



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING SOCIAL MOBILITY IN LUCY MAUD MONTGOMERY'S ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

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Abstract

This study discusses the role of education in promoting social mobility in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. This is a qualitative research with the novel as the primary data source. Supporting information is obtained from secondary sources such as scientific books, journal articles, and library research. The Data are collected through comprehensive reading and note-taking to identify relevant elements. This study employ's Wellek and Warren's theory i.e., sociology of literature and concept of social mobility from Sorokin and the concept of education from Dewantara. The findings identify three main roles of education, they are character building, self-development, and life determination, which reflected through character Anne. She gets informal education through family guidance that plays an important role in character building by developing self-control, responsibility, and humility. She gets formal education at school that contributes to her self-development by providing opportunities to recognize strengths and weaknesses, build self-confidence, and develop social skills. It is also found that education enables individuals to determine their life direction independently, as it is shown Anne's decision to continue to university Anvolea school by winning scholarship. It means that she successfully transforms from a marginalized orphan into a respected and independent young woman through informal education especially formal education. This indicates that education is crucial to promote social mobility, and empower people from marginalized backgrounds, particularly orphaned children and women in rural communities.

Keywords: Formal and informal education, social mobility, character building, self-development, life-determination

1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in developing individuals by improving knowledge, skills, character, creativity, critical thinking, and social awareness, while also creating opportunities for better employment and social mobility (Hasbullah, 2012; Habsy et al., 2023). Besides supporting intellectual development, education helps individuals become independent, responsible, and productive members of society. Although educational participation in Indonesia has increased, access to senior high school and higher education remains unequal, particularly in remote areas (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). Consequently, education is widely regarded as an important means of improving quality of life and overcoming socioeconomic limitations (Roshan & Rahman, 2025).

According to Dewantara (2013), education is a process of developing individuals through character building, self-development, and life guidance. These roles are closely related to social mobility, which refers to the movement of individuals or groups within the social structure through factors such as education, occupation, and economic conditions (Soekanto, 2012). Social mobility can occur vertically, involving changes in social status, or horizontally, without changes in social status (Sorokin, 1927). Therefore, education functions as an important mechanism that enables individuals to improve their social position and life opportunities.

The relationship between education and social mobility is reflected in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. The novel portrays Anne Shirley's educational



experiences as part of her personal growth and changing social position within her community. As one of the most influential Canadian literary works, the novel has attracted scholarly attention from various perspectives.

Previous studies have examined *Anne of Green Gables* from the perspectives of feminism (Herawati & Wulandari, 2025; Maria & Eka Sari, 2025), self-identity and women's empowerment (Jeevitha & Thomas Raj, 2024), sociology (Erina & Wajiran, 2024), social class (Widyawati, 2024), post-truth culture (Adjikusuma, 2020), and character development (Az-Zahra & Saktiningrum, 2024). However, these studies mainly discuss education as a supporting element of character development rather than as the primary factor promoting social mobility. Therefore, a research gap remains regarding the role of education as the main mechanism of social mobility in the novel.

This study applies the sociology of literature approach proposed by Wellek and Warren (1949), which views literature as a reflection of society, social values, and human relationships. This approach is relevant because *Anne of Green Gables* illustrates not only Anne Shirley's personal experiences but also the role of education, family, and social structures in shaping life opportunities and social mobility. Accordingly, this study aims to examine how the roles of education in promoting social mobility are reflected in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Education

Education is a planned and conscious process that aims to develop human potential holistically, encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and moral aspects. Sorokin (1927) identifies education as one of the primary channels of social mobility, enabling individuals to improve their social status by developing their abilities and adapting to social norms and values. As society evolves, education extends beyond its social function to address the demands of the modern world by promoting 21st-century skills, including

critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and teamwork (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). Similarly, Dewantara emphasizes that education should be human-centered, encourage freedom in learning, and foster students' character and potential. Therefore, education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a process of character building, self-development, and life determination.

2.2 The Role Education

Dewantara (1962) explains that education is a process of guiding individuals' intellectual, emotional, and moral development to help them become independent, develop good character, and contribute positively to society. Accordingly, education functions not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a process of character building, personal development, and life guidance. Through education, individuals learn moral values, responsibility, ethics, and positive behavior, while also developing creativity, confidence, talents, and interests. In addition, education helps individuals determine their future direction by expanding opportunities for higher education, employment, and an improved quality of life.

