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Q4(a)

**Explain the concept of social mobility. Describe with suitable illustrations how education and social mobility are related to each other**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Stratification and Mobility: Concepts

Stratification and Mobility: Concepts - equality, inequality, hierarchy, exclusion, poverty and deprivation; Theories of social stratification - Structural functionalist, Marxist, Weberian; Dimensions - Class, status groups, gender, ethnicity and race; Social mobility - open and closed systems, types, sources and causes.

**Core demand of the question**

- Discuss the relationship between social mobility and education
- Keep the discussion within a 20-mark length

**Revision summary**

Education is the modern channel of mobility and a filter of class and status.

Contest and sponsored routes, including **Mandal**, coexist.

**Bourdieu's cultural capital** and **Weber's** credentials explain reproduction.

**Census**, NFHS, coaching, and gig certificates are the Indian files.

Persons can rise while the class structure holds.

**Introduction**

Social mobility is movement across class, status, or power. Education is the main modern claim to open that movement. It is also a machine that reproduces advantage through credentials, language, and coaching. The relation is therefore double: channel and filter.

**Body****Education as an opening**

- Pitirim Sorokin treated school as a testing and selecting agency in more open systems.
- Ralph **Turner's** contest mobility pictures a race of examined talent. The Indian examination belt lives on that promise.
- Reservations after **Mandal** used the state and the classroom as a sponsored route for OBC mobility, not a pure market race.

**Education as reproduction**

- Pierre **Bourdieu's cultural capital**, habitus, and titled degrees explain why the same school does not equalise class.
- Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore treated unequal schooling as functional sorting. Melvin Tumin answered that blocked access wastes talent and calls inequality functional by tautology.
- **Max Weber's status groups use credentials as closure:** the degree is a title of honour as well as a skill.

## Indian files

- English-medium private coaching and unpaid care time split the "open" exam by class and gender.
- NFHS and **Census** literacy show female and rural lags that cap intergenerational occupational shift.
- Gig certificates and short skill courses look like mobility and often recycle informal work.

## Group versus person

- M. N. Srinivas's Sanskritisation is group mobility of style, sometimes using education as a badge.
- **Marx's warning remains:** persons may rise while class places stay. A few engineers do not abolish the informal majority.

## Discussion

- Mobility through education is real where public quality and scholarships cut the ticket price of **cultural capital**.
- It is ideological where the school is blamed for a labour market that cannot absorb the certified.

## Flow diagram

Education -> Contest scholarships reservation  
Education -> Cultural capital coaching status titles  
Contest scholarships reservation -> Social mobility  
Cultural capital coaching status titles -> Social mobility  
Social mobility -> Structure may still hold

## Conclusion

Education is both a ladder and a gate. Sorokin, **Turner**, **Bourdieu**, **Weber**, and Tumin name the mechanisms. **Mandal**, coaching, **Census** literacy, and gendered care show India's mix. Measure who moves, and whether the structure of places moves with them.

## Facts & figures

### Bourdieu

Cultural capital: language, taste, and diplomas that schools reward unequally.

### Turner

Contest versus sponsored mobility: open race versus elite co-optation through education.

### Mandal

OBC reservation as a state-sponsored educational and occupational channel.

### Cultural capital

Not only money: the inherited ease with elite language and exam codes.

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