

CLIMBING THE SOCIAL LADDER: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract: *The transition of a person or group from one social class or economic level to a higher-ranking one is referred to as social mobility. This can happen on an individual or collective level. When discussing the process of increasing social mobility, it is usual practise to highlight education as a crucial component of this process. This is owing to the fact that education has the potential to provide people with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete for jobs that pay better and improve their socio-economic standing. The ability to rise in one's social class is investigated in this study article as it relates to one's educational achievement and how it can affect that ability. It opens with a review of the past research that has been done on the subject and includes studies that have studied the function that education plays in aiding social mobility as a means of moving up in the social hierarchy. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the potential roadblocks to social mobility that may be encountered by disadvantaged populations. This study emphasizes the fact that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to experience upward social mobility and also reflects the fact that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to experience economic mobility. The purpose of this study is to highlight the fact that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to experience upward social mobility and economic mobility. The implications that these findings have for the decision-makers in the educational policymaking process will be discussed in the concluding section of the study. It suggests that efforts to promote social mobility should focus on increasing access to high-quality education, particularly for disadvantaged groups, and that policies aimed at reducing barriers to higher education may be particularly effective in facilitating upward mobility.*

Keywords: *education, social mobility, upward mobility, socio-economic status, policies*

Education is often viewed as a crucial aspect in fostering social mobility, as it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and credentials required to get desirable occupations and enhance their economic standing. Unfortunately, not all people and groups have equal access to education, which might hinder social mobility. In this research paper, we will investigate the relationship between social mobility and education, considering how education can serve as a catalyst for upward mobility and investigating some of the obstacles and discrepancies that can inhibit social mobility.

Social Mobility

Social mobility is the movement of individuals or groups between or among diverse social positions, such as social classes, economic levels, or jobs. This movement may be upward or downward, with people or groups ascending or descending in the social hierarchy, accordingly. Social mobility is a crucial aspect of a society because it allows individuals and groups to improve their conditions and opportunities and because it can lead to greater social and economic equality. However, the extent and ease of mobility can vary greatly depending on a variety of factors, such

as the economic structure, the availability of education and work opportunities, and the presence of discrimination and other obstacles to mobility. Pitirim Sorokin, the sociologist who first proposed the concept of social mobility, defines it as "any movement of an individual or social object of value from one social position to another"(Sorokin, 1927).

Oftentimes, improved opportunities and improvements in a person's or group's social and economic situations are related with upward social mobility. This can apply to both individuals and groups. A person who is born into a lower socioeconomic class, for example, may be able to climb the socioeconomic ladder through education, hard work, and perseverance, ultimately gaining a larger wage and social standing for themselves as a result of their efforts. This type of mobility is generally considered to be a positive aspect of a society because it enables individuals to improve their circumstances and opportunities and can lead to greater social and economic equality. In addition, it allows individuals to improve their circumstances and opportunities.

On the other hand, downward social mobility is typically connected with a loss of opportunities and a worsening of a person's or group's social and economic situations. Contrary to this, upward social mobility is often associated with the opposite of these outcomes. If a person loses their work or experiences a significant financial setback, they may be compelled to accept a position with a lesser salary, which will lead to a decline in both their income and their social status. This form of migration can have a detrimental impact on individuals as well as organizations, and it can exacerbate existing social and economic imbalances.

Education

Education is the process of promoting learning, which is the development of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, beliefs, and habits. Methods of education include conversation, instruction, training, and directed inquiry. Learners can educate themselves in addition to receiving instruction from instructors. Any encounter that has a formative effect on the way a person thinks, feels, or acts might be called educational. The objective of education is to cultivate individuals who can make informed decisions and contribute to their communities. This may involve teaching folks about cultural and social norms and equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the workforce. Aristotle defines education as "the process of preparing a person to achieve his goals by fully using all of his abilities as a member of society" (Gary McCulloch, 2008).

Education is generally viewed as a fundamental human right, as it is a crucial component of any prosperous community. It is an investment in the future, as educated individuals are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and be productive members of society. In civilizations like ours, where traditional systems of stratification, such as the caste system, impede large-scale social mobility, education can be extremely successful. Education is one of the most significant contributors to the level to which social mobility exists in a society, but there are many others. Education is a process that combines human growth and development with the transmission of cultural heritage. Education is a process of ethical self-formation and self-determination, and should be addressed accordingly (Stella Van Petten Henderson, 1967). As a result of their inability to obtain an education, there is abundant evidence that those who are

unable to rise in their social position experience significant disadvantages.

Education enables individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for better employment, which can lead to more income and advancement opportunities. Moreover, education boosts an individual's social capital. This suggests that persons with a higher education level are more likely to be socially accepted and respected. This can result in enhanced career possibilities and other societal advantages. Education can also provide individuals with the tools and resources they need to start their own businesses, resulting in increased social mobility. This is especially true in the current economic context, when individuals can use their skills and knowledge to start their own businesses and generate income. This can elevate the economic status of individuals and their families, allowing them to climb the social ladder.