From a sociological perspective, Sorokin (1927) argues that education is an integral part of the social structure and serves as a mechanism for social mobility. Besides providing knowledge and skills, education enables individuals to internalize social norms and values, facilitating their movement within the social structure and improving their social status.

2.3 Mobility

According to Sorokin (1927), mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one position to another within a social structure. It is a dynamic and continuous process that involves adaptation, personal development, and changes in response to environmental conditions. Therefore, mobility reflects not only changes in social position but also the process through



which individuals develop themselves and respond to social change.

2.4 Social Mobility

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups from one social position to another within a system of social stratification. According to Sorokin (1927), this process is influenced by factors such as education, occupation, and access to opportunities, enabling individuals to improve their quality of life and social status. Social mobility consists of two forms: vertical mobility, which involves upward or downward changes in social status, and horizontal mobility, which refers to movement within the same social level without changes in social status (Sorokin, 1927).

2.5 Sociology of Literature

This study applies the sociology of literature approach proposed by Wellek and Warren (1949), which views literature as a reflection of social life, including the institutions, values, and social structures that influence individual development. Through this perspective, literary works can be examined as representations of how education, social expectations, and institutional systems shape individuals' opportunities for social mobility. Educational experiences portrayed in literature are therefore understood not merely as personal events but as reflections of broader social realities.

This perspective is supported by Swingewood (1972), who argues that literature reveals social realities and structural inequalities within society. Accordingly, education functions as an important factor that influences individuals' access to opportunities, social recognition, and upward mobility, while limitations in educational access may reinforce social inequality.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method to examine the role of education in promoting social mobility in

Anne of Green Gables (Creswell, 2013). The primary data consisted of sentences, dialogues, narratives, and quotations from *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery (1908), while secondary data were obtained from relevant books, journal articles, and websites.

Data were collected through close reading, selecting relevant passages, relating the data to the sociology of literature approach proposed by Wellek and Warren (1949), and organizing them based on the roles of education. The data were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), including data reduction and conclusion drawing and verification.

4. Result and Discussion

This chapter analyzes *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, which tells the story of Anne Shirley, an orphan adopted by Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert in Avonlea. Initially portrayed as emotional, impulsive, and imaginative, Anne gradually matures through her educational experiences and interactions within the community. Supported by her determination and passion for learning, she overcomes various challenges, achieves academic success, gains admission to Queen's Academy, and eventually becomes a confident and respected young woman.

This study applies the sociology of literature approach proposed by Wellek and Warren (1949), Sorokin's (1927) theory of social mobility, and Dewantara's concept of education. These frameworks are used to examine how education functions as a means of character building, self-development, and life determination, while promoting upward social mobility and social integration for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4.1 The Role of Education in Character Building

According to Dewantara (1977), education develops character by cultivating moral values, self-control, and responsibility. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne Shirley's



character transformation illustrates how informal and formal education contribute to character building.

Initially, Anne is portrayed as impulsive and unable to control her emotions. When Mrs. Rachel Lynde insults her appearance, Anne reacts angrily: *"I hate you... How dare you call me skinny and ugly?"* (82). Guided by Marilla, Anne later reflects on her behavior and sincerely apologizes: *"Oh, Mrs. Lynde, I am so extremely sorry..."* (90). This experience demonstrates the development of self-control, humility, and responsibility through informal education, consistent with Dewantara's (1962) concept of character building.

Anne's responsibility is further developed through the currant wine incident and her failed attempt to dye her hair. Although both mistakes are unintentional or impulsive, Anne accepts their consequences and learns from them. Marilla's guidance reflects Dewantara's *Tut Wuri Handayani* principle by allowing Anne to face the natural consequences of her actions while providing continuous support (Dewantara, 1962).

Character building is also strengthened through formal education at Avonlea School. Anne's conflict and academic rivalry with Gilbert Blythe, which begins when he teases her by calling her *"Carrots"* (132), gradually develops into motivation for academic achievement. *"She flung herself into her studies heart and soul..."* (160). Through school experiences, Anne develops discipline, perseverance, sportsmanship, and emotional maturity. These findings support Dewantara's (1962) view that education shapes character and Sorokin's (1927) argument that educational achievement serves as a channel of upward social mobility. They also align with Swingewood's (1972) perspective that education enables individuals to overcome social limitations through personal development.

