



Inequality, Education and Social Power. Forum Transregionale Studien; Max Weber Stiftung —Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland, 17.11.2014—25.11.2014.

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Inequality, Education and Social Power

Understanding Inequality in Education in the 21st Century: A Synthetic Report

As the global economy slowly recovers from the 2008/9 recession, rising social inequality exacerbated by stagnating wages and unequal income distribution is emerging as a major concern of policy makers around the world. Education, both as a public good and ideologically charged concept, is often viewed as a means of social mobility and is set with high expectations. But education can also produce inequality and disenchantment in case some groups are denied or excluded from its benefits. Scholars from India, Latin America, Africa and Europe studied diverse constellations of factors causing inequalities within specific educational settings across and beyond temporal, national, cultural, and regional frames. Thereby, they contributed to our understanding of three overlapping themes: social diversity and inequality in education, cultural production of inequality in education and the global knowledge asymmetries. The seven-day event was convened by the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung — Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland in Berlin in cooperation with the Max Weber Foundation's Transnational Research Group (TRG) on "Poverty and Education", the research network desigualdades.net and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.

Social Diversity and Inequality in Education

Differential access to, and experience of, education depends on a person's and group's social position in a

particular societal context. A number of presentations addressed inequality in education from the perspective of social diversity, asking how structural and institutional realities define people's experiences. BHARAT CHANDRA ROUT (New Delhi) presented a large-scale overview on educational attainments of "scheduled castes and tribes," India's most disadvantaged parts of the population. CÄLINE TENEY (Bremen) emphasized that even in the seemingly homogenous societies in the Global North immigration and other social processes have serious implications for the (un)equal distribution and access to education. MEENAKSHI GAUTAM (New Delhi) discussed how the "intermeshing of structures of inequality" along gender, caste, and class shape the pathways of scheduled caste (Dalit) women in an elite college in Delhi. MARWA SCHUMANN (Alexandria) examined how female students specializing in orthopedic surgery at Egyptian universities get systematically discouraged from pursuing the envisioned career. Panel discussions raised concerns about some of the policies that were designed to address educational inequalities but tended to ignore the experiences and needs of particular groups. These policies were either too broad, one-sided, narrow in scope or ad-hoc in nature to recognize that people belong to and are defined by multiple social categories that intersect to shape their daily experiences.

Several presentations raised the question of how to assess the scope of educational inequality. In her keynote address, JUTTA ALLMENDINGER (Berlin) suggested that to be able to measure "educational poverty" effec-

tively, we need to distinguish educational attainment in terms of certificates to the one that fosters genuine competencies. This distinction allowed her to demonstrate that segregated school systems produce differentiated certificates, but not necessarily higher competencies among the graduates of the higher valued streams. ROCIO RAMIREZ (substituting for MARTHA ZAPATA GALINDO, Berlin), presented the project *Medidas para la inclusi3n social y equidad en Instituciones de Educaci3n Superior en Am3rica Latina* (MISEAL), drawing on Leslie McCall's *Complexity of Intersectionality* L. McCall, *Complexity of Intersectionality*, in: *Signs*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring) (2005), pp. 1771-1800. , which aims to consider the multiple ways in which social actors can be advantaged and disadvantaged at the same time.

To deal adequately with the problem of designing educational policies in diverse and unequal modern societies, also the normative considerations underlying such policies need to be reflected. ANDREAS GESTRICH (London) reminded us that, historically, inequality could be an explicit and legitimate aim of educational policy. However, from a point of view that considers social inequality as problematic, the question arises as to how to define the aims of the politics of education. An interesting debate emerged particularly in the thematic discussion group on gender about whether we aim for *gender justice*, *gender equity* or *gender equality* in education, and in society. In his talk on education in post-apartheid South Africa, YUSUF SAYED (Cape Town) linked social justice to strong forms of recognition, redistribution, and representation. Several participants also suggested the so-called *capabilities approach* A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2000. as relevant for conceptualizing the social ends of education.

