UNIT 2 EDUCATION, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Structure
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Objectives
2.3 Social Structure
   2.3.1 Meaning and Definition of Social Structure
   2.3.2 Role and Function of Education in Social Structure
2.4 Social Stratification
   2.4.1 Concept
   2.4.2 Theories of Social Stratification
   2.4.3 Types of Social Stratification
   2.4.5 Education and Social Stratification
2.5 Social Mobility
   2.5.1 Concept
   2.5.2 Theories of Social Mobility
   2.5.3 Forms of Social Mobility
   2.5.4 Factors Affecting Social Mobility
   2.5.5 Education and Social Mobility
2.6 Let's Sum Up
2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
2.8 References and Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social stratification is a relatively rigid concept in which your position in society tends to be determined by that of your ancestors. Every individual learns about values, ambitions, drive, and determination to succeed, and sets goals from what he/she has learnt from family members who make every effort to maintain their status and pass it on to their children. You may have noticed that in every society, everybody wants to rise, of course, but only those with exceptional drive are able to, usually through education and therefore productivity. Those lacking wealth are unable to take advantage of opportunities. Those with good education and strong motivation can rise but with difficulty if they start with little or no wealth. Those with good education, strong motivation, and some wealth can rise more easily and more quickly. If you start from a disadvantaged position, you will find it more difficult to rise, and the further you must rise to get anywhere. You may have noticed also that better employment positions are often determined by social position as well as by qualifications. In this unit, we will explain these aspects by looking into concepts such as social structure, social stratification, and social mobility. We will describe the sociological perspectives to provide the theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon of social stratification. The Unit would attempt to examine the role of education in the social structure, social stratification, and social mobility.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:
- define the concepts like social structure, social stratification, and social mobility;
2.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The concept of social structure is central in the sociological literature. It is used to designate an ordered arrangement of parts linked together to a whole. But what are these parts that are arranged in an order? In sociology, a part may mean a social group comprising a set of social relationships. For instance, a family is nothing but a set of social relationships between and among the individuals connected through either descent or blood or marriage. In this sense, a family may be treated as a part in the social structure. Similarly, one can think of social groups such as religious groups, political parties, business organizations, hospitals, schools, trade unions, etc., as being various parts of the whole i.e. the society.

2.3.1 Meaning and Definition of Social Structure

If we think of society as a multiplicity of social groups such as family, religious groups, political parties, or occupational groups then each of these groups exhibit organized, fairly stable or commonly accepted ways of behaviour. Each of these groups are distinguished by the roles their members play, the goals they set out for themselves, and the status attached to each of the roles within the group. In other words, a part may also be understood as a social institution and a social system comprises a number of social institutions.

Further, since a social system is composed of the interrelated acts of people, its structure must be sought in some degree of regularity or recurrence in these acts. Structure also has certain roles and any occupant of a role is expected to fulfill certain pattern of obligations and behaviour. In a nutshell, the structure of a social system includes:

- groups and sub-groups of various types, interconnected by rational norms,
- roles of various types, within the larger systems and within the sub-groups. Each role system is also connected with others, through the rational norms.
- regulative norms governing sub-groups and roles,
- cultural values

Therefore, a social structure can be defined as a network of social institutions and social relationships. It consists of relatively stable and orderly inter-relationships among various parts.

2.3.2 Role and Function of Education in the Social Structure

Education is the process of preparing people to fit into the complex social structure through the process of socialization. It helps the child to train for the future roles of an adult life. All social institutions define the pattern of relationships and behaviour expected of the persons who belong to them. The principal social institutions are concerned with regulation of economic, political, familial, educational, and religious aspects of human life. Thus the children have to learn to be fathers or mothers, teachers or civil servants, shopkeepers or priests. They have to learn to be members of more than one institutional group also. Therefore, the child prepares himself or
herself to take multiple roles through the process of socialization, in general, and education, in particular. Education in this context may be the informal education received in the family or the peer groups or the formal education received at school.