Review of Literature

The relationship between social mobility and education has been the subject of much research and debate. Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups between different social classes, while education refers to the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits through formal and informal learning experiences. One of the main arguments for the link between social mobility and education is that education can provide individuals with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities necessary to succeed in a range of occupations and social contexts. This is often referred to as the "education ladder," as education can act as a stepping stone for individuals to climb up the social hierarchy.

Studies have consistently shown that higher levels of education are associated with increased social mobility, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, one study found that individuals with higher levels of education were more likely to move up the social ladder compared to those with lower levels of education. Another study found that education can act as a "shield" against downward social mobility, protecting individuals from falling into lower social classes due to economic or other challenges. However, the relationship between social mobility and education is not always straightforward. Some research has found that the impact of education on social mobility may vary depending on a range of factors, including the type of education received, the occupational field in which an individual works, and the cultural context in which they live.

Studies have also found that the relationship between education and social mobility is stronger in countries with more fluid class structures, where there is more mobility between different social classes. In contrast, other researches has suggested that the relationship between education and social mobility may be weaker in countries with more rigid class structures, where it is more difficult for individuals to move up the social ladder regardless of their education level. Additionally, the relationship between education and social mobility may be influenced by factors such as gender, race, and ethnicity as researches have reflected the fact that women and minority groups may face more barriers to social mobility, even with higher levels of education.

After the post-independence period, studies on social mobility in particular came to the fore. These findings motivated both Indian and foreign scholars to analyse social mobility in the social

structure of Indian society. Such tests were overseen by Cohen, Bailey, Beteille, Hardgrave, and others. Existing social mobility literatures may or may not deal with mobility in a single variable, but they may deal with mobility in numerous variables. Cohn, Bailey, and Andre Beteille did research on social mobility in general. Numerous sociologists, including Andre Beteille, Anil Bhatt, Lynch, Sachchidanad, Nirupma Prakash, M.N Srinivas, A.T. Uplankar, G.D. Berreman, B.J Dev, and Lahiri, undertook studies examining diverse movement patterns (Suman, 2002).

Other factors, such as educational achievement, the expansion of the industrial sector, the development of urban centres, and the process of Sanskritization, have all played a key role in the rise of social mobility (Alexander, 1968; Sharma, 1996). India's social mobility has increased as a result of population growth, urbanisation, and availability to secular education, according to a thorough review of population trends in India and Pakistan. Social mobility has been significantly impacted by recent major economic advancements and the democratic form of government, in which no clear entitlements have been allocated to only one caste or creed (Davis, 1951).

A study of Aligarh's Muslim community reveals that the community has consistently adhered to the boundaries established by other faiths. A Muslim places greater emphasis on these identities than does daily Islamic tradition. The study explains the relationship between Muslims' socioeconomic status and their fragmented perceptions of identity and social structure and labour. Due to factors such as a lack of education and financial stability, the majority of Muslims are employed in low-paying positions, and only a small fraction are able to establish their own businesses. There are no principles within Islam that hinder economic growth (Mann, 1992).

Overall, the literature on 'social mobility and education' suggests that education is an important factor in determining social mobility, but the relationship is complex and may be influenced by a range of factors. Further research is needed to better understand the ways in which education impacts social mobility and how these effects may vary across different contexts.

Educating Yourself to the Top: Social Mobility Strategies

It has always been believed that education is the key to social mobility. It has served as a platform to elevate the economic and social standing of individuals and societies. Social mobility is the movement of individuals or organizations across a society's many social strata. It measures the ease with which individuals can ascend or descend the social hierarchy. Education is the major mechanism by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and competences required to get access to higher-paying employment, greater prospects, and a higher social standing. It allows individuals to climb the social ladder and obtain access to greater employment prospects and higher standards of living.

India instituted a policy of ethnic and religious preference called as reservation. This was an attempt to offer disadvantaged individuals with a chance to ascend the social hierarchy. It was required that a certain percentage of jobs and classrooms in public schools be reserved for members of scheduled castes and tribes. These people have been exposed to social and political prejudice for decades. There are reserved seats for women and members of underrepresented

groups.

There is no substantial difference between the abilities of children from high-income families and those from low-income households. However, the performance gap continues to increase as families with higher incomes are able to invest more and more in their children's education. This is one element contributing to the widening income gap. Education is frequently considered as a means of escaping poverty since it helps children from low-income families to make social and economic gains as they advance in their education. If made available to all individuals on an equal basis, education has the potential to be a tremendous force for democratisation. It has the capacity to eliminate caste and class distinctions.

