

EDUCATION
Target UGC NET 2025

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



Unit 1: Educational Studies



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c) Approaches to Sociology of Education (symbolic Interaction, Structural Functionalism and Conflict Theory). Concept and types of social Institutions and their functions (family, school and society), Concept of Social Movements, Theories of Social Movements (Relative Deprivation, Resource Mobilization, Political Process Theory and New Social Movement Theory)

Concept of Social Movements

Aspect	Description
Meaning	Social movements are collective, organized efforts to promote or resist social, political, economic, or cultural change. They emerge in response to social inequalities, injustice, or unmet demands.
In Educational Sociology	Social movements play a crucial role in shaping education policies, access, curriculum design, and the overall structure of the education system. They challenge inequality, promote inclusivity, and advocate for reforms.
Key Elements	- Collective action: Group efforts rather than individual actions. - Ideology: Driven by shared beliefs and goals. - Change-oriented: Seeks to transform or resist societal structures. - Sustained efforts: Develop over time rather than one-time protests.
Examples in Education	- Civil Rights Movement: Advocated for racial equality in schools (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education ruling). - Women's Movement: Fought for gender equality in education and the right to education for girls. - Student Movements: Protested against rigid curricula, high fees, and political interference in education. - LGBTQ+ Educational Rights Movement: Advocated for inclusive curriculums and non-discriminatory policies.

Definitions of Social Movements

Scholar	Definition
Herbert Blumer (1951)	Defines social movements as "collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life."
Rudolf Heberle (1951)	A social movement is "a group of people who share a common ideology and work together to achieve specific goals that bring change."
Charles Tilly (1978)	Describes social movements as "sustained interactions between powerholders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency."
Mario Diani (1992)	Defines social movements as "networks of informal interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in conflictual issues, based on shared beliefs and solidarity."
Sydney Tarrow (1998)	Argues that social movements emerge when people join together to challenge authority and demand change through collective action.

Characteristics of Social Movements





Characteristic	Explanation
Collective Action	Social movements involve a group working together rather than individual efforts. They rely on mass participation.
Social or Political Change	They aim to transform educational policies, curriculum design, or institutional structures.
Ideological Basis	Movements are rooted in shared beliefs, values, and ideologies, such as social justice, gender equality, or free education.
Leadership & Organization	Some movements have formal leadership (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. in the Civil Rights Movement), while others are decentralized and grassroots-led.
Resistance & Opposition	Often, movements face resistance from authorities, policymakers, or societal groups that support the status quo.
Temporal Aspect	Some movements are short-lived (protests against fee hikes), while others are long-term (struggles for inclusive education).
Use of Different Strategies	Movements employ various strategies, including protests, petitions, lobbying, legal action, and social media campaigns.
Influence on Policy & Society	Many movements lead to the formation of new laws, policies, or institutional changes, such as affirmative action in education.

Types of Social Movements

Type	Description	Examples in Education
Reform Movements	These seek gradual changes in educational policies or practices without overthrowing the entire system.	- Right to Education (RTE) movement in India. - Equal access to education for marginalized groups. - Curriculum reforms advocating for inclusivity.
Revolutionary Movements	These demand radical, structural changes in the education system or society.	- Student uprisings demanding changes in governance of universities. - Political movements that call for a complete overhaul of the education system.
Resistance Movements	These oppose specific educational policies or reforms that are viewed as harmful.	- Opposition to privatization of education. - Protests against budget cuts in education. - Resistance to standardized testing.
Alternative Movements	These advocate for new ways of thinking about education, often promoting alternative education models.	- Homeschooling and unschooling movements. - Montessori and Waldorf education movements. - Online learning and open-access education.
Redemptive Movements	These focus on personal and moral transformation through education.	- Moral education movements emphasizing ethics and values. - Character-building programs in schools. - Religious education reform movements.

