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COURSE TITLE: Principles and Practice of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology

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ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Assignment on principles and practice of Agricultural Extension

**Question**  
Discuss the various types of social institutions in the society and their relevance to the environment.

**Answer**

**What is a Social Institution?**

A social institution consists of a group of people who have come together for a common purpose. These institutions are a part of the social order of society and they govern behaviour and expectations of individuals.

**Types of Social Institutions.**

1. Family
2. Educational institutions
3. Religious institutions
4. Political institutions.
5. Economic institutions.

**Family**

Family is defined as a kinship group linked by blood and marriage and occupying a common household. A family as a social group is made up of a man, his wife or wives and children living under a common roof, interacting and influencing the behaviours of each other in a more intimate manner than with others who do not belong to it. The family is the basic social institution in the society. Family is an informal institution.

Relevance of Family to the Society.

First, the family is the primary unit for socializing children. No society is possible without adequate socialization of its young. In most societies, the family is the major unit in which socialization happens. Parents, siblings, and, if the family is extended rather than nuclear, other relatives all help socialize children from the time they are born.

Second, the family is ideally a major source of practical and emotional support for its members. It provides them food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials, and it also provides them love, comfort, and help in times of emotional distress, and other types of support.

Third, the family helps regulate sexual activity and sexual reproduction. All societies have norms governing with whom and how often a person should have sex. The family is the major unit for teaching these norms and the major unit through which sexual reproduction occurs. One reason for this is to ensure that infants have adequate emotional and practical care when they are born.

Fourth, the family provides its members with a social identity. Children are born into their parents’ social class, race and ethnicity, religion, and so forth. Some children have advantages throughout life because of the social identity they acquire from their parents, while others face many obstacles because the social class or race/ethnicity into which they are born is at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

**Educational institutions**

What is Education?

Education is the process of transmitting the socially approved cultural heritage of any society from one generation to another. It is also the process by which the new knowledge is spread among members of a society. The cultural heritage and knowledge are transferred through education. Education as an activity is the process of transmitting and acquiring the socially approved aspects of cultural heritage. The school is the social organisation in which education takes place. The process of socialization or culture learning usually starts informally in the family, churches, mosques, the community and then formally in schools. Education in the formal sense has come to mean systematic training by specialists within the formal organisation of the school.

What is an Educational Institution?

An Educational institution also called a school is a formal organisation whose main goal is to provide and offer education. It is an institution dedicated to education.

Relevance of Educational institutions to the society.

Perhaps the most important function of education is socialization. If children are to learn the norms, values, and skills they need to function in society, then education is a primary vehicle for such learning. Schools teach the three Rs (reading, ’riting, ’rithmetic), as we all know, but they also teach many of the society’s norms and values. In Nigeria, these norms and values include respect for authority, patriotism, punctuality, and competition (for grades and sports victories).

A second function of education is social integration. For a society to work, functionalists say, people must subscribe to a common set of beliefs and values. As we saw, the development of such common views was a goal of the system of free, compulsory education that developed in the nineteenth century. Thousands of immigrant children in the United States today are learning English, US history, and other subjects that help prepare them for the workforce and integrate them into American life.

A third function of education is social placement. Beginning in grade school, students are identified by teachers and other school officials either as bright and motivated or as less bright and even educationally challenged. Depending on how they are identified, children are taught at the level that is thought to suit them best. In this way, they are presumably prepared for their later station in life.

Social and cultural innovation is a fourth function of education. Our scientists cannot make important scientific discoveries and our artists and thinkers cannot come up with great works of art, poetry, and prose unless they have first been educated in the many subjects they need to know for their chosen path.

**Religious Institutions**

What is Religion?

Religion is defined as consisting of institutionalised systems of beliefs, values and symbolic practices which provide groups of men with solutions to their question of ultimate meaning - death, difficulties, suffering, etc. (Glock and Stark 1998). Milton (1996) has also defined religion as “the attempt to bring the relative, the temporary, and the painful things of life into relation with what is conceived to be permanent, absolute and cosmically optimistic”. Religion is a universal human institution. It entails a set of basic beliefs and ritualistic practices. These beliefs and practices however vary from one religious organisation to another and responsible for the multiplication of religious organisations in society.

What is a Religious institution?

