

Inequality, Education and Social Power. Winter Academy and Conference

Veranstalter: Forum Transregionale Studien;
Max Weber Stiftung – Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland

Datum, Ort: 17.11.2014–25.11.2014, Berlin

Bericht von: Jane Frances Lobnibe, University
for Development Studies, Tamale; Jana Tschuren-
renew, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

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. The interdisciplinary Winter Academy and conference „Inequality, Education, and Social Power“, explored this ambiguity from multiple perspectives. 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 con-

text. A number of presentations addressed inequality in education from the perspective of social diversity, asking how structural and institutional realities define peoples' 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. CÉLINE TENNEY (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. Time and again, the 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 we disentangle attainment in terms of certificates from attainment in the form of competencies in the measurement of „educational poverty“. 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 inclusión social y equidad en Instituciones de Educación Superior en América Latina* (MISEAL), drawing on Leslie McCall's „Complexity of Intersectionality“¹,

¹L. McCall, Complexity of Intersectionality, in: Signs,

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“² as relevant for conceptualizing the social ends of education.

Cultural Production of Inequality in Education

Another set of papers explored the contradictions and conflicts that emerge from the cultural projects which modern educational institutions often undertake through validating and distributing „cultural capital“, meaning „the kind of symbolic credit which one acquires through learning to embody and enact signs of social standing“.³ 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 Bourdieu⁴, Levinson showed how „cultural capital“ is a social resource that is intertwined with economic capital and according to which certain competencies and character traits in various societies are valued 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 Guru⁵, 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.⁶ 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. JANE-FRANCES LOBNIBE (Tamale) explored this dynamic in Ghana, using admission requirements to the University for Development Studies (UDS), which attempts to correct regional inequalities in higher education between northern and southern Ghana caused by British colonial and post-colonial development policies but ends 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 (Göttingen) 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

Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring) (2005), pp. 1771-1800.

² A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2000.

³ 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.

⁴ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁵ G. Guru, „Dalit Movement in Mainstream Sociology“, in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 14 (1993).

⁶ 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.

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 BAGCHI's (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 'the masses', by providing a simpler alphabet. MAYA BUSER DE (Seoul), who studied government secondary schools in Indian Kolkata and ANDREA CUENCA (Berlin), 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 Euro-centric 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.

This points, firstly, to the continued relevance of studying the impact of colonialism on 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 islamization of knowledge from the late twentieth century.

But historical structures of domination, i.e. (post-)colonial relations between „the west and the rest“⁷ 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 students' access to quality education. 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-administration, and mechanisms for student participation within the university community, the effects of which on inequality and education we will need to observe carefully.

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

⁷ S. Hall, Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular', in: R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London: Routledge, 1981, pp 227-239.

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 „private schools for the poor“ 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.⁸

Conference overview:

Welcoming Addresses

Andreas Eckert, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin/Forum Transregionale Studien
Heinz Duchhardt, Max Weber Stiftung – 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 Göbel, 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

Autónoma de México, Morelia

Panel 3: Social Diversity and Education

Chair: Jana Tschurenev, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen

Yusuf Sayed, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town
Céline 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 Göttingen

Augustin Emame, Institut d'Études Avancées de Nantes
Patricio Solís, El Colegio de México, Mexico City
Anja Weiß, Universität Duisburg-Essen

Overview Winter Academy „Inequality, Education and Social Power“:

Introduction

Marianne Braig, Melanie Hanif (Forum)
Andreas Gestrich, Indra Sengupta (TRG)

Workshop Session

Key moments of education policy towards the poor in the long 20th century
Ravi Ahuja (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) and Andreas Gestrich (German Historical Institute London)
Social stratification and intergenerational

⁸For further information please visit the blog <<http://www.ies.hypotheses.org>> (02.04.2015).

class mobility in Latin America
Patricio Solís (El Colegio de México) and
Marianne Braig (Freie Universität Berlin)

Project Presentations

Teachers' Struggle for Income in the Congo
(DRC). Between Education and Remuneration

Cyril Owen Brandt (Universiteit van Amsterdam)

Discussant: Alva Bonaker

The Politics of Higher Education and the
Everyday Life of Students in Jordan and
Egypt

Daniele Cantini (Martin-Luther-Universität
Halle-Wittenberg)

Discussant: Malini Ghose

The Informal Education Sector in Egypt:
Between State, Market, and Civil Society

Sarah Hartmann (Freie Universität Berlin)

Discussant: Saikat Maitra

Primed to Labour: 'Education' in Industrial
and Artisan Schools of Colonial India (1860s-
1940s)

Arun Kumar (Georg-August-Universität
Göttingen)

Discussant: Divya Kannan

Working Class Youths and Education in
Post-Industrial Mumbai

Sumeet Mhaskar (Georg-August-Universität
Göttingen)

Discussant: V. Kalyan Shankar

Youth Experiences in Secondary School:
Massification, Dynamics of Inequality and
Figures of Citizenship in Argentina

Pedro Núñez (Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Discussant: Maya Buser De

Gender Inequalities in Medical Education:
Accessibility of Orthopedic Training for
Female Interns in Egypt

Marwa Schumann (Alexandria University)

Discussant: Preeti

Social Origin and Inequality of Opportuni-
ties in Colombia: Analysis of Educational
Achievement and Occupational Attainment
among University Graduates

Andrea Cuenca Hernández (Humboldt-
Universität zu Berlin)

Discussant: Nicolás Brunet

Discussion with Anja Schillhaneck, MdB

Introduction: Georges Khalil (Forum Transre-

gionale Studien)