Social Movements and Their Impact on Education

Social Movement	Impact on Education
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Civil Rights Movement (USA)	Led to desegregation in schools (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954) and affirmative action policies.
Women's Rights Movement	Advocated for equal educational opportunities for girls and women, resulting in policies like Title IX in the USA.
LGBTQ+ Rights Movement	Promoted inclusive curriculums, anti-bullying policies, and the recognition of gender diversity in education.
Student Movements	Led to curriculum changes, fee reductions, and greater student involvement in decision-making.
Environmental Movements	Introduced sustainability education and eco-friendly policies in schools and universities.

Relative Deprivation Theory (By Robert Merton, 1960)

Aspect	Description
Definition	Relative Deprivation Theory, first described by Robert Merton, explains that social movements emerge when individuals or groups perceive themselves as being disadvantaged compared to others. This perceived deprivation motivates them to seek social change.
Key Concept	When individuals or groups compare themselves to others in terms of wealth, rights, privileges, or status and feel they are at a disadvantage, they experience relative deprivation. This feeling of injustice fuels the desire for social, economic, or political change.
Distinction from Absolute Deprivation	While absolute deprivation refers to extreme poverty where basic survival needs (food, shelter) are unmet, relative deprivation is about subjective inequality—the feeling that others have more advantages, leading to dissatisfaction and social unrest.
Role in Social Movements	People experiencing relative deprivation often become part of social movements to demand equality, justice, or resources they feel entitled to. The stronger the perceived inequality, the greater the motivation for collective action.
Impact on Behavior & Attitudes	Relative deprivation influences emotions, stress levels, resentment, political views, and engagement in activism or rebellion. Individuals may express frustration through protests, strikes, or social activism.
Connection to Psychology	This theory is linked to cognitive dissonance, as people struggle to reconcile their perceived disadvantage with societal values of fairness and equality. It also relates to frustration-aggression theory, where feelings of deprivation can lead to aggression and social unrest.
Connection to Biology	The concept of relative fitness in biology is similar to relative deprivation. In nature, an organism that is more successful than its competitors is more likely to survive and reproduce, just as individuals who overcome their disadvantages strive for better socio-economic conditions.

Why is Deprivation Relative?

- Deprivation is not absolute; it depends on what people compare themselves to.
- It arises from societal norms and expectations, not just material conditions.





- The standards for deprivation change over time and across cultures—what is considered deprivation today might not have been an issue in the past.
- This is why some people in middle-class societies may feel deprived compared to the wealthy, even though they have basic necessities.

Example:

- A person earning a stable income may feel deprived if their friends live in luxury apartments while they live in a small rented house.
- A student with a decent education may feel deprived if their classmates attend prestigious universities while they settle for a local college.

Causes of Relative Deprivation

Cause	Explanation
Economic Inequality	A significant gap between the rich and poor can lead to frustration among lower-income groups, triggering protests and demands for economic justice.
Social Comparison	People tend to compare their status, wealth, and privileges with peers or societal expectations. If they feel unfairly disadvantaged, dissatisfaction arises.
Media Influence	Exposure to social media and news can intensify feelings of relative deprivation by constantly showcasing the success and wealth of others.
Political Oppression	When a group is denied political participation, legal rights, or social status, it may experience relative deprivation and demand reforms.
Cultural Shifts	Changes in social norms or increased awareness of rights (e.g., women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights) can lead to greater recognition of inequality and calls for change.

Examples of Relative Deprivation in History

Historical Event	Explanation
U.S. Civil Rights Movement (1960s)	Black Americans fought against racial discrimination and segregation, demanding equal rights and opportunities.
Women's Rights Movement	Women who felt deprived of equal pay, voting rights, and career opportunities mobilized to demand gender equality.
French Revolution (1789)	The lower classes, feeling deprived of power and economic resources, rebelled against the monarchy and aristocracy.
Same-Sex Marriage Movement	LGBTQ+ individuals sought equal legal recognition of their marriages, similar to heterosexual couples.
Arab Spring (2010-2012)	Citizens in Middle Eastern countries protested against authoritarian regimes and demanded democratic reforms due to perceived social and economic injustices.