Religious institutions are the visible and organized manifestations of practices and beliefs in particular social and historical contexts. Like human emotions and attitudes, religious beliefs and practices project outward onto the social and historical plan. They create identities and representations, and determine attitudes, emotions, and behaviour. These manifestations and outward projections originate from beliefs and practices, but they are also limited by historical contexts.

Relevance of Religious Institutions to the Society.

Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society: it provides social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs, social control to enforce religious-based morals and norms to help maintain conformity and control in society, and it offers meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions.

**social cohesion**

* brings society together
* unifies people with common set of values that promotes a sense a community and positive social behaviours

**social control**

* prevent undesirable behaviour in society by associating it with negative spiritual consequences
* creating society laws and norms based on moral expectations

**explaining the unexplained**

* emotionally satisfying answers to big questions of human existence  
  -why am I here?  
  - what am I supposed to do with my life?

**psychological support**

* emotional support in time of crisis
* provides stability in uncertain times
* meaning to deal with painful events like death

**positive social change**

* use values/ideas of religion to create social change in the society.
* not about spreading the particular religion but challenging unjust/corrupt systems.

**Political Institutions**

What is a political institution?

Political institutions serve the people of a nation in form of governments in their traditional and modern forms which exist at the local, state and national levels. They serve executive, legislative and judiciary functions at each level and also relate citizens to each level of government in the performance of these functions. Each level of government also relates to the other in a systematic and coordinated fashion, frequently ensuring a division of labour. A system of political organisation is fashioned within which the philosophy and methodology of governance and selection of active participants in the political process evolve.

Relevance of Political Institutions to the Society.

In 1960, Gabriel Abraham Almond and James Smoot Coleman gathered three core functions of a political system, which include:

1. To maintain the integration of society by determining norms.
2. To adapt and change elements of social, economic, and religious systems necessary for achieving collective (political) goals.
3. To protect the integrity of the political system from outside threats.

**Economic Institutions**

What is an Economic Institution?

The economic institution in any culture is often concerned with the arrangement of relationships between people for the sustained production, distribution and consumption of goods and services within that culture or between it and another culture (Mbiti 2003). The family is the basic economic unit in any society. That is, it acts as the basic unit of production and consumption. As a society advances and becomes more complex, specialisation of functions often sets in to the extent that the function of production and distribution of goods becomes transferred to industrial and commercial firms. The family however, still plays the important role of providing the labour or manpower for production and distribution within these organisations.

Relevance of Economic Institutions to the Society.

Following are the functions of economic institution which include Social stratification, Power and authority, Interdependence of other Institutions, Needs satisfaction, Employment, Division of Labour and Provision of funds.

## **Social Stratification**

In capitalist system, there is uneven distribution of resources among people, which create many social classes in society. Individuals in society belong to different classes such as upper, middle and lower class. They can move upward or downward on the social ladder, for instance, if lower class people get access to more resources they move upwards on the social ladder and may become middle class or upper class. And if the resources of upper class diminish they will move downwards and may become middle class or lower class.

## **Power and Authority**

Those who have access and possess more economic resources they are powerful and authoritative in society. Wealth and economic resources are the source of power in society, the holder of wealth can control various agencies of society.

## **Interdependence of other Institutions**

Survival of economic institution depends on the cooperation with other institution. Labour force work in different industries which comes from the institution of family and without labour it is impossible to produce. Technical and managerial staff comes from the educational institution. The role of sociologist initiate when workers go on strike and industries get closed. Government formulate rules and regulations for businesses and business owners have to follow those rules. Therefore, cooperation with other institution is mandatory for economic institution.

## **Needs Satisfaction**

In modern world, our basic needs have enormously increased. We need industrial and agricultural goods and services to survive in modern world. Economic institutions are obligated to satisfy those needs.

## **Employment**

Economic institution creates jobs opportunities for people through which, they can generate income and earn their livelihood. That’s how people in the society satisfy their basic needs. Many businesses are developed under the economic institution.

## **Division of Labour**

Economic institution creates jobs for the people who acquire different skill sets. The roles and responsibilities of employee depend on their skills.

## **Provisions of Funds**

Economic institution provides economic assistance to other institutions as well. It provides funds to government in the shape of taxes and to the family in the shape of salaries.