The child gets to understand the role he/she has to play in the wider society through the formal education received in the schools. It is here a child learns to confirm to the rules and regulations of human behaviour in groups and institutions. They have to learn to be impartial and adopt a set of dos and don’ts. They also have to be prepared to change the social mores when they see that they can be improved. Thus the need of the society to bring up and educate its children leads to the institution of family and to a whole set of educational institutions, which are interrelated with the rest of the social structure.

Seen in this context, it can be understood that it is through the functions of people in their institutional relations that the patterns of culture in a society are maintained. Looked at from the point of view of the structure, a social system may seem to exist in a static framework. From the point of view of function, the society springs into the dynamic and changing life that we all experience. The structure of the institutions can be described in terms of status positions, rights, rules, duties, and chains of authority; but the culture of institutions results from the manifest activities of their living participants, in terms of their attitudes, feelings, and sentiments, social and cultural habits, recreations, ceremonies, and rituals. The function of education lies both in the maintenance and renewal of the social structure, and in the transmission and development of culture. It depends on the differences in the socio-cultural backgrounds and status of individuals in the modern industrial societies. It also functions as a main stratifying agent in the context of the industrial societies. The next part examines in detail the definition of social stratification and various theoretical explanations to explain the phenomena.

### 2.4 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangement of groups of people in terms of criteria like economic wealth, property, political power, prestige and social honour. Social stratification existed as far back as human civilisation itself.

#### 2.4.1 Concept

When human beings moved from the hunting and gathering societies to the sedentary agricultural societies, a variety of occupations developed that were essential to the functioning of the society. Inevitably, these occupations were ranked hierarchically, usually based on the amount of preparation and training required or the importance of that occupation to a particular society. This kind of unequal arrangement of groups of people existed for centuries and it was accepted as a part of the society. It is felt that social stratification is necessary to maintain social order. The order is maintained by the interdependence of individuals and groups on each other. According to Pitirim Sorokin, an eminent sociologist, an unstratified society with real equality of its members is a myth which has never been realised in the history of mankind.

#### 2.4.2 Theories of Social Stratification

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, four broad sociological theories have been used to explain and interpret the phenomenon of social stratification. They are:

i) Natural Superiority Theory

ii) Functionalist Theory

iii) Marxian Class Conflict Theory, and

iv) Weberian Multiple Hierarchies Theory.
Natural superiority theory, also referred to as social Darwinism, was a popular and widely accepted theory of social stratification in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The main advocate of social Darwinism was Herbert Spencer, an English Sociologist, who saw social organization as an environment. It is believed that certain individuals and groups had the requisite skills or attributes to compete and to rise in that environment. Others, not so skilled or less competitive, would fail. The social Darwinists believed that their theory was part of the law of nature.

Some other sociologists believed that the social inequality arising out of stratification is biologically based. Such beliefs are often heard in the case of racial stratification where, for example, whites claim biological superiority over the blacks. Even in terms of gender stratification, the underlying principle is that the men are biologically superior to women. However, the question of relationship between the biologically based inequality and socially created inequality is difficult to answer. Rousseau refers to biologically based inequality as natural or physical, because it is established by the nature, particularly with respect to the age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind. In comparison, socially created inequality consists of different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others, such as that of being richer, more honored, or more powerful. However, biologically based inequalities between men are treated as small and relatively unimportant whereas socially created inequalities provide the major basis for systems of social stratification.

Functionalist Theory of Social Stratification

Functionalist theory is a theory that is most concerned with how societies maintain order. Generally, the functionalist theorists have tended to stress stability, consensus, and integration in society.

Functionalisit assume that the society is similar to that of a human body, comprising several parts which form an integrated whole. Like the human body, the society's institutions must function properly to maintain stability of the entire social system. Further, certain functional prerequisites must be met if the society is to function effectively and in order. Social stratification therefore becomes a tool to see how far it meets these functional prerequisites.