Key Takeaways

Concept	Explanation
Relative Deprivation	The feeling of lacking resources (money, rights, opportunities) compared to others, which leads to dissatisfaction and social activism.





Impact on Social Change	Often serves as a catalyst for social movements demanding justice, equality, and political rights.
Absolute Deprivation vs. Relative Deprivation	Absolute deprivation is a severe lack of necessities (food, water, shelter), whereas relative deprivation is about feeling worse off compared to others.
Example of Relative Deprivation	A worker earning the same salary as a colleague but unable to afford the same lifestyle may feel relatively deprived.
Role of social media	Social media amplifies relative deprivation by exposing people to images of wealth, luxury, and privilege, intensifying feelings of inequality.

Consequences of Relative Deprivation

Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences
Encourages political and social change	Can lead to riots, looting, and political instability
Raises awareness of social inequalities	May fuel resentment and violence
Strengthens collective identity and solidarity among disadvantaged groups	Can increase stress and dissatisfaction
Leads to policy changes and legal reforms	Can result in radicalization or extremist behavior

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Types of Deprivation in Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative deprivation can be categorized into different types based on the nature of perceived inequality. Below are the major types:

Type of Deprivation	Explanation	Example
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Economic Deprivation	Occurs when individuals or groups feel they lack financial resources compared to others.	A worker earning minimum wage feels deprived compared to colleagues with higher salaries, despite similar qualifications.
Social Deprivation	Involves feelings of exclusion from social networks, privileges, or status.	A student from a low-income family feels deprived when classmates from wealthy families attend elite schools and enjoy better opportunities.
Political Deprivation	Occurs when people feel excluded from political power, decision-making, or legal rights.	Women fighting for voting rights in the early 20th century felt politically deprived.
Legal Deprivation	Happens when certain groups are denied equal legal rights or protection under the law.	LGBTQ+ individuals demanding legal recognition of same-sex marriage felt legally deprived.
Educational Deprivation	Refers to unequal access to quality education and learning opportunities.	Children in underfunded public schools feel deprived compared to students in well-funded private institutions.
Health Deprivation	Involves disparities in access to healthcare, medical treatment, and healthy living conditions.	People in rural areas lacking access to hospitals feel deprived compared to urban residents with advanced healthcare facilities.
Cultural Deprivation	Occurs when individuals feel that their cultural identity, language, or traditions are undervalued or suppressed.	Indigenous communities feeling deprived when their languages and traditions are ignored in national policies.
Psychological Deprivation	The feeling of emotional or psychological neglect, which affects mental well-being.	A child in a dysfunctional family feeling deprived of love and support compared to peers from caring households.
Gender-Based Deprivation	Occurs when individuals feel disadvantaged due to gender discrimination.	Women being paid less than men for the same job experience gender-based deprivation.
Racial or Ethnic Deprivation	The experience of discrimination and exclusion based on race or ethnicity.	Minority communities facing systemic racism and fewer opportunities in education and employment.

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Resource Mobilization Theory

Aspect	Details
Definition	Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) explains how social movements successfully mobilize resources like money, labor, and media to achieve their goals. It focuses on the strategic organization and management of resources.
Origin	Developed in the 1970s by sociologists John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald.
Focus Area	Unlike earlier theories that emphasized individual grievances, RMT focuses on how movements organize, acquire resources, and sustain themselves.

Core Assumptions of Resource Mobilization Theory

Assumption	Explanation
Social movements need resources	Movements require material, human, and financial resources to succeed.





Organization and leadership matter	Well-structured organizations with strong leadership can efficiently mobilize resources.
External support is crucial	Support from elites, institutions, and media helps movements gain legitimacy and resources.
Movements act strategically	Social movements make rational choices about how to allocate resources for maximum impact.
Political and social environment matters	The success of a movement depends on political opportunities and societal support.