4.2 The Role of Education as Freedom of Self Development

Dewantara (1922) defines freedom of self-development as the opportunity for

individuals to develop their intellectual, emotional, and social potential according to their abilities and experiences. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne Shirley's transformation from an orphan lacking social recognition into a respected member of Avonlea illustrates how education supports both personal growth and upward social mobility.

Through informal education at Green Gables, Anne gradually develops self-awareness, responsibility, and positive values. Reflecting on her mistakes, she admits, *"Ever since I came to Green Gables I've been making mistakes, and each mistake has helped to cure me of some great shortcoming..."* (262). This self-reflection demonstrates Anne's growing ability to understand herself and internalize the values taught by Marilla and Matthew, consistent with Dewantara's (1922; 1962) concept of self-development.

Formal education at Avonlea School further strengthens Anne's intellectual and social development. Her enthusiasm for learning, awareness of her strengths and weaknesses, and willingness to overcome academic challenges reflect increasing self-confidence and maturity. Anne admits, *"I'm dreadfully far behind the others... But there's not one of them has such an imagination as I have"* (128), and later recognizes her limitation in geometry while appreciating Miss Stacy's guidance (221). These experiences show that formal education encourages self-awareness, develops individual potential, and provides social recognition, supporting Sorokin's (1927) view of education as a channel of social mobility. Furthermore, Miss Stacy's guidance helps Anne apply the knowledge and values she acquires, enabling her to participate confidently in society and determine her future direction, in line with Dewantara's (1962) concept of educational freedom.

4.3 The Role of Education in Life Determination

According to Dewantara (1922), life determination refers to an individual's ability



to determine life direction through self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and the development of personal potential. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne's life determination develops through both informal and formal education, enabling her to become an independent individual who is capable of making thoughtful and responsible decisions.

Through informal education at Green Gables, Anne gradually learns to reflect on her experiences and control her emotions. After facing conflicts with Mrs. Rachel Lynde and experiencing the consequences of her impulsive actions, she begins to realize the importance of thinking before acting. This development is reflected when she says, *"I don't get cross about other things; but I'm so tired of being twitted about my hair and it just makes me boil right over"* (93). Rather than rejecting Marilla's advice or defending her behavior, Anne openly acknowledges the source of her anger and recognizes her emotional weakness. This indicates that she has begun to internalize the values taught by Marilla and develop greater self-awareness and self-control, which are essential elements of life determination (Dewantara, 1922; 1962). Her ability to recognize her emotional triggers also shows that she is becoming more capable of making thoughtful decisions instead of reacting impulsively.

Formal education further strengthens Anne's ability to determine her life direction by developing critical thinking, responsibility, and independence. Through her educational experiences at Avonlea School and Queen's Academy, Anne learns to evaluate alternatives and consider the consequences of her decisions. The clearest example appears when she receives a university scholarship but chooses to remain at Green Gables after Matthew's death to care for Marilla. She firmly states, *"I'm not going to take the scholarship... I'm going to stay here and teach"* (347). This decision demonstrates that Anne has become capable of prioritizing responsibility and gratitude over personal ambition. Rather than viewing education solely as a means of achieving

academic success, she applies the values and knowledge she has gained to make an ethical and responsible life choice.

This finding supports Dewantara's (1922) view that education guides individuals to determine their own life direction responsibly. It is also consistent with Sorokin's (1927) theory that education functions as a pathway to upward social mobility by preparing individuals to improve their social position through knowledge, responsibility, and independent decision-making. Furthermore, Anne's transformation supports Swingewood's (1972) argument that literature reflects social reality by showing how education can empower individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome social limitations and shape a better future.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that education plays a significant role in promoting social mobility in *Anne of Green Gables* through three major roles: character building, self-development, and life determination. Through both formal and informal education, Anne Shirley develops self-control, responsibility, self-awareness, and the ability to make independent and responsible decisions. These qualities enable her to overcome personal challenges, gain social recognition, and improve her social position within the community.

The findings also show that education is not only a means of acquiring knowledge but also a process of developing individual potential and shaping responsible life choices. By supporting intellectual, emotional, and moral growth, education becomes an important pathway for personal transformation and upward social mobility. Overall, this study highlights the importance of education in enabling individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their quality of life and social status. Future studies are encouraged to explore the role of education in other literary works using the sociology of literature approach or through comparative studies across different cultural contexts.



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