Talcott Parsons, the leading proponent of functionalist model, differentiated societies as falling on a continuum between ascribed-status-based societies and achievement-based societies. Societies in which individuals were value based on their family position, sex, race, or other traits of birth are viewed as the traditional end of the continuum. On the other end is the modern society, in which a system of rewards is used to aid in fulfilling a complex division of labour. According to Parsons, more difficult positions that demanded considerable responsibility required a system of rewards to motivate individuals to take them. In his view, stratification—which is, by definition, social inequality—was both necessary and agreeable. Parsons believed that stratification was necessary to provide rewards for people who would take on the additional responsibility tied to difficult positions, and in his view, stratification was desirable because it allowed the social system to function smoothly.

Parsons's ideas on social stratification were further developed by two American sociologists, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore in their essay "Some Principles of Stratification", published in American Sociological Review in 1945. They shared the common notions with Parsons in so far as stating that the social stratification is universal, functional, and integral to fulfilling the division of labour in society. According to Davis and Moore, no society is classless or unstratified.
Davis and Moore argued that it was necessary and functional for the society to have a varied set of rewards in relation to the varied levels of sacrifices required by some jobs. In other words, there are some jobs that require individuals to possess special talents or to develop special skills. These jobs may also require that the individual filling the position works with utmost care. Therefore, Davis and Moore find it logical that societies developed a system of rewards whereby those jobs requiring the greatest preparation and responsibility are rewarded more highly than are other positions. The social order has developed a differentiated system of rewards, which has led to social stratification.

Thus, Davis and Moore argue that one of society's most important functional prerequisites is effective role allocation and performance. This means that firstly, all roles must be filled; secondly, they must be filled by persons best able to perform them; thirdly the necessary training for them to be undertaken; and finally the roles must be performed conscientiously. If the duties associated with various positions would be equally present to everyone and all would depend on the same talent and ability, then it would make no difference as to who got into which position. However, it does make a great deal of difference mainly because some positions are inherently more agreeable than others. Davis and Moore suggest that the importance of a position in a society can be measured in two ways, i.e. the degree to which the position is functionally unique, there being no other position that can perform the work satisfactorily (for e.g. a doctor's role is more important than that of a nurse) and then by the degree to which other positions are dependent on the one in question.

In sum, both Parsons and Davis and Moore present a view of structured inequality as being necessary to maintain social order and therefore society's survival, and as being based on general agreement among the members of society.

**Marxian Theory of Social Stratification**

The Marxist perspectives generally regard modern society as being divided primarily into two classes - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat - on the basis of property ownership or non-ownership of property. Marx understood classes to be economically determined by the difference between owners of the means of production and non-owning direct producers. Class differences therefore are determined by the mode of production.

Marx and Frederich Engels have divided history into five distinct epochs of production: primitive communism, Asiatic, ancient Greece and Rome, feudal society, and capitalism of these, only the ancient, the feudal and the capitalist phases received special treatment by both Marx and Engels. Ancient society was based on slavery, feudal society was based on serfdom, and capitalism on wage labour.

Each of these societies was divided into two major classes: the oppressors and the oppressed or the exploiters and the exploited. In every case the exploiters are made up of those who own the means of production but do not produce. The exploited are those who do not own the means of production but are the direct producers of social goods and services. Because the exploited do not own the means of production, they are forced, in order to live, to work for those who own and control the productive conditions of life. The exploiters live by means of the surplus produced by the exploited. As a result, the social mode of production also reproduces the social relations of production. Thus the relationship between the exploiters and the exploited is constantly renewed and conserved. The Marxists therefore in contrast to the functionalists regard stratification as a divisive rather than an integrative structure and the focus was on social strata rather than social inequality in general.
Marx also spoke of the hostilities between the two classes. Three terms-class consciousness, class solidarity and class conflict - are important in understanding the dynamics of class conflict in the Marxist approach to the study of stratification. Class consciousness refers to the recognition by a class, such as workers, of the role its members play in the productive process and their relation to the owning class. Class solidarity refers to the extent to which workers act together to achieve political and economic aims. Finally, class conflict has two aspects: (1) the unconscious struggle between the workers and the capitalists for shares in the productive output at a time when class consciousness is not developed and (2) the conscious, deliberate and collective struggle between the two classes when the workers become aware of their historic role. According to Marx, social change occurs as a sequel to class struggle. Marx said that the revolution of the proletariat will bring an end to the class conflict i.e. the conflicting interests between the ruling class (bourgeoisie) and the subject class (proletariat).

