Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Notes

Parsons Pattern Variables

Introduction

Pattern variables are concepts developed by Talcott Parson, which reflect the properties of all action systems. Pattern variables are an established way of doing the thing. Everyone behaves as expected by the society, there are many people living in this world and no-one has problem with each other. When someone interacts with us beyond our expectation then he exploit the pattern. For e.g. In-disciplined student.

In relation to motivational and value orientation, in the performance of roles, each actor faces dilemmas. These dilemmas are result/caused from strains in an individual choice of or preference with a range of orientation both related to needs and to values. These dilemmas are dichotomous in character (divided into two).There are in all five pattern variables. Each side of it represents one polar extreme. Should a great deal or little emotions be expressed? Relations in family (mother represents "affectivity"

The five pattern variables.

   1) **Affectivity versus Affective Neutrality**.

This pattern variable concerns the dilemma of role performance where evaluation is involved in relation to a situation. There is dilemma of showing emotions. Hence affectivity- affective neutrality concerns the amount of emotions that is appropriate in a given interaction situation. Should a great deal or little emotions be expressed? Relations in family (mother represents "affectivity").For e.g. relations in occupational sphere represents "affective neutrality"

2. Self Orientation versus Collectivist Orientation.

This pattern variable denotes the extent to which action is to be oriented to self interest or group interest. Should actors consider their personal goals over those of Collective goals? Dilemma of fulfilling interest (i.e. self v/s society).For e.g.in an urban settlement, everyone prefer self orientation and ignore collective orientation. Two individuals belonging to two different caste can't marry because of collective orientation of society i.e. caste.

3. Universalism versus Particularism.

This pattern variable concerns the issue of how to evaluate and judge others in an interaction situation. For e.g. national character represents universalism while caste characters represent particularism.

4. Ascription versus Achievement.

The actor's dilemma in the ascription versus achievement pattern variable is based on whether or not the actor defines the objects of his or her role either in terms of quality or performance. Deals with the issue of how to assess an actor, whether in terms of performance or in terms of in born qualities? For e.g. caste is based on ascription and class on achievement.

5. Specificity versus Diffuseness.

This pattern variable concerns the scope of the object of role performance. Dilemma of scope of relationship. In this case needs to be understood in terms of the nature of social interaction. Hence it denotes the issue of how far reaching obligations in an interaction situation are to be. Should the obligation be narrow and specific or should they be extensive and diffuse? For e.g. relations between doctor and a patient represents specificity. In a city we have less scope of relationship. Relations between father and son represents diffuseness. In village, we have big scope of relationship i.e. family, friends, relatives, neighbours.

Conclusion

The pattern variable, according to Parsons, not only define the nature of role interaction and role expectation in a social system but provide in addition, the overall direction in which most members of a social system choose their roles. It also gives us an idea about the nature of the social system. For e.g. family as a social system, the role expectations within the family amongst its members can be said to be affective, largely collectivity oriented, particularistic, ascriptive and diffuse. On the other hand an e.g. of workplace, here role expectations and standards of role performance would largely be oriented towards pattern variables of affective neutrality, self orientation, universalism, achievement and specificity.