Project Presentations

Hauptschüler. The Role of Education in
Exclusion Processes in Germany

Stefan Wellgraf (Europa-Universität Viadrina,
Frankfurt/Oder)

Discussant: Deepika K. Singh

Educational Governance and Inequality in
Higher Education: The Case of the University
for Development Studies (UDS) Ghana

Jane-Frances Lobnibe (University for Devel-
opment Studies, Tamale)

Discussant: Meenakshi Gautam

Higher Education and Profit Logic in the Ed-
ucation System. Social Consequences of the
Expansion of Low-Cost-Private-Universities
in Peru

Carmela Chávez (Pontificia Universidad
Católica del Perú)

Discussant: Latika Gupta

Recasting the Self: Missionaries and the
Education of the Poor in Kerala (1854-1956)

Divya Kannan (Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi)

Discussant: Arun Kumar

Educational & Professional Status of Sched-
uled Castes/Tribes: Attainment & Challenges
Bharat Chandra Rout (National University
of Educational Planning and Administration,
New Delhi)

Discussant: Sunandan K.N.

Marketisation, Managerialism and School
Reforms: A Study of Public-Private Partner-
ships in Elementary Education in Delhi

Vidya K.S. (Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi)

Discussant: Cecilia Pereda

Transmission of Learning in Ilorin: A History
of Islamic Education 1897-2012

Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu (Universiteit Leiden;
Bayero University Kano) Discussant: De-
barati Bagchi

Refugee Settlements and the Role of Educa-
tion in Post-Partition West Bengal

Kaustubh Mani Sengupta (Jawaharlal Nehru
University, New Delhi)

Discussant: Saikat Maitra

Who Studies What, Where and Why? Sys-
temic Inequalities beyond Affirmative Action
Policies in Indian Higher Education

V. Kalyan Shankar (University of Pune)

Discussant: Sumeet Mhaskar

Thematic Discussions

Gender, Inequality and Education

Jana Tschurennev (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), Marwa Schumann

Chair: Andrea Cuenca Hernández (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Socio-cultural Diversity, Inequality and Education

Cornelia Gresch (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung), Latika Gupta (University of Delhi)

Chair: Stefan Wellgraf (Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder)

Inequality and Education in the Political Process

Lena Ulbricht (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung), Pedro Núñez (Universidad de Buenos Aires)

Chair: Melanie Hanif (Forum Transregionale Studien)

Panel Discussion

Inequality and Education: Economic Perspectives

Chair: Sumeet Mhaskar

Panelists:

Cyril Owen Brandt

Cultural and political economy perspectives on the (re)production and functioning of global agendas

Nicolás Brunet

Cumulative advantage mechanism and inequality across temporal processes

Daniele Cantini

The role of non-state actors in education

Sarah Hartmann

Privatization, marketization and commodification of education

Humboldt Ferngespräch

Global Knowledge Disparities: The North-South Divide

Project Presentations

Inequalities and Production of New Cultural Forms at Government Secondary Schools in Kolkata, India

Maya Buser De (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul)

Discussant: Pedro Núñez

Schooling Women: Debates on Education in

the United Provinces (1854-1930)

Preeti (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Discussant: Marwa Schumann

State and Non-State Actors in Current Secondary Education Policy in Uruguay: A Complex Configuration

Cecilia Pereda (Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento)

Discussant: Vidya K.S

Poverty, Hunger and State Welfare—The Example of the Indian Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Alva Bonaker (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Discussant: Cyril Owen Brandt

Critical Mind and Labouring Body: Caste and Education Reforms in Kerala

Sunandan K.N. (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies Delhi)

Discussant: Bharat Chandra Rout

Education as a Fundamental Right: Deconstructing Socio-historical Discourses and Challenges

Latika Gupta (University of Delhi)

Discussant: Carmela Chávez

A Script for the Masses? Pedagogic Practices and Didactic Traditions among Sylhetis

Debarati Bagchi (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Discussant: Sakariyau Alabi Aliyu

Gender, Caste and Higher Education: Pathways and Experiences of Dalit Women in an Elite College in Delhi

Meenakshi Gautam (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Discussant: Jane-Frances Lobnibe

Transforming Work: Training Programs and Retail Worker-Identity in Contemporary Kolkata

Saikat Maitra (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Discussant: Sarah Hartmann

Social Inclusion in Schools. Experiences and Role of Teachers, Students, Management and Parents

Deepika K. Singh (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)

Discussant: Stefan Wellgraf

What Exclusion Leaves Out: The „Life-Worlds“ of Educational Policy Making in Contemporary India

Malini Ghose (Georg-August-Universität

Göttingen)

Discussant: Daniele Cantini

Inequality Generating Process in Longitudinal Perspective: Educational Transitions and Occupational Trajectories in Three Mexican Cohorts (1950-2011)

Nicolás Brunet (El Colegio de México)

Discussant: Andrea Cuenca Hernández

Thematic Discussions

Chair: Indra Sengupta

Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Bharat Chandra Rout, V. Kalyan Shankar

Chair: Jane-Frances Lobnibe

Cultural Production of Inequalities in Education

Maya Buser De, Sunandan K.N.

Wrap Up Session

Editorial Note: This report contains a few minor changes that were made after publication.

Tagungsbericht *Inequality, Education and Social Power. Winter Academy and Conference*. 17.11.2014–25.11.2014, Berlin, in: H-Soz-Kult 03.04.2015.