The Weberian Theory of Social Stratification

The work of the German sociologist Max Weber represents one of the important developments in the stratification theory. According to Weber, stratification is based on the three types of social formation, namely class, status and power or party. Property differences generate classes, power differences generate political parties and prestige differences generate status groupings or strata.

Like Marx, Weber sees class in economic terms, classes as a group of individuals who share the same position in the market economy. Weber distinguishes four class groups in the capitalist society:

a) Propertied upper class
b) Property-less white collar workers
c) Petty bourgeoisie
d) Manual working class.

In his analysis of class, Weber differs from Marx on some important grounds. For instance, Weber says that the factors other than ownership or non-ownership of property are significant in the class formation and he rejects the Marxist view of the inevitability of the proletariat revolution. Weber also disagrees with the Marxist view that political power is derived from the economic power. He says that groups form because their members share a similar status situation. While 'class' refers to the unequal distribution of economic rewards, 'status' refers to the unequal distribution of social honour. Weber also looks at “parties” or groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interests of their membership.

The Principle of Meritocracy

Michael Young in his book, “The Rise of Meritocracy”, says that social status would be achieved on the basis of merit in a society where all members have an equal opportunity to realise their talents. Members of the upper strata in a meritocracy deserve their position, their privileges are based on merit. Socially speaking, those who occupy the top positions are undoubtedly superior to the social inferiors who are really the inferiors. Young argues that this may result in an upper stratum free from self-doubt and the restraining influence of humility. Its members may rule society with arrogance and haughty self-assurance. They may despise the lower strata whose members may well find such behaviour offensive. This may result in conflict between the ruling minority and the rest of the society. However, it may be assumed that Michael Young’s picture dream of a fair and just society may produce a far from perfect society.
2.4.3 Types of Social Stratification

This section will examine three major systems of social stratification – slavery, castes, and the social classes. These systems can be seen as ideal types for analytical purposes. It may be pointed out that any social stratification system may include elements of more than one type.

Slavery

The most extreme of legalized social inequality for individuals or groups is slavery. The distinguishing feature of this oppressive system of stratification is that enslaved individuals are owned by other people. These human beings are treated as property, just as if they are equivalent to household pets or appliances.

Slavery has been practised in different forms. In ancient Greece, the main source of slaves consisted of captives of war and piracy. Though the slave status could be inherited, it was not permanent. A person’s status might be changed depending on the outcome of the military conflict between kingdoms. On the other hand, in United States and Latin America, racial and legal barriers were established to prevent the freeing of slaves. In other words, in whatever form it existed, it had required extensive use of coercion in order to maintain the privileges of slave owners.

Caste

Caste is the cornerstone of social stratification in India. It is a hereditary system of rank, usually religiously recognised, that tend to be fixed and immobile. In other words, caste is a closed system, which denies social mobility. Connubiality and commensality are the cardinal principles of inter-caste relations based on the ascription of caste status and rank by birth. According to Bailey (1957), caste is a closed organic system of stratification. However, another sociologist, Lewis (1958) observes that caste is an integrating and cohesive factor in the village community as it encompasses kinship ties and political and economic relationships.

According to Luis Dumont, a French sociologist, Caste stands for inequality in both theory and practice, but this inequality is not a binary opposite of equality. In his well known study “Homo Hierarchicus”, he assigns an important place to hierarchy which forms an important aspect of the structuralist paradigm. Ideology refers to the ideas and norms derived form the Hindu civilization of which the caste system is an important manifestation. “Hierarchy” is the dominant principle of this normative structure which is contained in the dialectical relationship between the principles of purity and pollution in the ritual and the behavioral domains of the system. The ideology of the caste system in Dumont’s model of stratification helped in the comparative analysis of the social structure.

