



EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

Education aims at providing a person an ability and taste for pursuits which are worthwhile in themselves. This aim is achieved by introducing a student to a form of rational knowledge or a discipline such as natural sciences, mathematics, literature, Economics or history and by initiating him into rational procedures such as inventing, developing and testing hypotheses; critically assessing arguments and making and testing hypotheses and thereby achieving a progressive mastery over a rational discipline and a gradual command over the rational procedures, A student learns to care for the intrinsic quality of experiences and activities apart from instrumental value they may possess in making the life of the individual and the community more easy and comfortable, (Shah 1978; 7). Therefore we see that education is of immense importance for the overall development of a person. But opportunities for the access to education and therefore such development is not equally available to all.

There are various factors that help or hinder a person to acquire education. A child brought up in an educated family acquires a strong motivation for education. The upper status of the family in the society facilitates helpful contacts with teachers and co-learners which are powerful aid to education. Children coming from lower strata will be denied these and similar advantages (Rege 1978: 119) William Tyler in his book 'the Sociology of educational inequality' observes that there can be five different kinds of educational inequality -inequality due to achievement, inequality due to education background, due to aptitude or ability and inequality of school environment (Tyler 1962: 10).

The first one that is inequality in terms of achievement refers to the fact that some children can read better than others of their age and are more likely to stay on at school and go on the University. This educational inequality this is in terms of achievement. The second type of inequality is due to educational background. This means that some children come from families that give them certain advantages such as encyclopedias, visit to art galleries and museums and help with their homework. This refers to inequality in educational background. Third and the more unusual meaning a educational inequality, view of Tyler is that some children are able to need at higher level than others of the same age because they were born that way This inequality IS that of aptitude or ability, that is potential for learning.

The fourth type of educational inequality IS about, the advantages that come from different experiences and stimulation that the several provides. Because of the better or more educational facilitates and climate of school; the children will learn faster, stay on longer and pick up credentials that will increase his lifetime earnings. It is school environment inequality.

Tyler also mentioned about five models through which educational inequality can be understood the first model is the meritocratic model proposed by Richard Herrnstein (1971). According, to this model rich and intellectually competent parents pass on all their children a similar head state. In such a model, biological inheritance of ability is the engine of inequality since family, school and work simply reinforce genetic endowments.

The 'radical' or 'class conflict' model of educational inequality propose a different set of relationship in which social and family background rather than inherited ability is the driving force. Family background is a more determinant of educational success that is ability. Children from the poorer backgrounds never have, in words of Newson Report (1963) 'an equal opportunity for acquiring intelligence. They are often labled as 'in educable and the expectation is that they will leave early (as edited in H.M.S.O., 1967, paras 53-56)

The third model of educational inequality is the conservative model which believe that a system that restricts opportunity is not early inevitable but undesirable. It is in nature of things, that the children of privileged class are better endowed intellectually go to better schools and dominates the elite institutions of learning. Adhorents of both conservative and the radical models agree that intelligence is not a natural talent but rather something conferred by society. All natural qualities have a social origin'.

The evolutionary liberal model is similar to merit to create model but proposes a weak connection between intelligence and family background they refuse the claim that there is a restricted pool of ability which explains the different class rates of achievement and success.



The fifth approach is of compensating liberal which resembles class conflict model but proposes that school environment and credentials can significantly improve the life chances of working class children. Education is seen to offer a ladder of opportunity, however restricted, to the children of working and lower classes. Education gives everyone an equal opportunity for developing mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. Educational system is viewed as a means for compensating for the deprived environment of the (Tyler, *ibid*: 13).

The liberal model in general views that academic credentials are awarded on merit in a system of fair competition. In the same way, jobs are awarded on merits and there is a strong relationship between educational qualifications and occupational status. School provides equality of opportunity for all members of society regardless of their position in the stratification system, a more open society and therefore a higher rate of social mobility will result.

