

## Inequality in Education: A Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

It is widely known that education for all ought to be equal to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender and hierarchy. Although equality in education is the primary purpose of our government, however, there are some instances that inequality in education exists due to some factors. This research identifies the factors that lead to inequality in education. Based on our findings factors such as individual characteristics (attitudes and beliefs, psychological traits, parental socio-economic status), individual educational success (attainment, field of study), population groups (men and women and ethnic groups), educational inequality (gender pay gap, horizontal, occupational and segregation) contributes to the overall dilemma. Moreover, our findings also show that micro and social contributes to the gaps of inequality of education, thus, social interactions and social structures affects the micro conditions and outcome. This implied that educational inequality is caused by different factors and constructs that undermined the policy of an educational system and this lead to inequality of education.

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental building block of all societies. Education is also a fundamental human right for all and is necessary for all to make the best of their lives. The rights to freedom from slavery or torture and fair hearing are other rights. Antonnis et al. (2016) noted that education is key to economic development, reduction of poverty, equality between men and women, public health, resolution of conflicts and transition to sustainable production and consumption. The achievement of these and other Sustainable development goals (SDGs) can be further accelerated by ensuring equity in education. However, not everyone was taught the same standard. According to Mesa (2007), while educational inequality declined in all of the Philippines and its regions and provinces from 1960 to 2000, there are large differences between regions and provinces in their educational results. Using a decomposition analysis, it turns out that poor provinces have higher disparities in education than non-poor provinces and women face a fairer distribution of training at the national level than men. Regional and provincial statistics indicate that the Gini education indices are negatively linked to the average school years and the GDP, but are positively related to the Gini income index, the rate of poverty and the difference in poverty. Zamora and Dorado (2015) have claimed that equality of education does not mean just an egalitarian society in which education is fairly distributed among the population. Being connected with education, which is a

component of human capital, it also implies equal opportunity as a driver of labor productivity change.

Economic growth can be argued by ensuring educational equal opportunities that enable poor households to get out of poverty and meet higher living standards (Thomas Wang and Fan 2001; Ibourk and Amaghouss 2012). If the conversation scenario becomes reality, however, an inequitable educational distribution will lead to a situation in which only educated elites in society are afforded the ability to maintain a significant share of the national income, resulting in an increase in the incidence of poverty and an increase in the difference between the poor and non-poor. Moreover, results from the study of (Hussain, McNally, and TelJah 2009; Aburayya et al., 2020a; Salinas & Suson, 2019) found out that students from poorer backgrounds tend to study at lower-status and less well-resourced universities for which the social and economic value attached to the degree is likely to be less. In addition, unequal distribution of power in society is by way of unequal distribution of knowledge through formal education. Bernsteini an analyses have been carried out widely in the field of school education; and more recently there is a growing body of work focusing on higher education. Of particular relevance are studies that reveal the complexities and contestations shaping university curricula and pedagogy generally and in different disciplines (Geirsdóttir 2011; Luckett 2009; Brennan et al. 2010; Suson

et al., 2019; Aburayya et al., 2019a). Some other studies focus on the structure of knowledge in intellectual fields (Maton 2006; Moore and Muller 2002; Aburayya et al., 2019b), and some on the effects on identities of neo-liberal values in higher education (Abbas and McLean 2010; Abbas, Ashwin, and McLean 2012; Aburayya et al., 2020b). Taken together, such studies focus on the two political problems raised by Bernstein that Muller (2004) identifies: the problem of the effects on curriculum and pedagogy of 'economising' educational systems; and, the problem of whether educational systems relay or interrupt hierarchies in society. We build on and contribute to this accumulating knowledge in the field of university education and social justice by using Bernstein's concepts to explore what kind of university undergraduate sociology-related social science is being transmitted; how it is being acquired; to what effect on students; and whether the effects are inequitable (Cited by Mclean et al., 2013).

