Functionalist and Conflict approaches in religious and educational institutions

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**Introduction**

For structuring and maintaining human societies, social institutions play an important role. Religious and educational institutions are the backbone of the society upon which the structure of the society is based on. Both religious and educational institutions provide a structure and code of conduct which shines a light on how a person must live their life. Religious and educational institutions use different approaches for structuring a code of life that they want others to follow. This education whether it be religious or worldly gives knowledge and changes people for their betterment. It helps in building the perspective for looking at life. Institutes are the basic building blocks of any society as they teach and play their functions in certain realms of the society and are responsible for certain reforms as far as behaviour of individuals are concerned. Opinions and views are made by the institutions (religious and educational) regarding the surrounding world. Religious education helps in building a connection between world and eternity and keeps our faith alive. Religious and educational institutions use conflict and functionalist approach accordingly.

**Discussion**

Religious institutions are one of the main five institutions of society and religion constitutes a set of beliefs regarding the super-power. Religion is a social institution that includes practices and believes which serve spiritual needs of the society. Both functionalist and conflict approach provide valuable ways for understating this society in a better way. Norms are important for keeping a society in balance as functionalist approach argues that religion helps in maintaining the value consensus. According to functionalist approach, society is a system of interconnected parts in which the social institutions play an important role in the functioning of society. Functionalists claim that role of religion is to preserve the status qou rather than promoting social change. Religious institutions use functionalist approach for reforming the society as functionalist approach spots a light on the function that every institution plays in a society. In functionalist approach, religion has a prominent position. According to Comte, it prompted ordinary people to serve unseen purposes that becomes hard to detect sometimes even for religious scholars. According to micro functionalist Malinowski, religion helps in establishing, fixing and reforming society’s attitudes which then add value to existence and survival. Functionalist approach also claim that religion binds people together and promotes social order for maintaining peace and smooth functioning of society.

Conflict approach in sociology shines a light on inequality and claims that society is an arena of inequality where conflict and change are generated. Sociologist mostly use conflict approach for studying the ongoing conflict between disadvantage groups (Gaus et al, 2019). Conflict approach within religious institutions shines a light on how religion as a phenomenon of human behavior promotes social inequality with the help of the worldview that justifies oppression. According to Karl Marx, religious institutions play effective role for creating inequalities in people by giving more resources and power to certain people than other group of people. According to the conflict approach, religious institutions reinforce as well as promote social inequality and social conflict. It helps in convincing poor to accept their lot in life which leads towards violence and hostility which is promoted by religious differences. Religious institutions force the poor to accept their fact by helping the existing system in maintaining social inequality. Karl Marx claimed that workers need to rise up and overpower the bourgeoisie because they are exploiting them of their rights. For understanding this exploitation, poor class must realize that their poverty stemmed from the oppression by the elite class, but they are strong holders of religious beliefs which views their poverty in religious terms. They believe that if they are suffering in world there would be a reward at the end after this earthly life.

Educational institutions are also among the social institutions that reform the behavior of individuals so that they could make their society a better place for living. Educational institutions serve many important functions for society such as educational institutions teach socialization, social integration, and social or cultural innovation. There are some latent functions as well being performed by educational institutions and these functions include building of peer relationship, child care and lowering of unemployment by proving better job opportunities to the school students out of full-time labor force. Educational institutions claim that problems that may harm the society cannot be completely removed. Functionalist approach in society stresses upon the functional approach by claiming that this approach fulfill needs of the society. It won’t be wrong to say that socialization is the main function being played by the educational institutions. In order to learn about the social norms, skills and values of a society children must need to function in society and educational institutions serve as the primary vehicle for learning (Hedegaard et al, 2019). Three Rs are being taught by the educational institutions in society and these are reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic. Social values and norms are being transferred from one generation to another generation through educational institutions. Social integration is the second most important function of the educational institutions.

Functionalist approach claims that people need to subscribe to a common set of values and beliefs so that a society could work smoothly. For unifying a society common norm systems and values must be inculcated in society members in order to avoid any disorder in society. Third most important function performed by educational institutions is social placement. One of the prominent functions of educational institutes is that these institutions highlight inequality in social placement by the educationalist institute. Students are being looked upon by the teachers and other school officials for observing that whether a student is more or less motivated. For placing students at respective positions, educational institutions observe even if the students are educationally challenged so that teachers would give appropriate attention to the students. Educational institutions prepare people for their future life and enable them so that they could become a productive part of the society. After proper identification, children are taught at the level that suits them well as educational institutions prepare them for the professional life ahead (Moskop et al, 2019). Cultural innovation is another important role being played by the functionalist approach. Artist, scientists and poets cannot create or discover great things in their lives if they are not given proper education by educationalist institutions. It has been claimed that educational institutions require various kinds of reforms in the current system and process of education for making it effective as per the time and demand of the society.

Conflict approach does not oppose the functions being played by the educational institutions but gives some of these functions a different slant by spotting a light on how educational institutions perpetuate social inequality. In schools when children are tracked and placed in category like slow learner and fast learner, this tracking and categorization also creates social inequality as students are being locked faster within lower tracks. Conflict approach claim that even in educational institutions students may be placed as per their social class, race and ethnicity etc. that draws a parting line among the students. Conflict approach also claim that there are great chances that the test are standardized and are also culturally biased that also gives rise to social inequality. Conflict approach believes that difference of quality of educational institutions also widen the gap or inequality in the society. Educational institutions promote inequality as it draws a line among those who are from high standard educational institutions as compared to those who are in mediocre level educational institutions.

**Conclusion**

Taking a look at the above discussion, it could be said that social institutions define some ways and by following these ways life could be made better. Religious and educational institutions are the two main institutes that teach basic lessons of life. Both functionalist and conflict approaches view religious and educational institutions in different ways. Perspectives regarding educational and religious institutes of conflict and functionalist approaches are contradictory somehow as discussed above. It has been witnessed that functionalist approaches mainly shine a light on functions being performed by both educationalist and religious institutions. On the other hand, conflict approaches claim that inequality is promoted by both religious and educationalist institutions. So as a whole, it could be concluded that different approaches view educational and religious institutions in different ways by keeping in consideration their basic believes. Different approaches have their own ways of analyzing various institutes.

References

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