Again the role of ideology in the studies of social stratification in India can also be reflected in Yogendra Singh’s book “Social Stratification and Change in India”. Singh explains by using the concept of ‘Counter – Brahmanical ideology’ of the caste system in India. The social consciousness of the educated classes among the deprived communities, tribes and scheduled castes questions the Hindu caste system based on the idea of purity and pollution. Thus, the clash was between two ideologies in the Indian social structure – the Brahmanical model of caste and a casteless society of groups and communities based on occupational specialization.

However, with the process of modernization and social change, the issues involving social stratification in India have now crossed the boundaries of caste and class has also become an important analytical tool to understand the complex issue of social stratification in India. Social stratification in India is taking many new concepts into its fold like professions, elite, categories of weaker sections of society, women,
children, tribes and scheduled castes. These structural entities and the new domains of inequality requires novel orientations and analysis in order to understand the shift found in the sociology of social stratification in India.

Social Class

A class system is a social ranking primarily based on the economic position in which achieved characteristics can influence mobility. Education is an important contributory factor in achieving such a class position.

In contrast to slavery and caste systems, the boundaries between classes are less precisely defined, and there is much greater movement from one stratum or level of society to another. Yet class systems maintain stable stratification hierarchies and patterns of class divisions. Consequently, like other systems of stratification, class systems are marked by unequal distribution of wealth and power.

Income inequality is the main characteristic of a class system. For instance, Daniel Rossides (1997), an American Sociologist, has conceptualized the class system of the United States using a five class model – the upper class, the upper middle class, the lower middle class, the working class and the lower class. The lines separating social classes in this model are not so sharp as the divisions in the caste system.

2.4.5 Education and Social Stratification

Sociologists like Durkheim view the major function of education in any society as the transmission of that society’s norms and values. According to them, education provides a link between the individual and the society and it provides the individual specific skills necessary for the future occupations, which is the most important factor in the modern social stratification system. Parsons (1961) believes that the educational system is an important mechanism for the selection and allocation of the individuals in their future roles in the society. It is also regarded as the ground for proving one’s ability and hence selective agency for different statuses according to their abilities. However, this argument is rejected by people like Bowles and Gintis who argue that the social relationships in the schools replicate the hierarchical division of labour in the work place. There is a close correspondence between the social relationships which govern the personal relationships at the work place and the social relationships in the educational system.

Raymond Boudon (1974) also suggests that the inequality of educational opportunity is primarily a product of social stratification. According to him, even if there were no sub-cultural differences between classes, the very fact that people stand at different positions in the class system will produce inequality of educational opportunity. Thus, the essence of social stratification is social inequality and it manifests itself through many forms such as differential allocation of income, status and privileges, opportunities for various social utilities, etc and the educational achievement is very important in all these aspects. In the open systems of stratification such as class system, the movement up and down the strata is possible and in the closed ascription based stratification systems such caste, where the boundaries between various strata are rigid, the movement is extremely difficult.

Further, there are various correlates of the relationship between education and social stratification in a society. Most important of them is that the education is the primary generator of social mobility in any modern industrial society. This relationship is little complex to understand. For instance, the education is the main component in achieving a status in the social class system, on the one hand, and stratification system is the deciding factor in the differential access to education, on the other hand. Therefore the relationship between education and social stratification is very complex and can only be understood in relation to the concept of social mobility.
2.5 SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social Mobility may be understood as any transition of individual or any object or a value that have been created or modified by human activity from one position to another. So it can be said that the social mobility is an important concept to understand the movement of certain groups or individuals along the ladder or hierarchy.

2.5.1 Concept

The element of time is implicit in the phenomenon of social mobility which is a movement, either upward or downward, between higher and lower classes or, more precisely, movement between one relatively lower position to the subsequent higher one.

