UNIT 14 SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to introduce you to the concept of social adjustment so that you can help your students adjust in school and society. In Unit 13 you have studied about personal adjustment and emotional maturity, and the role of school and the teacher in the process of adjustment.

You know that the teacher is the central figure in school and classroom. He/she influences the behaviour of students both directly and indirectly. His/her behaviour can also motivate the students to form groups as well as to break up groups formed on the wrong basis. You will also study the concept of social maturity and its relationship with social adjustment. The role of teachers in group dynamics is also explained in this unit.

14.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the concept of social adjustment,
- explain the concept of social maturity,
- illustrate how social adjustment promotes good interpersonal relations,
- state the process of adjustment in the school environment, and
- explain the teachers’ role in group dynamics and social adjustment.

14.3 SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment is a popular expression used by people in day to day life. For example, while traveling in a bus or a train, we often hear or use this term; even when a guest comes to stay with us for a few days we have to adjust him/her in our house. Though sometimes we face problems
in making these adjustments, they are important to maintain personal as well as social peace and harmony. Thus adjustment maintains peace and harmony in home, school, society and in the country.

Social adjustment can be defined as a psychological process. It frequently involves coping with new standards and values. In the technical language of psychology, getting along with the members of the society as best as one can is called adjustment.

14.3.1 Nature of Social Adjustment

As social beings we live in a society, we form opinions about others and others have opinions about us. Everybody wants acceptance and recognition from and within society. We try to behave according to the norms of the society so that we can adjust with others. But it is not an easy task as the personality of each individual is a unique organisation. This organisation has to make special efforts to adjust with others unique organisations, which we call society. Actually adjustment is a wider term used in various spheres of life. For example, if an individual is well-adjusted in his family environment, his family adjustment will be good. So before defining social adjustment it is necessary for us to restrict the area of social adjustment. In other words we can say that social adjustment is the direction we, the teachers, try to instil adjustment skill in our students. As teachers we should emphasise on the adjustment of the student in the school. It is the teacher's responsibility to help the student cope with the existing situations of the school. For this we should contribute to improving the social environment of the school.

Psychologists use the term adjustment of varying conditions of social and interpersonal relations in the society. Thus we see that adjustment means reaction to the demands and pressures of the social environment imposed upon the individual. Whenever two types of demands come into conflict with each other and resultant in an adjustment being made, a complicated process for the individual, then some special problems of adjustment arise.

14.3.2 Perception and Social Adjustment

Impartial perception is needed for social adjustment. The processes of behaviour e.g. learning, maturation, sensation, perception and motivation are significant in our life because they contribute to the process of adjustment. The way we interact with people depends to a great extent upon how we perceive them and how we interpret their behaviour. The perceptions about people—what we think, what they are like—influence the way we respond to them. If you perceive that a student is hostile, you are unlikely to interact or adjust with him/her. Your behaviour in a group is certainly different from the behaviour when in alone. Group affects an individual's behaviour. The mere presence of others affects our performance.

How do we come to know about other people? Our social perceptions of others are initially based on the information we obtain about them—in some instances the attribution(inferences) we make about the causes for their behaviour. It is, of course, important to have accurate knowledge of others before deciding on the kind of possible interactions with them. Our perceptions of others' personalities and feelings guide us in deciding the way we respond to them and what sort of relationships we have with them. Knowledge about others influences our adjustment with them.

14.3.3 Impression Formation and Social Adjustment

We shall first discuss 'impression' as a cognitive process. Impression formation is the process by which information about others is converted into more or less enduring cognition or thoughts about them. When we first meet someone, we usually have access to information how the person looks and where he/she works and what he/she says. These categories and their perceived interrelationship form the basic cognitive framework by which we understand others and try to adjust with them.

14.3.4 Other Processes in Social Adjustment

There are certain other processes we can use for social adjustment. Let us discuss the main processes in the following paragraphs.

1) Stress and adaptation: The efforts to live and be satisfied is called adaptation. Environmental factors which make it hard for an individual to live are called stress. At
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the most elementary level of life, stress is experienced as irritation or discomfort. At a slightly more advanced level, stress is explained as the anticipation of harm. In human beings certain kinds of stresses produce anxiety. Anxiety sometimes produces defensive response which are mental efforts to reduce stresses. Defenses are generally regarded as poor methods of adjustment. Actually adjustment means reduction of tension or satisfaction of motives.

ii) Social influence: The process of social influence contains two critical elements—(a) someone's intervention, and (b) inducing change in other person. The FP (Focal Person) is one who is influenced by the source of intervention is termed as the agent. The following table classifies agents, types of intervention and related concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Agent</th>
<th>Types of Intervention</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stranger (S)</td>
<td>Physical presence</td>
<td>Social facilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Person</td>
<td>Modelling of behaviour</td>
<td>Imitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Modelling of behaviour</td>
<td>Compliance of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norms</td>
<td>Situations that increase salience of Norms</td>
<td>Conformity to norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>Obedience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Imitation, conformity and obedience is known as a promoter of social adjustment. The phenomena of influence, which also includes imitation conformity and obedience, always contain an agent which has caused a change in the focal person (FP). Influence situations can be differentiated by noticing the different characteristics of the agent and of the behaviour that makes up the intervention.

