



## **CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN LOW INCOME COUNTRIES (LICs)**

*Branislav Mitić*

*ITS Information High School, Serbia*

*E-mail: mmbane@gmail.com*

*Armand Faganel*

*University of Primorska, Slovenia*

*E-mail: faganel@gmail.com*

*Maša Mitić*

*IS Information High School, Serbia*

*E-mail: masamitic02@gmail.com*

*Submission: 10/30/2020*

*Revision: 11/27/2020*

*Accept: 11/13/2020*

### **ABSTRACT**

As globalization is increasingly affecting both Low Income Countries (LICs) and high income countries (HICs), the formation of mixed markets emphasizes the importance of private education. Functionalists, for example, highlight privately owned institutions as higher quality ones, as the competitive market forces them to innovate and follow the rapid technological improvements, to respond to customers' demand. Higher education is becoming a necessity in LICs, as well. This is because it is much easier nowadays to "import" the workforce from another country. On the other hand, factories of transnational corporations are getting established in LICs. In this case, higher knowledge is not required, as the emphasis is placed on repetitive tasks and division of labor. The aim of this work is to provide a relevant analysis of scientific approach of various stand points in regards to different functions and applicability of knowledge, while considering the external factors, such as economic status of the country, to define the key challenges. Still, as the country progresses economically, the sector of production is likely to shift from primary (fishing, farming, agriculture) to the third one (services). As a result, LICs who aim to progress in an economical sense, must place greater emphasis on higher education, and align the educational process with the economic demand.



**Keywords:** role of education, social mobility, social class, ethnicity, intelligence as a factor of success, meritocracy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main hypothesis tested within this writing is: “Students in LICs come from disadvantage backgrounds, and as a result have lower attainment and face greater challenges compared to their middle class peers.” In 2002, World Bank reported that a requirement for a more productive and efficient production, the labor force “has to be knowledgeable”. So, there is a substantial need for the quality of education to be improved in the LICs.

Also, developing and developed economies are the ones dictating the pace of educational improvement and enforcing some types of knowledge to be learned. Skills alongside creativity are becoming a requirement for the majority of middle-class jobs. Moreover, LICs are facing a lack of meritocratic systems that align with often regional development, meaning that people from urban areas have a higher predisposition to succeed (Mandler, 2020). Social class alongside intelligence affects the chances of the working-class to succeed.

The fluid and complex role of education, as a bridge between an individual and the economy, is increasingly pressuring and reducing social mobility, both intra and inter-generational. Moreover, globalization and an increased demand for cheap labor for transnational companies, pressures LICs who have little to no benefit from it, which ensures full exploitation of them by the HICs, ensuring the world’s commitment to capitalism.

## 2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The functionalist view explains how education fulfills the needs of society. Functionalists emphasize the manifest role of education – learning basic knowledge and transferring it to the next generation. According to them, education is used to maintain a consensus on how it is established for the benefit of society. Education is recognized as merit, as it helps socialize young people and helps them learn the importance of achievement, equality of opportunity, and competition.

Parsons (1964) found that after primary socialization received by the family, the second most important role in the society is secondary socialization. Educational systems prepare youngsters for the adult role, as it was studied by Haralambos and Holborn in 2008. Parents usually raise children and treat them as their child, without paying much attention to their skills.



Such a phenomenon is known as “Particularistic standard”. As soon as children reach primary school, according to functionalists, they are treated equally.

Their attainment is based upon their skills and knowledge, regardless of their social background, class, or gender. Such an educational system is known as meritocratic, and it contains “universalistic standards”. On the other hand, Marxists see the educational system as a way for ideologies to be spread, as it was claimed by Althusser (1971). Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Malott (2011) did a study in Capitalist America. Their aspect was recognized as traditional Marxist, and they study the reproduction of class inequality, its legitimation, and teaching of skills for further employment.

The reproduction of class inequality is sustained because middle-class families have enough social and cultural capital to support their children, meaning that wealthier students attend higher quality education and later on, middle-class jobs. Simoiultaneously, working-class kids get working-class jobs, as it was confirmed by Wilis (1977) and Dolby (2004) study on lads. He confirmed that lower-class students had lower attainment, but the reason for it was their rebels against the “myth of meritocracy” and the capitalist society. So, the poverty cycle continues spinning due to their will.