Lipset and Bendix define the term ‘social mobility’ as the process by which individuals move from one position to another in the society. Thus social mobility signifies the movement or shifting of individuals or groups in the ranking structure of the society.

2.5.2 Theories of Social Mobility

Various thinkers and theorists in sociology have talked about the notion of social mobility. Some of the notable among them are Marx, Durkheim, Weber, etc. Though they have not directly focussed on the notion of social mobility, they were at times referring to it in their analysis of social change. For instance, Durkheim (1947), in his book ‘Division of Labour’ talks about transition of societies from ‘mechanical solidarity’ to ‘organic solidarity’, which refers to a gradual transformation of a society from simple to complex division of labour.

The functionalist perspective believes in the expansion of formal schooling for efficient economic growth and development of a meritocratic society. But this can only be possible when a society facilitates social mobility. It is only when the society is mobile that the education system becomes a vehicle for progress and development. The specialization in education is the need of the labour force to match to the complexity of jobs in a modern industrial world. Social mobility could only help in developing technical requirements of industrial production and then allocate jobs to the right men or women.

Partly in response to the growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing functionalist account, many analysts have turned to the conflict or the Marxian perspective in search for a more adequate linkage between education and mobility. Marx himself believed that a high rate of social mobility would tend to weaken class solidarity. Classes would become heterogeneous and this would reduce the sharing of similar backgrounds which, in turn, would weaken the class identification and loyalty since it would be difficult for mobile individuals to feel a strong consciousness of kind
with other class members in which they found themselves. Thus intensity of class conflict and consciousness would also be reduced which would be problematic as, then, there would be no change to upside down the system of 'haves' by the 'have nots'. Ralf Dahrendrof, a neo-Marxist, feels that a situation has arrived in the west where as a result of mobility in the form of education the nature of conflict has changed. In an open society, it is replaced by competition to attain the best. In his words,

“instead of advancing their claims as members of homogeneous groups, people are more likely to compete with each other as individuals for a place in the Sun”.

He also argues that ‘although mobility diminishes the coherence of groups as well as the intensity of class conflict, it does not eliminate either’. Bowels and Gintis, however, observe that schooling operates within work i.e. the education system reflecting the organization of production in a capitalist society. To them, it is through schooling that authority can be legitimised which facilitates mobility on one hand and inequality on the other. But, even then, as long as there is mobility, education would help to justify in people’s mind a system of inequality and to reconcile them to their own position within it.

Max Weber (1864-1920), however, brought in the concept of social mobility for the attainment of social status or class. For this one must have opportunities for possessing the life chances which would include the income, perks and pensions together with security or good working conditions. Weber’s consideration of the capitalist market therefore appears to give an explanation that there is a hierarchy of occupational rewards found in these societies and to a great extent one can be a part of the competition on the basis of educational qualifications. Frank Parkin, a Weberian, however, feels that there has been a relatively high rate of upward mobility as a ‘political safety-valve’. It provides opportunities for many able and ambitious members of the working class to improve their conditions. The basic intention was to weaken the working class by making them join this middle class in collective strategies that might benefit the class as a whole. But these conditions were always found within a “social closure which can only be monopolised by a minority and used as a basis of power over the others”.

Besides the classical thinkers, some other sociologists have studied the concept of social mobility. For instance, Lipset and Zetterberg (1966) have underlined the dimension of occupational and consumption rankings of social class and power rankings in addition to providing a methodological note. They have also pointed the causes and consequences of social mobility. Accepting occupation as the most common indicator of social stratification, they viewed the occupational class as one of the major factors which differentiate people’s beliefs, values, norms, customs, and occasionally some of their emotional expressions. In their opinion, the recording of one’s occupational class also needs the recording of occupational setting, the social structure in which the occupation is located. Lipset and Zetterberg have accepted that there is a possibility of having a higher rate (and amount) of mobility in one dimension and lower in others. Therefore, the more qualified and accurate conclusions about mobility and stratification systems are possible only through a multi-dimensional approach in which one has to take all possible dimensions together.

