Comprehensive Study Notes: Society, Community, and School

1.0 Unit 1: Society and Education

1.1 The Concept of Society

The term 'society' originates from the Latin word *societas*, meaning friend and ally, which describes a relation or interaction among a group. At its core, society is understood as a 'web of relationship', and these relationships are fundamental to understanding human behavior and social institutions.

To comprehend society, it is essential to understand its key components:

- **Social Relations:** These are the connections between individuals. Sociologists categorize these connections into three main types based on their intimacy and social distance:

    o **Primary Relations:** Close, intimate relationships found within a family (e.g., mother-father, brother-sister, husband-wife).

    o **Secondary Relations:** Relationships that are less personal, such as those with uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces.

    o **Tertiary Relations:** More distant connections, including friends and neighbors.

- **Role:** This refers to the set of actions an individual performs. A person holds multiple roles that change with the social context. For example, a single individual can simultaneously be a teacher to students, a father to his children, a son to his parents, and a husband to his wife.

- **Status:** Each role is attached to a certain position within society, known as social status.

- **Norms & Values:** These are the collective conscience and unwritten rules that regulate roles and statuses. They guide human behavior and are often associated with sanctions (rewards and punishments) to ensure compliance.

According to sociologists MacIver and Page, society is "a system of usage and procedures, of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behavior and of liberties." Another perspective comes from Talcott Parsons, who referred to society as a 'social system' and identified 'interaction' among multiple people as its most basic unit.

Feature	Society	Community
Nature	Abstract, broad, and general concept.	A concrete constituent of society.
Scope	Wide-ranging, from a small group to global humanity.	Characterized by a definite territory.
Core Characteristic	A web of social relationships.	A close relationship known as a 'we feeling' among members.

| Identity | Based on shared systems and procedures. | Based on cultural similarity and a shared way of life. |

1.2 Social Institutions

A social institution is defined as "a set of norms" applied to various aspects of human behavior, regulated by established and stable rules to ensure the smooth functioning of society. The five key social institutions are:

1.2.1 Family

The family is the first and most fundamental social institution.

- **Definition:** A basic unit of society that serves as a bridge between the individual and the larger social world. It exists universally, though its structure and functions vary.

- **Primary Functions:**

  - Serves as the 'first school' where a child's initial learning occurs.

  - Regulates marital bonds and ensures legitimate reproduction.

  - Provides care for the young.

  - Controls human behavior through socialization.

  - Functions as an economic unit, at least for consumption.

1.2.2 Religion

Religion is a universal institution found in all societies, from primitive to post-modern.

- **Definition:** As defined by Emile Durkheim, religion is a "unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things."

- **Primary Functions:**

  - Acts as a powerful form of social control by establishing moral codes and values.

1.2.3 Economy

The economy is the institution that governs the production and management of resources.

- **Definition:** It refers to the rules, procedures, and norms governing the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

- **Primary Functions:**

  - Fulfills the material needs of society.

  - According to Karl Marx, the economy is the 'basic structure' upon which all other social institutions are dependent.

1.2.4 Education

Education is the process of learning and socialization that occurs in every society.

- **Definition:** The formal and informal process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and culture.

- **Primary Functions:**

  - Socializes new members of society and transmits culture to the next generation.

  - Fulfills society's need for a skilled human resource base.

  - Facilitates social mobility, allowing individuals to enhance their social status.

1.2.5 Polity

Every society has a system for maintaining order and exercising authority.

- **Definition:** A system of control that uses organizations and the legitimate use of force to maintain social order.

- **Primary Functions:**

  - As noted by T. B. Bottomore, the polity is concerned with the division of power and authority within a society.

1.3 The Evolution and Nature of Indian Society

The Indian social system is ancient and complex, with roots tracing back to the Stone Age and the Indus Valley Civilization. Over centuries, numerous immigrant groups from Europe and Asia—including the Sakas, Kushans, Moghals, and British—brought their cultures to the subcontinent. This long history of cultural contact and influence has made India a 'melting pot' of diverse cultures.

Features of Diversity in India

- **Races:** B.S. Guha identified six major racial elements in the Indian population: Negrito, Proto-Austroloid, Mongoloid, Mediterranian, Western Brachecephals, and Nordic.