Cultural Production of Inequality in Education

Another set of papers explored the contradictions and conflicts of the cultural production by modern educational institutions through the process of validating and distributing *cultural capital*, i.e. *the kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing* B. Levinson, *School groups and the culture of equality at a Mexican Secundaria*, Working paper series of the Duke-UNC program in Latin American Studies, 1993, p. 7. . Through exams, rewards and other disciplinary procedures, schools ensure success for those who possess particular competencies and skills often associated with elite groups in society. Following Bourdieu P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a*

Theory of Practice, Cambridge University Press, 1977. , Levinson showed how *cultural capital* is a social resource that is intertwined with economic capital and how it, powered with economic supremacy, can privilege one set of competencies and characteristics over others. STEFAN WELLGRAF's (Frankfurt an der Oder) discussed the German idea of *Bildung*, which, he proposed, captured the theoretical basis of this concept as a means by which the acquisition of skills and certificates serve as a promise to economic benefits. Building on Gopal Guru G. Guru, *Dalit Movement in Mainstream Sociology*, in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 14 (1993). , SUNANDAN K.N. (New Delhi) raised the question of which *and whose* *knowledge counted as authoritative in schools in India*. The disregard of experiential, practical knowledge assumed particular political relevance against the background of the caste-based division of labor.

Analyzing educational inequality through the lens of cultural production lends a perspective for the potential role schools play in establishing new forms of symbolic capital while displacing old ones B. Levinson, *School groups and the culture of equality at a Mexican Secundaria*, Working paper series of the Duke-UNC program in Latin American Studies, 1993, p. 7. . National policies and institutions that focus exclusively on formalized standards can deepen the exclusion of students from marginalized backgrounds who lack the cultural capital necessary to meet those standards. JANEFRANCES LOBNIBE (Tamale) explored this dynamic in Ghana, using admission requirements to the University for Development Studies (UDS). The program intended to correct regional inequalities in higher education between northern and southern Ghana caused by British colonial and post-colonial development policies but ended up denying secondary schools students from deprived regions entrance into highly sought after programs. In such contexts, she argued, educational equality could not be achieved without engaging and confronting the very mechanisms and structures that created the division. MALINI GHOSE (G3ttingen) also focused on institutional governance, asking how new opportunities in higher education in India allowed for new subjectivities to evolve for a *target population* as both subjects and objects of the policies. She analyzed how marginalized groups refashion their aspirations and strategic choices, discourses, policies and programs in their own ways to fit their own expectations and understandings of politics in the face of exclusion from educational opportunities.

Whether in Ghana, India or in Colombia, analyzing education from the perspective of cultural production not

only allows for the exploration of the effects of schooling and inequality across historical and cultural contexts but also furthers our understanding of an alternative pedagogic cultural capital. Such an effort was introduced by DEBARATI BAGCHIâs (New Delhi) analysis of the promoters of the Sylheti-Bengali script in India and their diaspora in the UK, which aimed to make literacy more accessible for âthe massesâ, by providing a simpler alphabet. MAYA BUSER DE (Seoul), who studied government secondary schools in Indian Kolkata and Andrea Cuenca, who spoke about the Colombian education system, pointed out that access to quality secondary education is of particular relevance for the distribution of cultural capital, emphasizing its potential to break the existing link between family origin and professional destination.

Global Knowledge Asymmetries and Inequality in Education

The contested nature of knowledge production and the question about who defines and determines what education is, were key theoretical issues that were raised and discussed to contextualize the local and global asymmetries in education. The effect of the unequal international world order in producing and validating Eurocentric knowledge was problematized by a number of project and conference presentations. They emphasized that global knowledge asymmetries, also caused by colonialism, remain a crucial issue in the discussions on inequality in education. SAKARIYAU ALABI ALIYU (Leiden/Kano) traced the history of Islamic education in Nigerian Ilorin since the advent of colonialism, highlighting the interaction and tensions between Islamic and western style forms of education. He showed that although western style education holds better prospects for its beneficiaries, Islamic education has continued to adapt to changes brought about by its competitor. The unequal power relations between the two systems were marked firstly by a period of resistance, then acquiescence through post-colonial accommodation and later to islamicization of knowledge from the late twentieth century.