Further, Lipset and Zetterberg have suggested two sets of methodological approaches to study the mobility. In the first set, there is comparison of (a) the present with the past (b) one area or country with another (c) one model with another, expressing equal opportunity. In the second set, there is the conventional operational method of ascertaining by comparing father’s and son’s positions. In this method, Lipset and Zetterberg have suggested an inquiry of father’s earlier occupations along with the sons.
Further, for sociologists of education like Halsey (1979), the idea of mobility is a movement from "somewhere to somewhere else and the somewhere in question may in principle be any social or geographical position". Sociologically, it means some kind of class or status or prestige or socio-economic position. However, mobility enhances social-class membership based on educational qualifications. Thus those who have moved upward had, in the process, exceeded the educational norms of their original group and those who have moved downwards had less educational advantage and therefore lower qualifications.

Finally, a more recent work on the linkage between the education and social mobility is done by Richard Jenkins (1991) who sums up all the views by saying that the field of interconnected interests and topics had evolved into the study of social and economic stratification and mobility. There is a patterned and differential distribution among categories of a society's population of life chances, resources and benefits, on one hand, and cost and penalties, on the other. According to him, the main concern of social stratification is maintaining order. Further, to attain an elite status in the hierarchy, educational mobility is required which would not only improve the labour market in terms of greater opportunities for employment but also by reducing the socio-economic inequalities to some extent in order to maintain order and equilibrium within the society by at large.

2.5.3 Forms of Social Mobility

There are mainly three forms of social mobility, namely vertical mobility, horizontal mobility and spatial mobility.

Vertical Mobility

By vertical social mobility, we refer to the relations involved in the transition of individuals from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of transition, there are two types of vertical mobility – ascending and descending or social sinking and social climbing. The ascending type exists in two principal forms as infiltration of individuals of lower stratum into a higher one, the insertion of such a group into higher stratum, instead of going side by side with existing groups of the stratum. The descending has also two principal forms. The first consist of dropping of individuals from one higher position into lower existing one, without degradation or disintegration of the higher groups to which they belonged. The second is manifested in its degradation of social group as a whole. An example of vertical mobility is that in which the scheduled castes move upward by getting modes of education, new techniques, skills and adopting the ritual and manners of higher status caste groups, changing their caste names, home culture and occupation and maintain the higher position. The theory of “lagging emulation” under the framework of reference groups is employed to understand this type of mobility both in the field of hierarchy and occupation. However, this type of mobility takes place from lower stratum to higher stratum.

Horizontal Mobility

Horizontal mobility refers to the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated at the same level. Horizontal shifting occurs usually without any noticeable change. If we take occupation, shifting from one job or factory or occupation to another of the same kind would be referred to as horizontal mobility. An example of horizontal mobility is the citizenship shifting or shifting of individuals from one state to another. That does not mean the changing of citizenship, but it is called shifting of citizenship.
Spatial Mobility

Spatial mobility refers to inter-generational mobility which is an outcome of migration or shifting of places, for example, it may happen as a result of migration from rural to urban community or social improvement of individuals within the family and hence provide the chances for change in culture. In this context, some of the scholars of change and mobility have discussed the units of mobility in the form of individual financial group and corporate mobility. The study of mobility can be subsumed under above pattern. So we can say that the social mobility is a part of the broader concept of social change. In a transitional society, modern education, industrialization, growth of cities, factories, bureaucracy and change in the occupational patterns are the main variants for the social mobility.

