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Q4(b)

According to Durkheim, "The major function of education is the transmission of society's norms and values." Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- According to **Durkheim**, "The major function of education is the transmission of society's norms and values." Discuss
- Keep the discussion within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

- **Durkheim**: education methodically socialises; major function is moral transmission.

Needed for **organic solidarity** and occupational ethics.

School rituals still fit.

Bourdieu and **Althusser** add class reproduction and ideology.

Gender and caste ask whose values.

Transmission is major, not sole.

Introduction

Emile Durkheim treated education as the methodical socialisation of the young. Its major function is to transmit the moral rules that a differentiated society still needs. The sentence is the core of **Moral Education** and Education and Sociology. It is incomplete as a map of schools today.

Body**Durkheim's claim**

- In **organic solidarity**, the child must learn a common morality plus a specialised occupational ethic.
- **The school is a social fact**: discipline, attachment to the group, and autonomy as a modern ideal.
- Transmission is not a family leftover. The nation and the occupational group require a public teacher.

What the claim illuminates

- Uniforms, assemblies, and civics still ritually charge belonging, a cousin of collective effervescence.
- Exam systems transmit achievement values that Talcott Parsons later typed.

Limits in discussion

- **Pierre Bourdieu**: schools transmit class cultural capital while claiming a common morality.
- **Louis Althusser**: education as ideological state apparatus, closer to **Karl Marx** than to a neutral church of the nation.
- **Gender and caste**: whose norms? Ann Oakley and Indian classroom studies show a double curriculum.
- **Conflict and change**: transmission can fail, or transmit rebellion, which Robert Merton's latent functions allow.

Discuss

- Major function, yes, for **Durkheim**'s problem of moral integration.
- **Not the only function**: allocation, credentialing, and exclusion are major too.

Flow diagram

Education -> Transmit norms values
Transmit norms values -> Moral integration
Hidden curriculum -> Education

Conclusion

Durkheim is right that education's classic function is to transmit society's norms and values in a methodical way. **Bourdieu**, **Althusser**, and feminist and caste critique show that "society" is stratified. Discuss the sentence as a necessary moral function, not as the whole of the school.

Facts & figures

Moral Education

Durkheim's lectures on discipline, group attachment, and autonomy in the school.

Organic solidarity

Differentiated society that still needs a common moral core plus specialist ethics.

Bourdieu

Reproduction: the school converts inherited culture into apparently neutral merit.

Althusser

Education as a key ideological state apparatus.