Quite contradictory Green (1997) said that “There is no such thing yet as a postmodern theory of education.” She claims that postmodernism can offer little explanation upon the topic of education in terms of the correlation between undeveloped and developed regions, as it represents mainly a perspective upon modern industrial societies. However, postmodernists offer an interesting standpoint by questioning what does “betterment” mean? Who benefits from education? How does teaching provoke inequalities? All these questions represent a fundamental, postmodernist standpoint.

Postmodernist sociologists Heaton and Lwason (1996) and Lawson (2009) claim that the hidden curriculum is the main source of gender segregation and socialization. From an early age, students are learned that males have an active, dominant role, while females are more passive, timid, and shy. Smith and Rigby (2004) claims that other than gender stereotyping, sex discrimination and labeling affects different school subcultures, as well.

Cudd (2006), a liberal feminist, also claims that culturally assigned identities and social roles, work as a constraint for women, showing the clear disadvantages of cultural homogeneity. Radical feminists claim that the education system is patriarchal and thus marginalizes women.



Banyard (2011) investigated how sexual harassment, as a type of bullying has a lower ponder in comparison to verbal or physical assault among males. Radical feminists also concentrated on the monopolization of knowledge by men, as on the establishment of all-girl schools which could have shown greater levels of mutual respect and meritocracy.

### **3. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY**

Social mobility refers to the ability of people from a different class, ethnicity, and gender, of attaining certain positions within the society – basically moving upwards or downwards the society’s structure. It can be measured in two main manners: intergenerational mobility (movement between generations, the difference between parent and children’s job) and intragenerational mobility (the ability of advancement within one’s life, usually comparing their first job position and the one before retirement). Functionalists Davis and Moore (1945) claim that move up and down, must be obtained, so education represents a bridge between an individual and economy. Thus, the system that most qualified gets the best jobs – which is usually not the case in LICs, where political party or nepotism plays a huge role.

Harris (2005b) claims that social mobility is established as a result of people being encouraged to perform different roles that hold different values to society. The debatable question here is what determines the importance? It can be measured in terms of responsibility a person holds, but the cost-benefit analysis seems vague. Moreover, the differences in importance ensure necessary social inequalities, functionalists claim. Usually, LICs have the majority of the population employed in the primary sector, meaning that children are likely to be encouraged to become farmers, while in contrast, HICs focus their economic structure on the third sector, thus encouraging tourism and services (Bashiruddin, 2019).

Inequalities that arise from a meritocratic system are vital for society and encourage meritocratic competition. Still, it is debatable if modern industrial society's educational systems’ are meritocratic. Students from LICs face inequality since the starting point, in terms of material deprivation, lack of resources, private tutors, etc. Paterson and Iannelli (2005) claim that: “Many studies have shown education and the acquisition of educational qualifications are important means through which middle-class families pass on their social and economic advantage to their children. In these circumstances, education, rather than promoting greater social mobility, may in fact reduce it” (Wiseman, 2010).

Neo-Marxists Bowles and Gintis (2011) claim that educational systems are influenced by “sponsored mobility”. They explain this phenomenon as the result of children from LICs,



usually working-class, have less cultural advantages, compared to students backboned by their parents' class and ethnic background.

Aldridge (2003) claims that those from the working-class face lower levels of occupational mobility and it represents a "key feature" of various industrialized, HICs, and MICs. This is the case because the educational system is tightly connected to the economic demands, Marxists claim. As a result, jobs that are encouraged, are the ones lacking in the economy. As the economy progresses from command-planned towards the market, and later on mixed, the demand varies, while the educational system is likely to follow.

The New Right standpoint explains the benefits of privately owned schools. Due to the high competition, the highest choice is available for the consumers, which ensures the best possible outcome. Such an idea is connected to marketization as it stems from the fact that companies respond to the demand of customers by innovating and introducing new technologies to attract customers and maintain their trust (Malice, 2019).