Moreover, research has shown that inequality still has prominent effects in the West's education system, in particular in the US, which contributes to racial and socio-economic performance differences. Educators, administrators and policy makers have priority to reduce educational disparity. CEPA performs an observational analysis exploring a number of poverty and education disparity problems (CEPA, 2020). Chua's report (2008) stressed that governments around the world, including the Philippines, are depriving children of their fundamental literacy skills, since they did not resolve the 'strong and enduring' disparities in education. The alert, as launched on the 25th of November 2009, was issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization "If the world's governments are concerned about Education for All, they must take the challenge of addressing inequality more seriously," says Unesco. It states that education inequality are a product of, among other issues, income, sex, place of residence, race, language and disability. The latest Unesco study has classified the Philippines as one of the countries where the inequalities in education 'mirror' income inequality. In the poorest 20 per cent, Filipino children receive five years of lower education, according to UNESCO. On average the poorest 20 per cent receive six and thirty years of education, compared to the wealthiest of the richest twenty. "For many of them, the proportion of off-school students from the lowest quintiles is over 40%." Unesco said the relationship between household income and survival is "even more prominent" in high school grades. The UN agency has consistently noted that school-age boys in the Philippines are under-enrolled in both elementary and high schools, even more so in tertiary education, and that gender disparities have been "at the expense of boys." Its 2009 report relates gender disparity in the Philippines to poverty. Among the poor, girls far outnumber number boys who are in high school. Historically, boys have outperformed girls in mathematics in all grades of primary and secondary education the world over, but the picture has changed in the Philippines. Girls, Unesco said, are outperforming boys in mathematics in elementary grade. Unesco raised concerns over the conditions of schools and the quality of education Filipino schoolchildren get. Many schools and classrooms are in a state of disrepair. At least half of school heads say their "school needs complete rebuilding" or "some classrooms need major repairs," the report disclosed. At least one -third of students attend schools with insufficient toilets. Distance

and student well-being are equally serious problems. Unesco said teachers in the Philippines have reported one in seven children walking more than five kilometers to attend school. Schools also suffer an acute shortage of seating, and nearly half of students go to schools without libraries, according to the report. Unesco found that village schools operate fewer days a year than town or city schools. Grade 4 teachers in village schools, for example, have reported teaching significantly fewer annual hours of mathematics and reading than teachers in city or town schools, it added. Poor morale and weak motivation also undermine teacher effectiveness. For example, fewer than a third of fourth graders had teachers who thought their pay was adequate, said Unesco. Earlier this year, Unesco also said in its midterm review of the six EFA goals that the Philippines was "at risk" of not achieving the goals on adult literacy and gender parity. In 1991, the Philippines enacted the Local Government Code that transferred a number of functions, including the delivery of goods and services, from the national government to local governments. In theory, decentralization is supposed to make systems more responsive to local needs and give the poor a greater voice. Unesco found, however, that in the Philippines, financial decentralization "appears to have exacerbated inequalities, with wealthier regions better placed to mobilize resources." The Local Government Code allows local authorities to raise revenue for education through the Special Education Fund (SEF) tax on property. Unesco, however, noted that "spending per student from the SEF in the poorest municipalities with the lowest property values is only 13 percent of the levels in the richest municipalities and 3 percent of that in the richest cities." The report suggested a number of policies to remedy the inequalities in education, ranging from removal of school fees for basic education and increased public investment, to a strengthened commitment to education quality. It calculated that the financing gap for achieving basic education by 2015 globally is around \$7 billion a year, and accused the donor community of a "collective failure" to deliver on aid commitments. The Philippines devotes less than 3 percent of its gross national product to public spending on education, and has had to rely substantially on aid to finance basic education. It is one of the largest recipients of loans from the World Bank, along with Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia and Venezuela. In 2006 the bank extended a \$200 million loan as its National Program Support for Basic Education Project. This literature review identified the factors that lead to educational inequality and the constructs that undermined the policy in our educational system that decline quality education for all.

### **Inequality in Education**

Educational inequality is understood as the tendency for different sub-groups in society to make different educational choices and be differentially successful in their educational careers (Raabe, 2018). Moreover, research on educational inequality, particularly analyses of the achievement gap, document average differences between groups in school-level resources and then attempted to predict outcome scores. While this is an often accepted knowledge, it overlooks the intervening processes that lie between the observation of resource and the ability of students or families to engage and utilize that resource. While traditional investigations of education have assumed resources to be the lynchpin to equality between groups, my analysis argues