- **Castes:** The Anthropological Survey of India has identified over 4600 castes and sub-castes, which continue to regulate social, economic, and political behavior.

- **Religions:** India is home to followers of most of the world's major religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, along with numerous cults and sects.

- **Communities:** There are over 700 distinct tribal and ethnic communities in India, comprising nearly 7.5% of the total population, who traditionally existed outside the caste system.

- **Languages:** According to Grierson's estimate, India has 179 languages and 544 dialects. The Indian Constitution officially recognizes 22 regional languages. This linguistic diversity contributes to distinct cultural regions with unique dresses, food habits, and practices.

Features of Unity in India

1. **One Political Entity:** For much of its history, particularly during the Mauryan, Gupta, Mughal, and British periods, the Indian subcontinent has existed under a single political regime.

2. **Territorial Integrity:** Geographically, India is a distinct subcontinent separated by the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean, united by major river systems.

3. **Common Culture:** Throughout history, figures like Emperor Ashoka and Emperor Akbar promoted cultural and religious harmony. In villages, different religious groups live together, share their lifestyle, join each other's festivals, and are tied with one thread of Indianness.

4. **Varna System:** The traditional Varna model of social classification provided a single, overarching framework that encompassed the entire subcontinent, assigning specific roles and statuses to different social groups.

5. **Historicity:** Over 5000 years of shared history have created a unique cultural tradition characterized by syncretism, assimilation, and the formation of new socio-cultural groups.

1.4 The Linkage Between Society and Education

Education is widely viewed as the foundation of a modern society, essential for economic prosperity, social well-being, and political stability. Emile Durkheim emphasized education's role in preserving society and its culture. Similarly, John Dewey argued that the school is a miniature society, with the ultimate goal of fostering social progress.

1.4.1 Social Functions of Education

Education performs several crucial functions for society:

- **Transmission of Culture:** The primary role of education is to transmit a society's traditions, culture, skills, and knowledge to the next generation. Culture, as defined by E.B. Tylor, is a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

- **Reduce Inequality and Disparity:** Because knowledge is power, education is a key tool for empowerment. It helps reduce socio-economic inequality by providing opportunities to all. National programs like Sarva Sikhsa Abhiyan (SSA) aim to achieve universal primary education and promote gender equity.

- **Social Mobility and Social Change:** Education is a primary factor in social mobility. By providing opportunities for all, it allows individuals to enhance their educational qualifications and income, thereby improving their position in the social hierarchy.

- **Development of New Knowledge:** Education fosters innovation and adds to existing knowledge. Historical discoveries like fire, the wheel, and metals, as well as modern inventions like the internet, have drastically changed society and were all products of new knowledge.

- **Individual Development:** Education prepares individuals for their future by equipping them with the skills needed to function in the world of work. It develops them physically, mentally, and socially, contributing to a healthy and progressive society.

1.4.2 The Influence of Society on the Education Process

Just as education shapes society, society profoundly influences the education system. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described this as 'cultural reproduction,' where the education system perpetuates the culture of the dominant class. The nature of educational institutions, their objectives, and their curriculum are determined by the society's context.

- **Socio-cultural Influence:** The education process is embedded in a society's social structure and value system. Schools transfer existing cultural content, including societal biases and hierarchies like the dominance of elite culture and gender disparity, from one generation to the next.

- **Economic Aspects:** A society's economy has deep implications for its education system. Market demand often dictates which fields of study are prioritized, leading to a higher demand for professional courses like engineering and medicine. Economic disparities can also limit equal access to quality education.

- **Political Conditions:** The state's political ideology directly shapes educational policy. In democratic states, education aims to promote equality, while socialist states may use the education system to inculcate a specific political ideology. For example, Nazi Germany and the post-1917 USSR used schools for political socialization rather than the impartial search for truth.

2.0 Unit 2: Community and School

2.1 Understanding Community

A community is an inter-dependent unit of people who share common interests, traditions, norms, and values for their collective welfare.

There are three main types of communities:

1. **Geographic Community:** Defined by members' place of residence, such as a village or district.

2. **Ethnic/Racial/Religious Community:** Membership is based on shared ethnic, racial, or religious identification, often cutting across geographical locations.

3. **Communities Based on Shared Concerns:** These include groups like parents' associations, formed around shared interests in the welfare of students.