Education is one of the most effective strategies for encouraging upward social mobility. Due to its multidirectional influence, it can facilitate social mobility in a number of directions. The following are a few of the numerous ways education plays an important role.

- a. It is mandatory for all individuals since it is essential for the evolution of the human race. Education enables a person to comprehend themselves, their environment, and their underlying talents and potentials. Education enhances one's intelligence, broadens one's perspective, contributes to one's all-around and balanced development, and most importantly, it improves a nation's social, economic, and political institutions. It is required for every individual since it is essential for the evolution of the human race. Education enables a person to comprehend themselves, their environment, and their underlying talents and potentials. Education enhances one's intelligence, broadens one's perspective, contributes to one's all-around and balanced development, and most importantly, it improves a nation's social, economic, and political institutions.
- b. Formal and non-formal education contribute significantly to the larger goal of promoting social mobility. Social mobility is both directly and causally related to a person's level of formal education. It is generally agreed that formal education is either the primary cause or one of the primary causes of social mobility.
- c. Education has a direct effect on occupational mobility, which contributes to a person's economic advancement. Conversely, education is also a vital role in the establishment of new social structures. Those members of society who have attained higher levels of education and professional success are afforded respect. One of the fundamental aims of education is to instil a sense of self-improvement and ambition in a person, so motivating that person to exert considerable effort in order to climb the social ladder.
- d. Having a higher level of education makes it easier to earn more money; hence, education is a significant tool for advancing in social standing. Often, the transfer from one career to another is seen as the most reliable sign of social mobility. This is due to the correlation between educational status and vocational standing. The primary factors that determine a person's social standing are their income and way of living.
- e. With the aid of education, pupils from lower social strata can climb the social ladder and attain a higher social standing in society. Education can assist a person better prepare for employment, which is an essential part of "social uplift." The surge in the number of women getting a higher degree has had a profound effect on how society perceives women. It has aided in the advancement of their social status, rank, and attainment of high

social reputation, indicating that women have attained social mobility (Nazimuddin, 2014).

The type of instruction utilized in the educational system has the ability to significantly contribute to the social mobility of the population. When a local language is employed as the medium of instruction in educational institutions such as schools and colleges, one of the side effects is that it makes it more difficult for students and teachers to move about geographically, which is linked to both vertical and horizontal social mobility.

Obtaining a higher social status and position in society is one of the objectives that can be achieved through education. Because of this, each student wants to gain a higher level of education in order to get a higher social rank. One cannot increase his or her social standing or climb the social ladder. The subjects students learn in school, the amount of money they make, and the colleges and universities they attend have a considerable impact on their potential to advance in society. Not only does the formal system of education serve as a significant means of social mobility, but so does the informal system of education. With the aid of this system, individuals who did not have access to proper educational opportunities at the appropriate time in their life are able to educate themselves (Raftery, 1999).

Through a variety of pathways, including as political influence, marriage, familial relationships, and education, it is possible to improve one's social position. Among these channels, education is by far the most popular because it is easily available to an increasing number of people due to the global expansion of educational facilities. Due to the following factors, education is viewed as the means to upward mobility:

People aspire to achieve a high level of educational success, and when they do so, their integrity is rarely called into question.

- There is a substantial relationship between education, income, and occupation. The better the education level, the more prestigious the position, which in turn results in a higher annual wage. In this sense, schools play a vital role in classifying kids into the right levels for their futures, as the acquisition of a higher social status is significantly connected with formal education. This is accomplished by a system of exams, supervision, and promotions. Therefore, education can assist elite mobility, also known as the migration of people into the top positions of society. Due to this, a degree from an approved educational institution is now necessary for admittance into numerous well-established professions, such as those of doctors, lawyers, accountants, teachers, engineers, etc.

Unlocking Opportunities: Education and Social Progress

Education gives people the tools they need to adapt to a dynamic and ever-changing world, including the ability to think critically and solve problems creatively. Gaining these certifications and skills through education might pave the way for more promising career opportunities. By increasing opportunities for education and lowering barriers to success, society can level the playing field and reduce inequality.

- To begin, formal schooling is a tried and true method of perpetuating social stratification from one generation to the next. A higher education level is a strong predictor of continued social mobility, therefore those who are born into higher social classes have a better chance of

maintaining their position. Second, getting an education is crucial to climbing the social ladder. Access to higher education correlates positively with a person's ability to advance in society. However, this is only possible if all people have access to a quality education, which provides underprivileged groups with a chance to improve their circumstances. They can either ascend up the social ladder or reduce the likelihood of falling further down by furthering their education (Whitfield, 1988).