We shall discuss the five concepts presented in Table 14.1 to help you understand the process of social influence better.

Social facilitation: In a group situation, the presence of others would always influence performance and thus the efforts to bring changes in performance of an individual are called social facilitation. The presence of other increases an individual's arousal level which in turn enhances performance of well learned responses but decreases performance of poorly learned responses e.g. a well trained musician would, according to this theory (social facilitation), perform better when others are present but a beginning would make more mistakes when giving a recital in front of others than when practicing at home. The social facilitation effect indicates that the mere presence of other people does not always result in improved performance but they must involved in any action to bring about improvement. Social facilitation is most likely to occur when the people in a group are involved in the task being performed. The performance of the trained musician in the above example would probably not be enhanced if the people in the audience were not listening to the musician and evaluating his performance. In other words, social facilitation occurs most readily for strong responses in situations where the presence of others is motivating.

Imitation: Imitation involves change in focal person's behaviour that matches or copies others' behaviour. Students imitate a variety of behaviours in many different settings. They imitate the behaviour of social personalities for getting the recognition.

Compliance to others: Human being as a social being has to adjust himself in the social environment. He works everyday according to his daily schedule e.g., eating, drinking, bathing, sleeping, working, etc. But practically in his daily life he commands others and works according to his own or others' rules and regulations. In a family, every member is dependent on each other; sometimes even parents also obey the rules of their children and this type of situation influences them to adjust in social environment.

Conformity to norms: Conformity refers to the situation in which individuals change their behaviour so that they become more similar to those of the other members of the group. In
conformity situations the agents have at least some interest in changing the focal person's behaviour. Every group has its own norms and rules to follow. These norms or rules are agreed upon by the group members and these exert a powerful influence on social behaviour. It is necessary for the focal person to be aware of the norms and rules to be subject to its pressure.

Norms and rules can be formal agreements such as laws or contracts, or there can be informal agreements such as an agreed upon time to begin a meeting. No group exists without rules that regulate the members' behaviour. And every member has to show compliance to rules. What do the members gain by their willingness to be regulated? The chief advantage of rules and norms is that these serve to co-ordinate behaviour i.e. rules are established to avoid conflict and to govern behaviour.

**Obedience:** Obedience refers to situations in which the agent has the legitimate right to influence the focal person and the focal person has the obligation to obey. Such reciprocal role relationships are most clearly demonstrated when the agent has a higher status than the focal person and the roles are part of a social system in which a higher status clearly influence over the lower status, such as ranks in the military.

### 14.4 SOCIAL MATURITY

Social maturity is a long process. A student's best bet for being socially mature is to be exposed to those people who are socially mature so that he can pattern his behaviour accordingly. The student can try to reach the expectations of the societal system: parents, teachers, siblings and peers who matter to him. Thus, knowing what to do and striving for it are essential for reaching the desired level of social maturity. In this context, providing appropriate role models to the student goes a long way in helping him to what is desirable and expected of him. If a student sees adults around him creating scenes and tantrums, it would be unrealistic to expect patience, forbearance and tact from such a student. A student who has always been kept waiting for simple things everyday will be unable to face situations where one has to live with uncertainty. In social situations, by and large, students tend to react the way they have been treated.

#### 14.4.1 The Nature of Social Maturity

As stated above, the maturity of a student is influenced by various social factors. Some of the important factors are as follows:

i) **Concept of dependence-independence:** Dependence-independence - patterns of behaviours are acquired by students in the course of day-to-day interaction. An individual is required to modify his behaviour in terms of asserting his independence and seeking succourance (aid or relief) in the socio-cultural context.

