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Political Socialization in Society

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Abstract

'Political socialization' is the term used to describe the process whereby the individual learns about and develops orientations to politics. The agents of Political socialization are numerous-the family and school attracted much of the scholarly research, but a political institution such as a political party, history, outstanding political experiences, occupation and the educative efforts of the regime are some other agents. The process of Political socialization takes place through several agencies like family exercises both latent and manifest influence on the child, school exercises profound influence on the process of Political socialization. Socialization is a process by which an individual gets inducted into the society with all its diversities. Every society has its own set of values and a unique, separate identity. The individual has to get assimilated into the system so that one can be a part of the system, sometimes being moulded and at other times, changing the system. Socialization is a continuous process in the life of an individual. Change is inevitable in every society as also in the political system. The challenge of every political system is how to imbibe these changes into its individuals while maintaining consistency and continuity. The process of political socialization is a part of general socialization.

Keywords: Political socialization, participation, political behaviour, political culture, political

Introduction

H.H. Hyman, who coined the term 'political socialization, laid emphasis on the perpetuation of political values across generations. Picking up a thread from such an interpretation, Lasswell says that political socialization "unquestionably meets the criterion of significance in as much as it is an important feature of every past, present and future body politics. Every community transmits with varying degrees of success the mature practices of its culture to the immature. Every stable sub-culture engages in a parallel process, since it also distinguishes between participation by the mature and the immature. (Satish kumar, 2007, 273) ^[1]

Knowledge about political socialization provides basic information to Political science regarding the new dimension of political science like political socialization, its evolution, goal, then present its importance. Policies are formulated and laws are enacted only after a careful consideration of the social needs and the consequences and behaviour of people towards society. Which gave rise to a new branch called political socialization. Political socialization provides information to Political science in various methods and concepts of political socialization were applied to the study of political behaviour and institutions.

Political socialization "is the process by which political cultures are maintained and changed. Through the performance of this function individuals are inducted into the political culture, their orientations towards political objects are formed. "In other words, it refers to the learning process

by which norms and behaviour acceptable to a well running political system are transmitted from one generation to another. Thus, the aim of this concept is to train or develop the individuals in a way that they become well-functioning members of a political community. Obviously, it has a peculiarly psychological dimension in the sense that "it is the gradual learning of the norms, attitudes and behaviour acceptable to an ongoing political system."

Political behaviour is learned behaviour. How this learning takes place and conditions an individual's orientation to politics forms the basic concern of political socialization. As Almond and Powell observe, "political socialization is the process by which political cultures are maintained and changed." Individuals are inducted into the political culture and orientations towards political object are formed through the process of political socialisation. (K.A. Babu & Sajit Kumar, (59-60) ^[2].

The socialisation process is a continuous one. From child onward. The individual is exposed to various life experiences and learning situations that steadily mould his ideas about politics. Also, the socialization process symbolizes a transmission or communication process. Information, value, and feelings are often directly transmitted and these exert powerful influence on the individual's mind school text books on civics and social studies, for instance, try directly to communicate definite knowledge and desired values, which come to shape the mind of the young learner. This easier example of manifest political socialization. They can be

another process of latent socialization. This takes place through the transmission of non-political yet attitudes which affect attitudes towards analogous roles and objects in the political system. Acceptance of other person's views and listening to others and conflict resolution through debates and discussions can be prevalent modes of social behaviour in a country this kind of social culture is likely to affect attitudes of individuals towards political process as well.

Various Agents of Political Socialization

Almond and Powell have identified a number of agents of political socialization it is through these agencies that the influence process works and reaches out to the individual mind, in a way, one can identify a definite "socialization structure" in society that regularity performs the functions of socialization.

The first and for most agent of socialization is the family. This primary organization has an authority structure and a decision making process. The influence-both latent and manifest-to which the child is exposed at the early stage-have a decisive impact on his orientation towards authority and obedience in other spheres including the political.

The second most powerful agent is the school. Manifest transmission of political knowledge and opinion takes place at the school level. Debates and discussions and other decision-making mode in the school exert influence in later life on the individual's performance in other roles.

The third influential agent is the work or employment situation. Political orientations are shaped through participation in unions, collective bargaining demonstrations and other forms of decision making. Informal groups of employees exert influence on their members attitudes towards political objects and events.

The fourth transmitting agent is mass media. Radio, television, newspaper and other forms of mass media provide information about political happenings. Manipulation of media is often resorted to in different countries to influence and change the political orientation of citizens.

Lastly individual orientation to politics is very often conditioned by direct contacts with the political system. His + direct relationship with political parties and pressure groups and influential political leaders would naturally determine his attitude s toward politics.

Not only above institutions but social and political institutions as a whole play their part in the process of norm-internationalization. The role of religious institutions, for instance, need not be undermined. The effect of the church on political attitudes "is less apparent when it reinforces other socialising agencies, but the role of Roman Catholicism in many European countries, liberal-democratic and totalitarian, offers illustrations of its conflict with both state and education and is possibly a vital factor in the political behaviour of women in some countries." Youth movements do play an important part in the process of rational integration particularly in the developing countries. Let us also have a look at the role of the political parties that are more diffuse have because of their need to wider support. The role of the government as a whole must be looked into, particularly in countries like West Germany and the Soviet Union where financial support is given by the state to voluntary youth groups and organizations to encourage political education.

Finally, we come to the influence of direct contacts with the political system. It will not be wrong to say that nothing can be as influential in shaping the attitudes and orientations of the individuals as their direct contacts with the institutions

and processes of the political system under which they live and work. "No matter how positive the view of political system which has been included by family and school, when a citizen is ignored by his party, cheated by his police, starved in the bread line and finally conscripted into the army, his views on the political realm are likely to be altered. Direct formal and informal relationships with specific elite in the political system are inevitably a powerful force in shaping orientations of individuals to the system."

Conclusion

Political socialization is a very powerful tool to mould political cultures. The various agents of political socialization can even help create an entirely new set of values and attitudes. Its importance is growing in today's world where the traditional structures of a village or tribal community are breaking down. As the world shrinks, political systems are borrowing more from each other. The citizens learn as they move ahead in life. Any event, be it in the social, religious, and economic sphere can influence the political system of a state. Thus, political socialization has to be healthy and positive. It can be moulded in the totalitarian regimes as well as in the developing countries. In the former it is controlled while in the latter it is general and diffused. Both situations are dangerous and need to be handled carefully by the few eternal, vigilant citizens within the political system

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