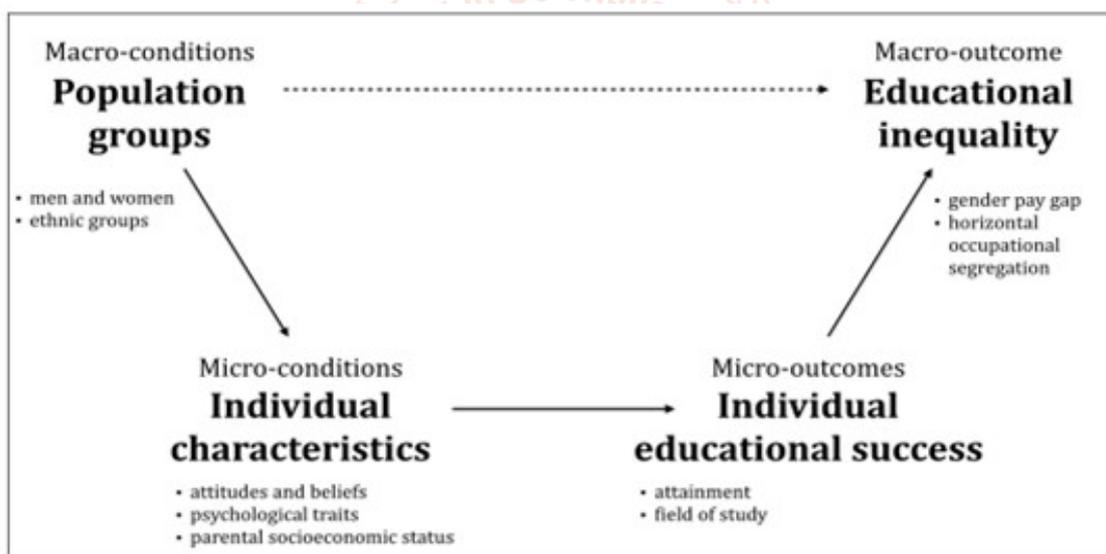
that in the post-Civil Rights Era the general provision of resources is an insufficient policy tool (Lewis, 2008).

However, Unterhalter (2015) stated that defining inequalities and equalities is not a matter of theory and abstraction. Concretely it requires us to understand the institutional foundations that reproduce inequalities and that can support equalities. These institutional foundations comprise both political and economic processes, socio-cultural norms, and policy and management regimes. Some of these institutional foundations directly underpin education systems, and some have an indirect connection. An analysis and assessment of gender inequality and equality in

schooling needs to take in these institutional processes which work at international, national and local level, often in un-coordinated ways. Central themes in a definition of gender equality and schooling include understanding opportunities, experiences, processes, practices, and outcomes. Each aspect can entail the discrimination and subordination of individuals, which constrains opportunities, agency, and the realisation of valued outcomes. These restraints include forms of exclusion, silencing, stereotyping, marginalisation and violence on the basis of gender. Each aspect also entails understanding the intersection of gender with other kinds of inequalities (e.g. class, race, ethnicity, location, poverty, sexuality).

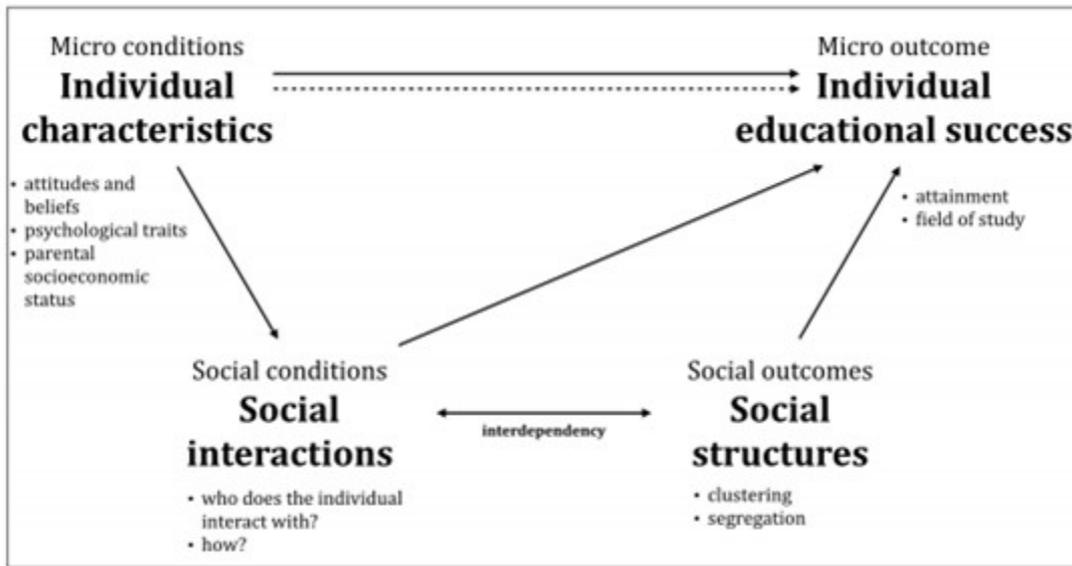
**Educational Inequality as Micro-Macro Level Phenomenon**