Types of Resources in Resource Mobilization Theory

Type of Resource	Examples
Material Resources	Money, equipment, office space, printed materials.
Human Resources	Leaders, activists, volunteers, skilled professionals.
Social-Organizational Resources	Networks, alliances, access to influential individuals or groups.
Cultural Resources	Knowledge, symbols, strategies, historical narratives.
Moral Resources	Legitimacy, public trust, support from society and influential figures.

Importance of Resource Mobilization Theory

Importance	Explanation
Explains movement success/failure	The theory helps understand why some movements thrive while others collapse due to lack of resources.
Highlights the role of organizations	It emphasizes that structured organizations improve the efficiency of social movements.
Focuses on external influences	Demonstrates how external support (elites, media, institutions) enhances movement sustainability.
Applies to various movements	Useful in analyzing civil rights movements, feminist movements, environmental activism, and more.

Criticism of Resource Mobilization Theory

Criticism	Explanation
Overemphasis on resources	Ignores ideological, emotional, and cultural factors that also drive social movements.
Rationality assumption	Assumes all movements act strategically, ignoring spontaneous and emotional activism.
Elitist bias	Suggests that movements depend on elite support, overlooking grassroots activism.
Limited focus on grievances	Downplays the role of dissatisfaction and injustices in sparking movements.

Application of Resource Mobilization Theory in Social Movements





Social Movement	How RMT Applies
Civil Rights Movement (USA)	Used financial resources, media, and strong leadership (MLK, NAACP) to sustain activism.
Feminist Movement	Relied on networks, alliances, and cultural narratives to promote gender equality.
Environmental Movement	Utilized scientific knowledge, financial resources, and political lobbying to push for policy changes.
Labor Rights Movement	Organized unions, strikes, and legal resources to advocate for workers' rights.

Political Process Theory

Aspect	Details
Definition	Political Process Theory (PPT) is a framework for understanding social movements, emphasizing the interaction between political opportunities, mobilization structures, and framing processes.
Key Proponent	Doug McAdam (1982) in his work Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970.
Objective	Explains how movements emerge, develop, and succeed by analyzing external political conditions, internal organizational resources, and the way issues are framed.
Main Idea	Social movements are not just spontaneous reactions but are influenced by political structures, available resources, and cultural narratives.

Core Components of Political Process Theory

Component	Explanation	Examples
Political Opportunities	Favorable conditions in the political environment that allow social movements to emerge and succeed.	- Policy shifts - Electoral changes - Government instability - Reduced repression
Mobilizing Structures	Organizational networks and resources that help social movements coordinate and sustain activities.	- Social media platforms - Labor unions - NGOs and advocacy groups - Student organizations
Framing Processes	The way activists shape messages to attract support, gain legitimacy, and mobilize participants.	- Slogans like Black Lives Matter - Protest symbols (e.g., clenched fist) - Media campaigns - Narratives that highlight injustice

Political Opportunities

Type of Political Opportunity	Description	Example
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Expanding Political Access	When marginalized groups gain access to decision-making processes.	Civil Rights Act (1964) enabling legal advocacy.
Division Among Elites	When ruling elites are divided, social movements can take advantage of instability.	Differences among government officials during the Arab Spring.
Decreased Repression	Reduction in state control or repressive policies creates room for activism.	Fall of military dictatorships in Latin America (1980s).
Increased Political Alliances	Support from influential political actors strengthens movements.	Women's suffrage movements gaining political endorsements.

Mobilizing Structures

Type of Mobilizing Structure	Explanation	Example
Formal Organizations	Institutionalized groups that provide structure and leadership.	Greenpeace for environmental activism.
Informal Networks	Loose connections among individuals that allow information sharing.	Social media activism like Twitter campaigns.
Religious Institutions	Faith-based organizations that mobilize support and resources.	Churches supporting the Civil Rights Movement.
Media and Communication	Platforms that spread movement messages quickly and widely.	Arab Spring's reliance on Facebook and Twitter.