There are symbolic and practical benefits to a good education. In addition to equipping people with the knowledge and skills they need to actively contribute to society, education also serves as a powerful emblem of a culture's shared values and ideals. This can take the form of imparting knowledge about cultural and social mores, or it can be a venue for the individual's creative expression and the cultivation of his or her particular set of skills. Education is essential for growth in both one's personal life and one's career. It not only helps people acquire the skills they need to advance in their careers, but it also opens doors to new economic and social opportunities. In particular, one's ability to think critically and solve problems, as well as one's technical proficiency in a given sector, can both benefit from schooling. This can improve their career prospects, raise their income, and propel them forward in their lives.

So, what, exactly, do we mean when we talk about the usefulness of something? Education is said to be useful when it leads to a career in teaching, as in the case of someone who goes to university to acquire a degree in the subject and subsequently works in the field. One who works in the field of nursing or who is a student at a nursing school. In this context, the importance of schooling is plain to see. When anything has symbolic significance, what does that entail? It is possible for a person to earn a degree in engineering but then choose not to enter the workforce. He instead utilises it as a symbol of his superiority over others. A similar situation is a father who did not finish high school but who works hard and earns enough money to send his daughter to a prestigious private university. When his daughter graduates from college and finds gainful employment, he will know that investing in her education was worthwhile.

Suggestions and Policy Recommendations

Education is usually seen as a significant factor in promoting social mobility, as it equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for professional success and goal attainment. There are, however, additional challenges to social mobility, such as discrimination, unequal access to resources and opportunity, and systematic barriers to education and employment. To overcome these challenges and promote social mobility, it is necessary to develop policies and programmes that target the root causes of social disparity and provide individuals with opportunities for success. These recommendations provide a holistic approach to resolving this complex and diversified problem. The principles are centred on improving educational access, increasing equity and inclusion, and providing aid and resources to underprivileged populations. By implementing these policies, we may aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society in which everyone has the opportunity to succeed and realise their full potential.

- One major idea is to boost disadvantaged populations' access to high-quality education. This could include increasing funding for low-income schools, enacting policies to eliminate educational inequality (such as school vouchers or merit-based scholarships),

and offering greater assistance to disadvantaged kids (such as tutoring or mentorship programmes). Such programmes can assist to level the playing field for underprivileged pupils, giving them a better chance of success in school and afterwards.

- Another suggestion would be to invest in early childhood education. According to research, investing in high-quality early childhood education can have long-term positive benefits on social mobility by providing underprivileged children with a solid foundation for success in school and beyond. To ensure that all children have access to these essential opportunities, policymakers could explore extending access to pre-kindergarten programmes and increasing financing for early childhood education.
- The high expense of higher education, particularly for poor students, can be a significant impediment to social mobility. Policymakers should consider increasing funding for financial aid programmes or introducing income-based repayment arrangements for student loans to minimise the cost of higher education. This could assist to make higher education more accessible and cheap for underprivileged persons who might not be able to afford it otherwise.
- In addition to standard four-year college degrees, vocational and technical education programmes can be an excellent option for individuals seeking to gain the skills and knowledge required to earn well-paying positions in high-demand industries. Policymakers should think about increasing funding for vocational and technical education programmes and making them more accessible to students. This could serve to open up more options for achievement for disadvantaged persons who may lack the means or opportunities to obtain a regular four-year degree.
- Finally, promoting work-life balance policies can be an effective strategy to encourage social mobility. Many disadvantaged people confront social mobility difficulties because of their commitments outside of employment, such as caring for children or elderly family members. Policies such as paid family leave and flexible work schedules can assist individuals in better managing their duties and pursuing further education or job growth. Policymakers may contribute to establish a more inclusive and fair society in which all individuals have the opportunity to achieve by supporting policies that promote work-life balance.

Conclusion

For a long time, people have looked to education as a way to increase their chances of moving up in the social strata, since it equips them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a dynamic and ever-evolving world. Access to education is generally viewed as the key to achieving social mobility in today's industrialized society.

In order to climb the social ladder, education serves a dual purpose. Education, on one side, equips people with the information and abilities they need to succeed in the workforce and find jobs they enjoy doing that pay well. In today's market, when many professions call for specific training and knowledge, this is more crucial than ever. Education helps people better their economic and social position by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve professional success in their chosen industries.

But education can also aid in social mobility by equipping individuals with the analytical and problem-solving abilities necessary to succeed in today's interconnected social and economic

systems. The ability to think critically and adjust to new circumstances is becoming more and more vital in today's quickly evolving environment. The ability to critically assess data and information is a key skill that may be learned in school, allowing students to better respond to challenges and seize opportunities.

Having access to high-quality, affordable educational opportunities is a basic human right, and governments and other institutions should work to protect and expand those rights for all people. This may entail allocating funds to help students from low-income families, investing in the education and development of educators, and guaranteeing that all schools have access to the materials they need to provide a top-notch education. These investments from governments and organizations can help level the playing field so that everyone has a shot at success.

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