According to the literature, educational disparity appears to be different in educational achievement or area of study for general population subgroups (vertical and horizontal educational segregation, respectively). Education inequality is thus a macro-level phenomenon or observation. This can be explained in terms of macro-level approaches such as the education system, regulations and policies that differently impact groups within communities (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Heath, 2007; Fleischmann and Dronkers, 2010; Suson, 2019; Aburayya, et al. 2020c). But causal influence between macro-level phenomena can function only through the micro-level, as Coleman (1990) has pointed out. Most research on macro-level phenomena, including educational disparity, is therefore based on individual actions and performance. This behavior can have dramatic effects on the macro level has also been reported, for example in Schelling's influential model of home separation (1971), showing how even poor individual micro-level preferences can be intensified to full separation on the macro-level. (Cited by Raabe, 2018).



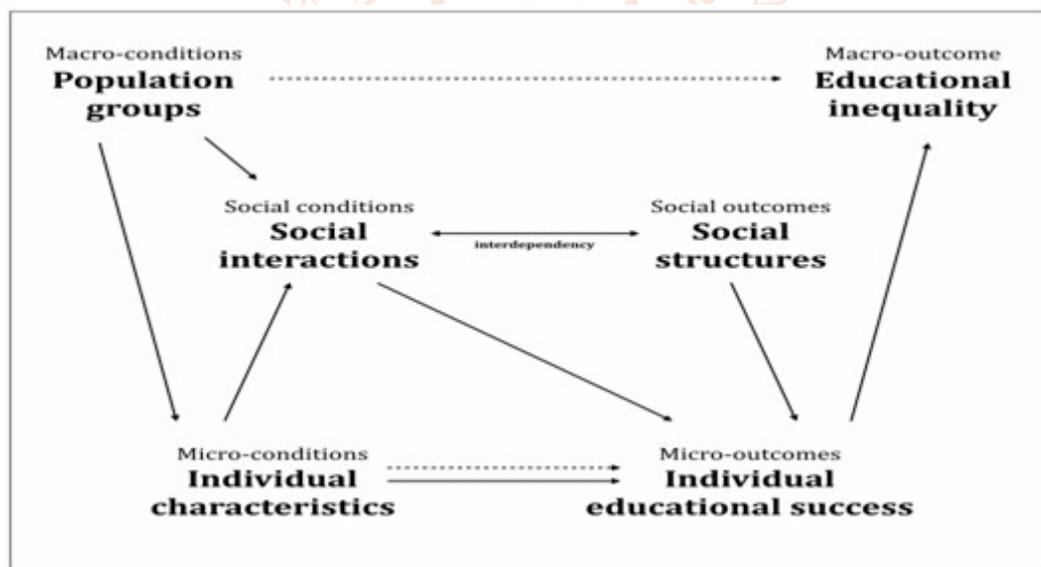
**Figure 1.1: Educational inequality explained by Coleman’s micro-macro link.**

The "Coleman Scheme," a "Coleman boat" (Coleman 1987, 1990), is a well-known model that links micro-level processes to macro-level outcomes. This can also be used to describe the inequality in education (see Figure 1.1). In other words, the "macro-outcome" is education inequality. The "macro conditions" are the presence in society of various classes, such as men and women, or various ethnic groups. The micro-level variables are individual attributes, such as human capital, behaviors, beliefs or socio-economic status of parents. Since the Coleman model assumes that macro factors can only influence macro outcomes through microeconomic processes, it is presumed that sex or ethnicity as such only have an effect on the educational performance of these individuals Factors. Furthermore, while it considers macro effects to consist of micro-level events and behaviors, it does not presume that macro-level effects are just a simple combination of individual results: they presume a complex interplay between individual outputs, which then affects the macro-level. Examples are the segregation model referred to above by Schelling (1971) or the group action threshold models by Granovetter (1978). In applying this to the explanation of education inequality, it means that educational inequality as the macro-level effect must not be interpreted as the simple sum of individual effects, but that the macro-level of educational inequality is determined by complex processes among the different outcomes. Thus, this model allows interdependencies of individual preference and choices, such as horizontal segregation, which shape macro-level outcomes such as horizontal segregation. An example of this is the tendency for women to focus on specific fields of study because many other women do so too (Raabe, 2018).