Historical structures of domination between âthe west and the restâ S. Hall, Notes on Deconstructing the âPopularâ, in: R. Samuel (ed.), *Peopleâs History and Socialist Theory*, London: Routledge, 1981, pp 227-239. seem also to frame the expansion of neoliberal international economic policies that have contributed to the marginalization of the Global South in knowledge production, but also in studentsâ access to quality edu-

cation. Within this framework, SARAH HARTMANN (Berlin) examined the deficiencies of an underfunded and overburdened public education system in Egypt, which has compelled teachers to resort to extra tutoring as a strategy to supplement their meager salaries. In Peru, Carmela Chavez showed that university students and investors have become part of a new social middle class culture that values higher education as a private good for social mobility. This development has given rise to an increased participation of the private sector in higher education, including international actors. Guided by the neoliberal economic philosophy, the operations of these private universities led to more inequality in Peru, as well as in the Middle East (DANIELE CANTINI, Halle-Wittenberg), and other places. Privatization and internationalization completely altered previous ways of university operations, creating novel models of organization and mechanisms for student participation within the university community.

Conclusion

The current report provides a partial glimpse into the rich seven-day discussions on the structures of educational inequality and the educational experience of marginalized groups in the Global South and Europe. A general conclusion suggests that educational governance, policy-making and the distribution of cultural capital are set in context of conflicts and struggles among and between groups shaped by systems of class, gender, ethnicity, or moral orientation and region. While it was agreed that the promotion of educational equity and social justice can only be dealt with contextually, multiple perspectives presented a general conclusion. Thus, it was highlighted that educational differentiation is not the answer when dealing with culturally diverse and socially stratified populations, even when the underlying consideration is the recognition of difference. This was very germane in all the discussions about the German differentiated school system (Jutta Allmendinger, Stefan Wellgraf, Anja Schillhaneck), but also in the studies on the emergence of âprivate schools for the poorâ in India (Geetha Nambissan), as well as post-apartheid South Africa (Yusuf Sayed). Inclusive and comprehensive education is of utmost importance, particularly in the context of diversity. For further information please visit the blog (02.04.2015).

Conference overview:

Welcoming Addresses

Andreas Eckert, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/Forum Transregionale Studien

Heinz Duchhardt, Max Weber Stiftung â Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland

Panel 1: Education, Inequality and Social Power: General Discussion

Chair: Andreas Eckert, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/Forum Transregionale Studien

Sarada Balagopalan, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Dehli

Klaus Hurrelmann, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin

Carlos Costa Ribeiro, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

Panel 2: Global Knowledge Asymmetries and Education

Chair: Barbara GÃ¶bel, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin

Neeladri Bhattacharya, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Peter Kallaway, University of Cape Town

David MacDonald, University of Guelph

Hebe Vessuri, Universidad Nacional AutÃ³noma de MÃ©xico, Morelia

Panel 3: Social Diversity and Education

Chair: Jana Tschurennev, Georg-August-Universität

GÃ¶ttingen

Yusuf Sayed, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town

CÃ©line Teney, Universität Bremen

Martha Zapata Galindo, Freie Universität Berlin

Keynote Address

Jutta Allmendinger, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung

Introduction: Marianne Braig, Freie Universität Berlin/Forum Transregionale Studien

Panel 4: Private Actors in the Education System

Chair: Andreas Gestrich, German Historical Institute London

Geetha Nambissan, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Hania Sobhy, Orient-Institut Beirut

Silke Strickrodt, German Historical Institute London

Panel 5: Inequality, Education and the Labor Market

Chair: Ravi Ahuja, Georg-August-Universität GÃ¶ttingen

Augustin Emame, Institut d'Études Avancées de Nantes

Patricio SolÃ¡s, El Colegio de MÃ©xico, Mexico City

Anja WeiÃ, Universität Duisburg-Essen

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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