Besides these five models, many thinkers have expressed their own different views. For example Emile Durkheim (1922: 67) maintained that there were as many different kinds of education as there were social milieus in any given society. In ancient Rome the education of the plebian was very different from that of the patrician. In India Brahmin Kshatriyas had quite separating education to Shudras. Karna had to suffer a lot to get Brahmin education. Douglas, Flaud, A.H. Halsey, F.M. Martis, J. Barron Mays all agree on the effect environmental factors upon children. Herbert H. Hyman in an article entitled 'The value system of different classes' was the first to point out that class and ethnic stratification are directly related to educational attainment, values system of the lower classes creates a 'self-imposed' barrier to an improved position. Members of the working class place a lower value on education as a means to personal advancement. They emphasize stability, security and immediate economic benefits while evaluating jobs and tend to reject the risks and investments involved. The motivation to achieve whether in school or job, will generally be lower for the members of the working class (Hyman 1964: 8). According to J.W.B. Douglas (1964: 75) Inequalities is increased by self-fertilizing nature of education. In the Crowther report, it was indicated that the chances of the children of professions and managerial parents continuing their education to 17 or beyond were 25 times more than the son of unskilled workers (Crowther Report 1959: 118) similarly Robbins Reports 1963: 50, registered that 15 per cent boys from non-manual classes entered university degree courses as against 3 per cent from manual classes.

Newsom and Powden Reports (1967, pp. 53-54 and 320) has observed that potential ability among the children of the lower classes have been masked by the inadequate power of speech. Linguistic adequacy is closely linked with home and social background. According to Bernstein the middle class child is brought up in an ethos of formal language or in 'elaborate code' while working class child is limited to use of 'restricted codes' (1961- 55'). Formal education is conducted in terms of an elaborate code and restricted code by its very nature, reduces the chances of working class pupils to successfully acquire some of the skills demanded by the educational system. From this view point, equality of opportunity can become a reality by compensating for the deprivations and deficiencies of low income groups. Professor Rahim Pedly in his discussion of 'A New Society' states that the first need is a culturally rich environment of the neighborhood, the home and the school within which children can both learn and grow. (Pedley 1963: 31)

French Sociologist Raymond Boudon in his work education, opportunity and social inequality argues that inequality of education opportunity is produced by 'two component processes. The first component, he refers to as the 'primary effects of stratification'. It involves sub cultural differences between social classes which are produced by the stratification system. The secondary effects of stratification are more important. These stem simply from a person's actual position in the class structure. He maintains that even if there were no sub cultural differences between classes, the very fact that people start at different positions in the class system will produce inequality of educational opportunity. He calls it positional theory. Moreover, there are greater pressures on the upper middle class boy to select a higher level educational course, if only to maintain his present social position (Boudon: 75).

Pierre Bourdieu, Michael F.S. Young, D. Lawton, Jane Torrey form another group of thinkers who argue that dominant groups in society have the power to define what counts as knowledge in the educational system. And if classroom knowledge is based largely upon the Knowledge of dominant groups then schooling will automatically favour the children of powerful and discriminate against those from lower social strata. Bourdieu (1973: 3) argues that the major role of the educational system is 'cultural reproduction'. This means reproduction of the culture of dominant class and to establish it as the basis of knowledge in the educational system. The dominant culture is the 'Cultural Capital' to be translated into wealth and power. The class differences in educational attainment is largely because of this uneven distribution of cultural capital. Children from dominant classes internalize most of the skills and knowledge during their preschool years and therefore have a higher rate of success than working class students. He further says that educational system plays the role of the elimination. It eliminates members of working class from higher level of education, either by examination failure or by self-elimination. Thus, it filters



in students of dominant class and filters out students of working class. In this way education is concerned with reproduction of established order.

Conclusion

F.D. Young (1971) also concludes that power and privilege remain within the same social groups on account of in equalitarian character of education system. Tyler also observes that there is a lightening word between education and occupation. A.H. Halsey is also supportive of the view that social background has an increasing effect on educational attainment and at the same time bond between education and occupational. Thus Halsey concludes that 'education is increasingly the mediator of the transmission of status between generations (Halsey, 1961). It is only through educational system that privilege is passed on from father to son. Therefore, this view of Halsey is opposed to meritocratic model and views education as a mechanism for the maintenance of privilege rather than as a means of role allocation.

To conclude, education may push up the rate of economic development but it cannot be equalizer to bridge the gulf between rich and poor on the contrary education helps in maintaining status quo and perpetuates the interest of dominant social class. It cannot be a stimulus to inclusive growth.

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