**Figure 1.2: "Micro and Social" Coleman boat of educational inequality**

The way people relate to each other creates a structure that often influences the opportunities and patterns of each other. This structure itself can, in two main ways, be a resource for education success. First, if an individual is embedded in a densely connected network (a "closed network"), it can be helpful since it means a shared network link between everyone else. This means that knowledge can be obtained directly and that it is less dangerous for people to trust others so they can sanction closely a society in which all know each other (Coleman, 1988). Since, as described above, people tend to relate more to people similar to themselves (McPherson et al., 2001), the more resourceful the immediate network around them is therefore more likely to be similar. This can also be a drawback, however, since it causes redundancy of information and lack of external pulses. As a consequence, bridging capital, consisting of the network connection to other groups which is different in some ways, will probably give access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable, in addition to the closely knit 'bonding' social capital (Putnam 2000; Burt 2007). Generally speaking, disparities in social capital at both person and institutional levels may result in cumulative advantage, also known as the Matthew effect (Merton, 1968): Those who already are in an advantageous role may further this, since they have access to the social capital that this network position carries. There have been finding, for instance, that jobseekers with a higher socio-economic status can find more and higher jobs than those with less socio-economic status (Ioannides and Datcher Loury, 2004), and that men can make better use of these types of opportunities as women (Aberg & Hedström, 2001; Aburayya et al., 2020b). Raabe (2018) pointed out that the social dimension of educational inequality explanation is therefore a difficult level that describes how individual circumstances contribute to individual outcomes, through social experiences and social structures.



**Figure 1.3: The "Multilevel" Coleman boat of educational inequality**

According to the general concept of the Colen system, human features influence social experiences, leading to various patterns in how people communicate. As already argued, social experiences and social systems are interdependent: thus, as compared to the conventional Coleman scheme in which only micro effects, not micro-conditions, affect macro-results, the social conditions, and social outcomes affect individual educative outcomes. There are a variety of ways to research the social domain, which comprises interdependent social experiences and social structures. First, there is an ego-centric approach which takes into account the specific types of interaction in which an person interacts, but not the way in which people interact with each other. As discussed above, however, these types of analyzes cannot offer useful insights, because they cannot take account of the

endogenous complexities of friendship networks. However, they can display similarities and record patterns on a degree comparatively accurate. As stated, several research uses aggregates of individual characteristics at the level of the classroom: using friends is therefore a better calculation rather than everyone in the class. Secondly, the socio-centered approach takes account of relations between individuals and the system that arises and interacts with them, including segregation, hierarchy and density. When taking this approach over time, it should take account of network dynamics and individual results and thus specifically take into account peer effects. This is firstly because partnerships are typically homophilic and secondly because of the endogenous nature of relationship networking. First of all people tend to become friends with people with whom they share several or significant characteristics (such as age, sex, behaviors, cultural consumption habits or free time), a phenomenon known as homophile (McPherson et al. 2001). Separating pleasant similarity from similarity as a result of peer effects through such selective friendship involves a longitudinal approach and is an integral part of this study. Second, who becomes friends and remains with whom characteristics are not only influenced: network mechanisms such as reciprocal friendships (reciprocity), friendships with friends (transitivity), or popularity of the people in the network are only some examples. The manner in which these processes form a Network is endogenous, that is, they rely on one another: For instance, someone who is also a friend of a friend is more likely to designate a friend. Since this interdependence violates the fundamental premise that regression analyzes are autonomous, a social network analysis is essential to take these networking processes into account (Carrington et al., 2009). As a longitudinal approach to choose from factors is required, the longitudinal social network study is required when targeting effects from friends (Steglich et al. 2010), as shown by numerous studies (e.g., Schaefer, 2016; Lakon et al., 2017; Aburayya et al., 2020d).

### Discussion and Conclusion

An equitable education system helps all students develop the knowledge and skills they need to be engaged and become productive members of society. More importantly, giving all children an equitable start would lead to better economic and social outcomes for individuals, for regions, and for our nation (SPREE, 2018). Based on the results of our study, inequality in education emerged when sub-groups of a population have gaps in terms of educational background and achievements. Although poverty is also the leading cause of inequality of education, some constructs have also emerged, such as Individual characteristics (attitudes and beliefs, psychological traits, parental socio-economic status), Individual educational success (attainment, field of study), For the macro-conditions this include the population groups (men and women and ethnic groups), while for the macro-outcome it includes the educational inequality (gender pay gap, horizontal, occupational and segregation). Moreover, our findings also show that micro and social contributes to the gaps of inequality of education, thus, social interactions and social structures affects the micro conditions and outcome. This implied that educational inequality is caused by different factors and constructs that undermined the policy of an educational system and this lead to inequality of education.

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