2.5.4 Factors Affecting Social Mobility

There are various factors, which are responsible for the social mobility.

a) The Supply of Vacant Status

The number of statuses in a given stratum is not always or even usually constant. For example, the expansion in the proportion of professional, official, marginal and white-collar positions and decline in the number of unskilled labour positions require a surge of upward mobility. These positions retain their relative social standing at times. Demographic factors also operate to facilitate mobility, when the higher classes do not reproduce themselves and hence create a demographic vacuum (Sorokin, 1959).

b) The Interchange of Rank

Any mobility that occurs in a given social system which is not a consequence of a change in the supply of positions and actors must necessarily result from an interchange. Consequently, if we think of simple model for every move up, there must be corresponding move down. Interchange mobility will be determined in a large part by the extent to which a given society gives the numbers of lower strata which means complete with those who enter social structure in higher level. Thus the lesser the emphasis a culture places on the family background as a criteria for marriage the more will be the class mobility that can occur both up and down through marriage. The occupational success is related to educational achievements which are open to all and hence the greater occupational mobility (Lipset and Zetterberg, 1966).

c) Modern Education

The education has particularly created new incentives and motivation to initiate and adopt the ideals, practices, behavior pattern and style of life of the higher castes which M. N. Srinivas (1965) translates and explains under the process of sanskritization and westernization. Sanskritisation is a process through which the lower castes imitate the traditions and cultural practices of the upper castes and sometimes even the nomenclature to push their case for a higher status in the society. There are many instances of the lower castes that have adopted the practices of higher castes in order to be upwardly mobile which is otherwise not possible in the traditional Hindu society.

The process of westernization in terms of adoption of the western ideals in life, is also a most potential force in social mobility, specially in the urban and industrial centers. The new value orientations, motivation, behaviour patterns, formal relations, individualism, monetised attitude to social status, western technology is popular among the people. This popularity for status upliftment, encourages the migration to places where economic opportunities in terms of urban trade, industrial occupations and jobs in different governments are available.
d) Migration

Migration to urban areas also contributes to the change in the social status of individuals and groups. The traditional occupations slowly disappear and the modern industrial occupations are sought after.

All these factors help in the improvement of the social position of the people. Normally, the higher the income of a particular occupation, the greater is the importance of education. However, though money makes the base of living, education decides the quality and mode of life and living. As a result, lots of changes have come in the living arrangements of the people in the modern societies. The changes also occur in the behaviour and manners of the people, which may be the outcome of social mobility.

2.5.5 Education and Social Mobility

As discussed earlier, education in the present day context is the most important and dynamic force in the life of individual, influencing his social development. It functions more as an agent of social change and mobility in social structure. It leads to economic development by providing ways and means to improve the standard of life. The positive attitude towards education leads to socio-economic mobility among the individuals and groups. That means, a person who is born in an agricultural family can, by means of education, become an administrator or any other government employee. Secondly, education leads to the changes in the lifestyles of people. It modifies the attitudes, habits, manners and their mode of social living. Thirdly, the education is responsible for inter-generational mobility among the individuals and groups. Through inter-generational mobility, the social groups are able to maintain their status and the status of their family. Therefore, it can be said that education plays an important contributory role in the mobility of individuals and groups regarding their social position, occupational structure, styles of life, habits and manners.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space given below.
       b) Compare your answer with those given at the end of unit.

2) What are the three major forms of social mobility?

3) Briefly identify education as a factor in social mobility?
2.6 LET'S SUM UP

In sum, social stratification is a particular form of inequality. As the well known sociologist Pitirim Sorokin remarked, an unstratified society with real equality is a myth which has never been realized in the history of mankind. The discussion in this unit attempts to reject the belief that the inequalities are biological or hereditary and argues that the stratification is basically a socially created phenomenon. Further, it is important to note that the relationship between the social stratification and education is complex and it must be seen with respect to the specific societies in which they exist.

The unit has highlighted the conceptual and theoretical clarity in understanding the notions of social structure, social stratification, and social mobility and provided an analysis of linkages of these concepts with education. It also provided some examples for the reader on the specific theoretical propositions linking education with the stratification and mobility. Instances referring to the Indian society are particularly given in order to facilitate the understanding of students in their own social context.

2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1) • Slavery
   • Caste
   • Social Class
2) • Vertical Mobility
   • Horizontal Mobility
   • Spatial Mobility
3) • Education functions as an agent of social change and mobility in social structure
   • Education leads to economic development
   • Education led to the changes in the lifestyles of people
   • The social groups are able to maintain their status and the status of their family

2.9 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


