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Q8(a)

"Education is a major source of social mobility in contemporary society." Explain.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Social Change in Modern Society

Social Change in Modern Society: Sociological theories of social change; Development and dependency; Agents of social change; Education and social change; Science, technology and social change.

Core demand of the question

- "Education is a major source of social mobility in contemporary society." Explain
- Keep the explanation within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Contemporary bureaucracies and labour markets make credentials a major mobility channel.

Parsons, **Weber**, and Turner explain allocation and contest/sponsored races.

Mandal, **Census**, and NFHS show real occupational and gender-linked shifts.

Bourdieu, **Marx**, Tumin, and Oakley show inherited filters and unpaid-care cuts.

Major source, not a classless contest; inflation can mean running to stand still.

Introduction

Social mobility is movement across class, status, or power. In contemporary society, school and credentials are a major official channel of that movement. They are major, not monopoly. Property, caste, and care still sponsor or block the ladder.

Body**Why education is major now**

- Industrial and bureaucratic work, in **Max Weber**'s key, demand certified competence. The office asks for files of degrees.
- Talcott Parsons treated school as an allocating agency on an achievement axis.
- Ralph Turner's contest mobility is the ideology of the exam. Even sponsored mobility uses school as the gate.
- **George Herbert Mead**: school is a new generalised other that can rival the caste or kin other.

How the channel works

- Literacy and higher education raise market chances, which **Census** and labour data still associate with occupation.
- Reservations after **Mandal** made education-plus-office a state-sponsored mobility path for OBCs and earlier for SC/ST.
- Women's schooling, in NFHS, links to delayed marriage and some agency, a gendered mobility of a sort.

Why "major" is not "sufficient"

- **Pierre Bourdieu:** cultural capital converts inherited style into apparent merit.
- **Karl Marx:** class places can persist while a few circulate through college.
- **Melvin Tumin versus Davis-Moore:** unequal school access wastes talent and calls the result functional.
- **Ann Oakley:** unpaid care and early marriage cut the years that would have been mobility through school.
- Informal and gig labour absorb graduates without class rise.
- Status honour, Weber's second order, still polices marriage despite the degree.

Contemporary society specified

- **Credential inflation** makes more education necessary to stand still, a Robert K. Merton-type latent effect.
- Coaching markets show that the "source" is often money in the form of school.
- Yet compared with land alone in a closed agrarian order, education is a wider channel than before.

Explanation in sum

- Major source as the legitimate, expanded, bureaucratic channel.
- **Not the only source:** property, party, and migration also move people.
- Measure relative mobility, not inspirational biographies only.

Flow diagram

Education credentials -> Social mobility
 Property caste care -> Filters
 Filters -> Education credentials
 Education credentials -> Credential inflation

Conclusion

Education is a major source of social mobility because contemporary work and the state certify persons through school. Weber, Parsons, and Turner explain the channel. Marx, Bourdieu, Tumin, and Oakley explain its class and gender filters. Treat it as a central, biased ladder, not as a solvent of structure.

Facts & figures

Contest vs sponsored mobility

Turner: open race of talent versus elite co-optation through school.

Cultural capital

Bourdieu: inherited culture marked as school ability.

Mandal

Education and jobs as a politically opened mobility channel in India.

Credential inflation

Rising certificates required for the same relative position.

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