Age variations are important considerations with reference to dependence-independence.

ii) **Self-control**: Self-control, as part of social maturity, is necessary for decision-making and facing the consequences. Too many impositions on students results in developing either a rebellious or subservient attitude. Acquiring self-control is partly maturational and partly learnt behaviour. The students studying in a secondary school understands that society does not expect him to regress to childhood behaviour at this age. He tries to come up to the expectations of the society and this he achieved by controlling his behaviour.

iii) **Stress**: Stress is part of everybody life and everybody has to overcome stresses. Every time there is a stress situation. A mature individual mobilises the available resources and utilises them to the best of his ability to overcome the stress. Stress situations help individuals learn to put forth their very best to resolve stress. Students have to learn to cope with stress and competition in the course of development but this stress should not hamper the process of their adjustment.

iv) **Social maturation**: Socially mature are aware of their roles. During the process of social growth students learn to live up to the expectations of the society in which they live. In every society the male and female roles are different. Individuals who violate these
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expectations and do not take the appropriate roles are often ridiculed. To play appropriate roles are the sign of socially mature persons.

**Ability to size up a social situation:** Another component of social maturity is to size up a social situation and react to it appropriately. A mature student is able to perceive a cue/hint in a social situation and accordingly modify his behaviour. He understands his mother’s behaviour by observing her facial expression or change in her tone. He will understand that she does not approve his actions. He can amend his behaviour accordingly. This ability increases as the student matures and this is desired for social adjustment.

### 14.4.2 Social Adjustment and Social Maturity

The behaviour of the individual depends on maturation and learning. Maturation is also helpful in the process of social adjustment. Studies have indicated that the socialisation plays an important role in social maturation, social learning and social adjustment. Much of the behaviour of a child determined by the process of socialisation—a process in which the environmental forces determine or influence the learning of accepted and approved ways of behaving. Through socialisation individuals prepare themselves for life in a society at a given time. A child is called socialised when he behaves in accordance with certain standardised ways or norms of the group in which he is raised. These modes of behaving (from family to society) continue to exert a controlling influence on his behaviour and help him in his social adjustment.

#### Check Your Progress 1

**Notes:**

a) Write your answer in the space given below.
   
   b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

**What do you understand by a) social adjustment, and b) social maturity?**

a) ....................................................................................................................................

b) ....................................................................................................................................

### 14.5 SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

In the preceding section, we discussed social adjustment and social maturity. Now we shall discuss social adjustment and interpersonal relationship. We can say that our social adjustment depends on the type of relationships we establish with other people. Social psychologists have studied a number of factors which help determine the formation and maintenance of interpersonal relationship. Why are people initially attracted to each other? What processes are involved in shaping the nature of relationship in social adjustment? The society in which we live consists of various types of persons. There are some persons for whom you feel a strong attachment. There are probably a few whom you dislike. Why do you like some people more than others? The general answer is that we like people to the extent that our interactions with them are rewarding or reinforcing. With such people we adjust ourselves.

**Proximity as a basis for interpersonal relationship:** One factor which affect the interpersonal relationships is physical nearness or proximity. You may agree that increase in the frequency of contact between individuals also increases the likelihood that friendship would develop. Perhaps we simply prefer pleasant interactions with those individuals whom we encounter frequently and make special effort to ensure that our interactions with them run smoothly and we adjust with each other.
Interpersonal relations and similarity in attitude: One of the factors which influences our relationship is the similarity in attitude. The relationship between similarity and attraction is so reliable that it can be represented by a mathematical formula. Similar attitude and attraction are directly proportional to each other.

Social exchange theorists have been especially successful in providing a framework to describe the nature and dynamics of interpersonal relationships. They emphasised the interdependence of social relationships. The quality of the outcomes experienced by two persons engaged in a relationship depends on the behaviour of both the participants. Satisfaction with a relationship increases if the outcomes are satisfactory and decreases if the outcomes are not satisfactory.

The growth of interpersonal relations starts with the stage of unilateral awareness and ends at total unity. The stage of total unity shows perfect adjustment among the individuals. If we want adjustment among the members of a group, the outcomes of the group should be equally distributed among the participants. This statement proposes that when individuals find themselves in an unfair and inequitable relation, they experience distress and problems of adjustment. You, as a teacher, should keep this fact in mind while dealing with your students.

14.6 ADJUSTMENT IN SCHOOL

In this section you will study factors related to adjustment in school. You, as a teacher, are more concerned with the adjustment of students in school because the primary purpose of education is to train students to be successful in their social life. They are trained to face social and economic problems. The process of adjustment start right from the birth of the child and continues till death. Human beings have the highest capacity to adapt to new situations. They not only adapt to physical demands but also adjust to social pressures.