#### **4. FACTORS INFLUENCING CURRICULUM**

As individuals progress within educational systems, the ability to access knowledge increases. In LICs, many children are forced to work as subsistence farmers, leading to them leaving school at an early age, so the access to knowledge is narrow. At the workplace, different levels of knowledge are required, which is a result of different levels of knowledge gained in school. In school, some types of knowledge carry a higher ponder than others.

Special status is often connected with mathematics, science. Authority, on the other hand, is learned in the school, so it can be replicated in the working environment. Educational qualifications give students the impression that knowledge is a commodity, that can be bought and sold, so students in LICs are usually associated with lower qualifications.

Young (1971) claimed that some type of ideology is always perpetuated through education. In such a way, students from LICs are aware of their status, if they are thought about capitalist society. Lack of educational qualifications is followed by a low-quality low-paid job, which represents a vicious circle. The knowledge presented to students is constructed from a certain standpoint and has its purpose. Usually, schools divide knowledge into subcategories of subjects, implying that one subject is not relevant to the other. This allows control of what is being learned and the ways students can show their knowledge.



The ethnocentric curriculum contains the norms and values of the dominant group within a society, which is, in most cases, the ethnicity of the majority. As a result, students from minorities may consider the curriculum as irrelevant, as their culture and literature are not included, or the curriculum highlights the importance of the major culture. This is usually present in former colonial forces, while the immigrants from colonies, usually LICs, do not have an opportunity to learn about their history, as their history, according to the colonial force, began with colonization. Moreover, the formal curriculum in terms of democracy could clash with the “learned experience” of the minorities (harman, 1976).

The difference in subject choice for boys and girls is a reflection of societal gender stereotyping, where women are choosing subjects connected to care, such as nursing, while males often pick engineering. In LICs, not many girls have an opportunity to attend school, as they are expected to aid their mothers. But, even if they do, it is to help their mothers and become housewives. In this case, gender stereotyping is, in a way, expected. However, it is majorly present in the HICs, too (Kariya & Rappleye, N.D.). Self and Zealey (2007) and Trigg et al. (2010) did a study in the UK and found that women often studied medicine, while men focused on business and computer science.

Also, The Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) reported that “girls consistently outperform boys at all levels of the UK education system are not necessarily helping women into well-paid jobs.”<sup>1</sup> The reason for this, they suggest, is the fact that boys have “different occupational and educational aptitudes”. This shows that gender stereotyping is not necessarily connected to the class, but the society. Warrington and Younger (2000) and Branden, Avermaet and Houtte (2013) stated that different career goals are a reflection of patriarchal gender stereotypes, in terms of secretarial jobs, hairdressers, childcare for women and accountancy, business, and plumbing for boys.

## **5. FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT – INTELLIGENCE**

Generally, intelligence and its relation to achievement are defined in three forms as being: positive, negative, and agnostic. The agnostic definition or explanation argues that we can not confirm that there is a relationship between the two variables. This is because we are

---

<sup>1</sup> 2007. *Equal Opportunities Commission Annual Report & Accounts April To September 2007*. [ebook] London. Available at: <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/231125/1034.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231125/1034.pdf)> [Accessed 16 November 2020].



not sure how to measure all types of intelligence effectively and even if we study just one type of intelligence, there is no consensus upon the ways to sustain validity and reliability.

Another problem with intelligence is that it does not have a permanent state, it rather represents a complex dynamic system that is highly dependable on the context given and can be presented in several ways. This standpoint assumes that intelligence is not inherited, meaning that it is not something we are born with, but it is developed through learning and cultural practices. With that in mind, Saunders (2002) and Branden, Avermaet and Houtte (2013) claims that it is not a matter of nature, thus suggesting that students from LICs who score worse, are a product of low-quality education, which also opens up an optimistic view that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can, hypothetically, advance in a meritocratic system.

Sociologists who support the positive view, argue that IQ tests measure cognitive skills, which is one of the major indicators of intelligence. Mathematical problem solving and logic is included in this observation. As skills similar to these are valued in school and at work, the relationship between intelligence and attainment makes sense in this manner (Young, N.D.).

Saunders (2002) claims that intelligence levels are different when comparing social classes. Middle-class students generally appear more intelligent than working-class ones, due to their cultural and social advantages. The “social selection” in terms of meritocracy, ensures that students with the most academic achievement can climb up the social structure. Also, social mobility is, Saunders claims, available for working-class students who show exceptional knowledge, thus enabling them to rise to the middle class. Middle-class students who fail to acquire knowledge will climb down the class structure and end up in the working-class. Overall, this means that middle-class children will always, on average, be more intelligent.