Framing Processes

Framing Type	Explanation	Example
Diagnostic Framing	Identifies the issue and explains why it is a problem.	"Climate change is a global emergency caused by human activities."
Prognostic Framing	Provides solutions and strategies to address the problem.	"We need global policies to reduce carbon emissions and shift to renewable energy."
Motivational Framing	Encourages people to take action and get involved.	"Join the climate strike to demand urgent action from world leaders!"

Strengths and Criticism of Political Process Theory

Strengths	Criticism
- Helps explain why some movements succeed while others fail. - Highlights the role of external political conditions. - Emphasizes organizational resources for movement success.	- Overemphasizes political conditions, ignoring emotions and culture. - Less effective in explaining leaderless or decentralized movements. - Struggles to explain spontaneous uprisings.





Application of Political Process Theory to Modern Movements

Social Movement	Political Opportunities	Mobilizing Structures	Framing Processes
Civil Rights Movement (1950s-60s, USA)	Legal desegregation and federal support.	NAACP, churches, student groups.	"I Have a Dream" speech, nonviolent resistance.
Arab Spring (2010-2012, MENA)	Political instability and economic hardship.	Social media, youth groups.	"People want the fall of the regime!"
#MeToo Movement (2017-present)	High-profile sexual harassment cases, legal changes.	Social media, women's organizations.	"Believe women," viral hashtag activism.
Fridays for Future (Climate Activism, 2018-present)	Government inaction on climate change.	Global student network, social media.	"There is no Planet B!"

New Social Movement (NSM) Theory

Aspect	Details
Definition	NSM Theory explains the emergence of movements that focus on cultural, identity-based, and quality-of-life issues rather than traditional class struggles.
Origin	Emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in response to traditional labor and class-based movements. It gained prominence in Western Europe and later influenced global movements.
Purpose	Advocates for social and cultural change rather than economic redistribution.

Key Characteristics of NSM Theory

Characteristic	Explanation
Identity-Oriented	Movements are centered on personal and group identities rather than class conflict.
Decentralized Structure	Lacks hierarchical leadership; operates through networks and grassroots activism.
Cultural Focus	Engages in symbolic and cultural struggles rather than economic battles.
Non-Violent Approaches	Often relies on protests, digital activism, advocacy, and awareness campaigns.
Post-Materialist Values	Prioritizes issues like human rights, environmental protection, gender equality, and democracy.
Global Influence	NSMs operate across national boundaries, using international networks and digital platforms.

Major Examples of New Social Movements

Movement Type	Examples
Civil Rights Movement	Black Lives Matter (BLM), Dalit Rights Movements
Feminist Movement	#MeToo Movement, Women's Suffrage Movements





LGBTQ+ Rights	Pride Movements, Same-Sex Marriage Campaigns
Environmental Movements	Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Green Peace
Anti-Globalization	Protests against WTO, Occupy Wall Street
Human Rights Movements	Amnesty International, Indigenous Rights Movements

Key Theorists and Their Contributions

Theorist	Key Contributions
Alain Touraine	Argued that modern movements arise from struggles over cultural values rather than class-based conflicts.
Jürgen Habermas	Suggested that NSMs focus on communicative action and public discourse to drive societal change.
Alberto Melucci	Highlighted the role of collective identity and symbolic actions in NSMs.

Comparison: Traditional Social Movements vs. New Social Movements

Feature	Traditional Social Movements	New Social Movements
Focus	Economic class struggle, labor rights	Identity, culture, and human rights
Organization	Centralized leadership	Decentralized, network-based
Methods	Strikes, protests, unionization	Digital activism, awareness campaigns, protests
Goal	Economic redistribution	Cultural and social transformation
Feature	Traditional Social Movements	New Social Movements

Criticisms of NSM Theory

Criticism	Explanation
Fragmented Nature	Lacks cohesion due to diverse agendas and identity-based focus.
Lack of Clear Political Agenda	Focuses on symbolic and cultural change rather than concrete policy reforms.
Short-Term Engagement	Movements often lack long-term sustainability due to decentralized leadership.
Overemphasis on Identity Politics	Critics argue it may divide society rather than unite around broader goals.

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