Local communities vary due to several factors, including population size, language, religion, social composition (e.g., caste or socio-economic status), and overall economic conditions.

2.2 Community's Role in Elementary Education

Community involvement is critical for the success of education. The Delor Commission (1996) identified the local community, including parents and teachers, as a primary contributor to successful educational reforms. Several initiatives in India highlight the power of community engagement:

- **Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP):** This project in Rajasthan tackled teacher absenteeism in remote villages by selecting and training local villagers (Shiksha Karmis) to replace chronically absent teachers, thereby reviving local primary schools.

- **PROPEL:** An action-research project where ownership and control of primary schools were given to the villagers, making them responsible for the success or failure of the program.

- **LOK JUMBISH:** A "people's movement" in Rajasthan that created a learning environment by using local knowledge and skills at every stage, with significant teacher involvement.

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** This national program emphasizes decentralization and community ownership of schools, using a community-based approach for planning and monitoring school activities at the local level.

2.3 Influence of Community on the Learner

2.3.1 Language Development

Children naturally learn the language and dialect spoken by their community. Using a child's mother tongue in early education is vital. When the school's language is different from the home language, it can lead to alienation, non-participation, and high dropout rates.

Case Study: The PaNiya Tribe Children of the PaNiya tribe in Tamil Nadu are socialized in their own tribal language. When they enter schools where Tamil is the medium of instruction, they face significant psycho-sociolinguistic challenges due to the different grammatical structures, which negatively impacts their school achievement.

2.3.2 Cultural Development

Culture, in this context, refers to the traditions, folklore, and folk arts that a community uses to maintain and transmit its shared way of life. Local culture is a rich educational resource that can make learning more relevant and engaging.

Case Study: The Mahul Tree In tribal communities, the Mahul Tree holds immense significance and serves as a powerful teaching tool.

- **Economic:** Its fruit is a vegetable, its seed produces oil, and the byproduct of the seed, called "pedia," is used as manure. Its flowers are used to make liquor, providing a key source of income.

- **Social:** The tree is referenced in folk songs, tales, and riddles. Its trunk is used in marriage ceremonies as a symbol of family and procreation.

- **Medicinal:** Parts of the tree are used to treat ailments like piles and swelling.

- **Religious:** The tree is worshipped, as it is believed that gods and goddesses reside within it.

2.3.3 Life Skill Development

Folk stories from a community are often rich with lessons about navigating life's challenges. A tribal story tells of a hen that cleverly avoids being eaten by a crocodile. By addressing the crocodile as "brother," the hen uses **Creative Thinking** to reframe their relationship and **Effective Communication** to de-escalate a threat. This act of creative problem-solving saves her life and eventually leads the crocodile to develop a sense of **Empathy** after discovering they are related because both are born from eggs. This narrative illustrates how essential life skills are embedded within cultural traditions.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines **Life Skills** as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday living." These skills are crucial for personal development and social well-being. The ten core life skills are grouped into three categories:

Thinking Skills

- Creative Thinking

- Critical Thinking

- Decision-Making

- Problem Solving

Social Skills

- Self-Awareness

- Effective Communication

- Interpersonal Relationship

- Empathy

Emotional Skills

- Coping with Emotion

- Coping with Stress

Life Skill-Based Education (LSBE) is an interactive teaching and learning process that helps learners acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to make positive decisions and adopt healthy behaviors.

3.0 Unit 3: Contribution of Community in School Education

3.1 Significance of Community Participation

The primary goal of community participation is to help universalize education. This involves ensuring the **availability** of schooling, promoting universal **enrollment**, and improving student **retention**.

The following table, based on a case study of three different locations, illustrates the impact of community involvement:

Location	Level of Community Involvement	Effects on Schooling
Sansi Village	**Inactive**	People were not interested in school management. VEC/SMC were non-functional, records were poorly maintained, and both teachers and students were often absent.
Surkha Village	**Active**	Committees were functional and records were well-maintained. The community contributed utensils, taught mathematics classes

		for weaker students, monitored midday meals, and arranged for a doctor to conduct medical checkups.
Bhalswa Slum	**NGO-mediated**	Parents had little time to participate due to long working hours. An NGO served as a mediator, running bridge courses and conducting household surveys.