Teachers have important role in modifying and shaping the personality of students in accordance with natural objectives of life. The greatest contribution of teachers will be to channelise the energy of students to reconstruction in their social life. One of the challenges hurled at teachers is to maintain the mental and physical health of the children and youth of the nation. The teacher has to emphasise on the harmonious development of students’ personality so that they can contribute to the welfare of the country. You can facilitate their adjustment in their life. You can also help them in maintaining their mental health because proper mental health leads to social adjustment.

There are some school-related factors which influence students’ adjustment in school. Important factors are as follows:

i) Proper training to teachers: Teachers who are properly trained in educational psychology may help students in their adjustment. Teachers’ personality and democratic attitude are also important factors which can promote adjustment in students.

ii) Adequate curriculum: Curriculum should be planned and transacted in such a way that it should fulfil psychological and social needs of students. Need fulfilment leads to better adjustment.

iii) Adequate recreational facilities: Facilities, such as sports, library, debate and excurs-
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- Sion may help students in their adjustment. We should provide proper recreational facilities to them in the school.

iv) **Classroom climate**: If the classroom climate is affectionate and cooperative enough, it can facilitate better adjustment in students.

v) **Proper relationships between administration**: Cordial relations between the Principal and teachers, and teachers and teachers, and teachers and office staff also play an important role in creating harmonious and congenial environment in the school.

vi) **Evaluation system of the school**: Evaluation should be rigid cum flexible. Too much subjectivity and unreliability should be avoided. Numerical marking should be avoided and grades should be given to students. Due to low marks, students lose confidence in their life which then affects in their mental health. The word ‘fail’ should not be used by the teachers.

An adjustment mechanism is a habitual method of overcoming blocks, reaching goals, satisfying motives, relieving frustration and maintaining equilibrium. Every individual uses his own mechanism to maintain a balance in his own personality. This mechanism, also known as defense mechanism, is discussed at length in Unit 13 (sub-section 13.5.4). Besides what has been presented/discussion in sub-section 13.5.4, the following measures can also help students in adjusting to the school environment:

- The school environment should be free from partiality and should provide the feeling of security in students, irrespective of their socio-economic status.
- School environment should be democratic. Students’ representation on various committees should be made.
- School should organise various curricular activities for students.
- Teachers should know the fundamental principles of human behaviour to solve students’ problems. They must be emotionally stable and have positive attitude towards teaching. They should create conducive school climate.
- Students should be encouraged to express their views and feelings on various issues related to school freely.
- Teachers should develop a variety of interests in students so that they can satisfy their emotions.
- Day-to-day problems can be discussed in class.
- Sex and moral education should be an integral part of the school curriculum.
- School can organise guidance services for students.
- There should be flexibility in school activities to accommodate the individual needs of the students.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Notes**:  

- a) Write your answer in the space given below.
- b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Give an example of improved interpersonal relations through social adjustment.

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Before we discuss the role of teachers in shaping group dynamics in the school environment, we should clearly understand the concept of group dynamics.

Dynamics means change. Group dynamics means the change of behaviour through interaction in the group. It refers to the forces which operate in group situations. It studies the structure of the group and other phenomena which emerge out of group interaction. The behaviour of members who constantly interact undergoes continuous changes because human behaviour is not static.

### 14.7.1 Group Processes and Group Dynamics

A group may be defined as two or more persons in dynamic interaction. The group demands reciprocity among its members. Every social system influences, to a great extent, the behaviour of its constituents. Students are not an isolated island. They interact with the environment for their development. This development depends on social interaction. It is impossible to imagine the harmonious development of a student without proper socialisation. Social interaction plays an important role in the development of intellectual and other abilities in the students. Students interact in groups in the school, in the classroom, on the playground and so on. To deal effectively with social groups one must study the dynamics of social behaviour.

**Need to study group dynamics**: Why should a teacher study group dynamics? A teacher deals with groups of students for five to six hours everyday. In order to make your teaching effective, you should study group dynamics. A class is a group of students with different socio-economic background. You, as a teacher, should have a thorough knowledge of the interaction process among the students. If you are well-equipped with the basic knowledge of group dynamics, you can provide appropriate guidance to students for their adjustment. By doing so you can also improve the emotional and social climate of the class.

The teacher must know how adolescents form groups and what is the structure of groups and other mechanisms operating in the group situation. Students seek love and motivation from their groups. Smooth functioning of the group is important for effective learning. If there are conflicts and stresses in the group, learning will be disturbed. A teacher’s knowledge of group dynamics can improve the social and emotional climate of the school/class. She/he can improve group relations to maintain proper mental health of the individual members and group relationship in the class.

### 14.7.2 Group Relationship in the Class

Analysis of sociometric studies shows the following patterns of relationship among the students of the class:

- **Stars**: Stars are the students in the class whom majority of the students like.
- **Isolates**: The students whom no member of the class likes or wants to associate. They are rejected by all.
- **Mutual pairs**: There are the students who like each other. There is reciprocal relationship among mutual pairs of students.
- **Chains**: There are chains of relationship among students where A chooses B and B chooses C. There is a closed circle where A likes B, B likes C and C likes A.

You will study about group dynamics in Unit 14 (Section 14.7) of the Course ES-333.

### 14.7.3 Teachers’ Role in Improving Group Relationship

In a classroom situation, generally two types of roles are identified: teacher’s role and student’s role. In group dynamics the teachers can provide a leadership role. The role of the leader is now shifting from authoritarian to a democratic and participatory one. Teachers must, therefore, encourage participation of students in all the school activities. To improve the climate of the classroom students should be taken into confidence and decisions taken democratically.
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Teachers' role is to facilitate the learning process. They are no more the instructor and the director of learning; they are facilitators of learning of their students. In teaching-learning process teachers should act as guides to promote learning. They should motivate students to participate in learning activities. Students' participation in learning activities individually or in groups enhances their learning.

Effect of group on adjustment: The classroom climate should be one in which students' involvement is ensured. A teacher's direct and indirect behaviour influences the personality development of students. Democratic leadership provided by the teachers develops positive traits in students, which help in their adjustment. Group relationship plays an important role in learning.

You can create conducive and cohesive climate in class. Today, education for all the sections of society necessitated teachers to think and develop interest in group dynamics. This has now been incorporated as an integral part of the teacher education programme.

The following measures can be used to improve the classroom climate.

- Teachers' behaviour: Teachers are models for the students. Their behaviour should be impartial. The whole climate of the classroom as a social group can be charged with emotions.
- Discussions: To improve the classroom's emotional climate, free discussion should be occasionally arranged for the group. Suggestions should be invited from students to improve upon the existing classroom climate.
- Effective communication: Lack of proper communication causes disruption in class. You should help students understand each other in formal and informal meetings. They can be encouraged to meet each other and also the teacher freely. If there is any misunderstanding, it should be immediately clarified. The classroom communication should be a two-way process.
- Cohesiveness: You can encourage feelings of cohesiveness among students through effective communication.
- Counselling: Recent research studies on group dynamics emphasise the role of counselling. Proper counselling can improve the emotional climate of your class.
- Tours and visits: Co-curricular activities such as tours, etc., give students opportunities to understand each other and improve the emotional and social climate of the group.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
   b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

Discuss the role of a teacher in influencing group dynamics.

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14.8 LET US SUM UP

Adjustment is a life-long process which helps individuals manage or cope with the various demands of the environment. As social being we live in a society and want acceptance and recognition by the other members of society. We try to behave according to the norms of the society so that we are able to adjust with others.

Social adjustment depends on students’ interpersonal relations and their interaction in the group, say in the classroom or the school.

Social maturity is also important in the process of social adjustment. In the process of social maturity the student tries to reach the desired level of maturity expected by the society he lives in. A socially mature student has the ability to size up the social situations and react appropriately.

Your role, as a teacher, is important in the process of social adjustment because you have to train your students to face personal, social and economic problems in their life. Students’ adjustment with society or in school largely depends on their interaction with the external environment in which they live.

A class as a group gives students opportunities to interact with each other. Students in social situations mostly interact in groups in classroom and on the playground. To deal effectively with social groups one must study the dynamics of group behaviour. Dynamics of groups means changing behaviour of the individual in group. But here a question arises: why should teachers study group dynamics? As you know you have to deal with groups of students from five to six periods daily. In order to make your teaching effective you must study the group dynamics of the class.

14.9 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. What is social adjustment? What are the other processes in social adjustment?

2. What are the important factors for adjustment in the school climate?

3. Define a group and discuss the place of a teacher in the group formation.

4. What do you mean by group dynamics? Why should teachers study group dynamics?

14.10 SUGGESTED READINGS


1. i) Social Adjustment is an effort made by an individual to cope with standards, values and needs of a society in order to be accepted.

   ii) Social maturity means knowing what to do and striving for it by following role models to reach the desired level of acceptable social behaviour.

2. The example should refer to the following aspects:

   i) Proximity as a basis for interpersonal relationship.

   ii) Interpersonal relations and similarity in attitudes, and

   iii) Growth and decline of relationships.

3. Learning process in a school happens in a group with teacher as a guide of that group. Mental health of a group is an important factor in the process of learning. As a leader, the teacher can be autocratic, democratic or participatory. The teacher’s rejection or acceptance of a group behaviour can actually steer group activities in the right direction.