3.2 Government Initiatives and Community Roles

Since the 1980s, government policy has shifted towards decentralization to empower local communities in school management. Key initiatives include the **National Policy on Education (NPE 1986)** and the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments**, which strengthened Panchayati Raj Institutions. These policies led to the creation of grassroots structures like the **Village Education Committee (VEC)** and the **School Management Committee (SMC)** to ensure community involvement.

Roles the Community Can Play to Improve School Education

- Generating awareness about the benefits of education.

- Ensuring high daily attendance rates for students.

- Monitoring teacher attendance and performance.

- Boosting the morale of school teachers.

- Supervising the appropriate use of financial resources.

- Actively participating in school meetings to discuss children's progress.

- Helping children with their studies at home.

- Providing instruction in local skills and culture.

3.3 Identifying and Mobilizing Local Resources

Micro-planning is a process that involves the community in developing a detailed plan for local educational needs. A key tool in this process is **community mapping**, where villagers draw a map of their area to identify houses, resources, and the educational status of every child, including those who are out of school or have dropped out.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an approach that uses visual and symbolic methods to gather information, making it highly effective for including non-literate community members in the planning process. Two common PLA techniques are:

1. **Chapati Community Visioning:** Participants use different-sized cardboard "chapatis" (flatbreads) to represent community problems, associating the largest chapati with the most significant issue. This helps prioritize concerns visually.

2. **Using Seeds, Sticks, and Flags:** In community mapping, residents use locally available materials like seeds, sticks, pebbles, and flags to symbolize household demographics (e.g., a stick for a man, a leaf for a woman) and to flag homes where children are not attending school.

4.0 Unit 4: Provisions for Community Participation under SSA and RTE

4.1 Legal and Programmatic Frameworks

4.1.1 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Launched in 2001, the SSA is the Government of India's flagship program for the Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). It emphasizes **community ownership** of schools and its main activities include opening new schools, strengthening infrastructure (classrooms, toilets, drinking water), and providing additional teachers and training.

4.1.2 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009

The RTE Act makes education a fundamental right for every child aged 6-14. Its key features include:

- Provision of free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school.

- A mandate for private schools to admit at least 25% of their students from poor families.

- A policy of no detention or board examinations until the completion of elementary education (Standard VIII).

- Provision for age-appropriate admission for out-of-school children, with special training to bring them up to level.

- Establishment of minimum norms for school infrastructure and teacher-pupil ratios.

- Mandatory formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) in every school.

4.2 Formal Structures for Community Participation

4.2.1 Village Education Committees (VECs)

VECs are grassroots bodies responsible for the management and monitoring of elementary education at the village level. A typical VEC, such as those in Uttar Pradesh, is headed by the Gram Pradhan (village head) and includes the senior-most head teacher and three parents. Major functions of VECs include:

- Organizing enrollment drives and awareness campaigns.

- Supervising school construction and maintenance activities.

- Monitoring student attendance and retention.

- Monitoring teacher attendance and performance.

- Managing school grants and maintaining financial records.

4.2.2 School Management Committees (SMCs)

The RTE Act mandates the formation of an SMC in every school to ensure community oversight.

- **Composition:** At least 75% of SMC members must be parents or guardians. Of these parent members, 50% must be women. There must also be proportional representation for parents of children from weaker sections.

- **Key Functions:**
    - Preparing the annual School Development Plan (SDP).

- Supervising the utilization of school grants and finances.

  - Monitoring the academic progress of children.

  - Ensuring the regular attendance and punctuality of teachers.

  - Monitoring the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme.

  - Ensuring all government incentives (e.g., textbooks, uniforms) reach the students.

4.3 State-wise Examples of Community Initiatives

The following table highlights diverse examples of community participation in education across various Indian states:

State	Key Community Initiative(s)
Nagaland	Disbursement of teacher salaries is handled by the community on a 'No Work No Pay' principle.
Rajasthan	Community monitoring of teacher attendance led to the removal of irregular teachers.
Karnataka	Women's self-help groups (Sanghas) run pre-schools (balwadis) with no financial aid.
Bihar	Community supervises the distribution of incentive allowances for regular student attendance.
Gujarat	Early Child Care Centers are run and managed by local committees of women.
Jharkhand	Village Education Committees conduct social audits of school functioning by organizing public meetings (Aam Sabha).
Assam	Community members motivate parents of disabled children to enroll them in schools.