A negative standpoint explains that educational attainment depends upon several cultural factors within and outside the school which causes some students to perform well while working as a constraint to others to perform that well. The Robbins Report (1963) claimed that social class was one of the major influences on the achievement, as in the UK students with similar IQ did not acquire the same occupation, as twice as many middle-class students did bachelors as the working-class students.

Murayama et al. (2012) did a study in Germany and found that IQ was a significant factor only at the beginning of mathematical studies. The long-term analysis shows no



correlation between achievement in mathematics and IQ. This is because skills, motivation, and persistence played a more important role.

## **6. FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT – SOCIAL CLASS AND ETHNICITY**

Material deprivation is also a factor which disadvantages students from LICs: poor nutrition often leads to loss of concentration, thus is likely to result in lower achievement. The number of members in the house also restricts the space available for studying, thus affecting attainment. Frequently, students in LICs are forced to work to provide family income, which makes them more vulnerable to disease, thus affecting attainment negatively (Markovits, 2019).

The environment students live in also can be a disadvantage for students in LICs. High levels of crime in the neighborhood, drug abuse, lack of facilities such as library, often lead to underachievement. Material deprivation is present in the Northern America and Europe, but Ramachandran found that in India, material deprivation is the major factor of underachievement. He claims that: “50% of schools have a leaking roof or no water supply 35% have no blackboard or furniture 90% have no functioning toilets. She further argues: ‘Malnutrition, hunger and poor health remain core problems, which comprehensively affect attendance and performance in classes. The added burden of home chores and child labour influence a large number of children, especially girls, to drop out of school’ (James, 1916).

Douglas (1964) and Kirby (2000) found that parental attitudes and their will to motivate children to attend higher education, directly reflects upon their current achievements. Also, larger families, which are usually the case in LICs, do not have enough resources to support education of every child, so the first born is most likely to be fully educated.

Students from working class try to overcome the disadvantages by adapting themselves to middle class norms and values in the school. Bernstein (1971) and Bernstein (2003) claimed that restricted speech codes used by working class clashed with the elaborated ones middle class teachers used. This meant that middle class students were able to succeed and were over-represented in bands, sets and streams, as they were able to communicate in “the language of education”.

Other than that, many students in LICs face economic hardship, due to which they are forced to leave school as soon as possible. Immediate gratification is usually a result of parental influence and economic factors. In LICs this results in men acquiring manual jobs, while





women raise a family and work sometimes part-time. In contrast, middle class families in more developed regions motivate children into deferred gratification and teach them on the importance of higher education.

Goodman and Gregg (2010) found that 75% of the affluent mothers assumed that their child would go to university, while 37% of the least affluent mothers 'hoped' their child would attend higher education; children from poorer families believed that they were 'less academic' and were consequently less concerned about doing well academically than their middle-class peers. MacDonald and Marsh (2005) claimed that there is not an evidence of anti-school subculture or underclass, while social exclusion is a result of labelling.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Education is becoming increasingly more important as a factor of survival. Still, many claims that educational systems, such as the one in the USA, are used for social control, whilst low education is a goal of political leaders, to ensure low levels of critical thinking. John Stossel did a study in a school and interviewed children to gather their experience in education. One of the answers was that you can frequently see kids walking in the school smoking weed, you know, representing a day-to-day situation.

What John Noticed was that parents thought that this will never happen to their kid, so there is nothing to worry about. The concept “it will never happen to me” is a reason why ideologies and patriotism are easy to install in people. They assume that they are the only ones living there, so nothing bothers them. Polluted river in China – well I am not the one drinking that water. Global warming – I do not live on the coast. Food price increase in Africa – that is far away. Not taking responsibility for our actions, while simultaneously living in an invisible and highly unrealistic social bubble, is a major cause of 21st-century problems. Social consciousness is a 21st-century cure to the recent trend of western individualism.

According to the research done, we can conclude that there is sufficient relevant evidence to support that claim that “Students in LICS come from disadvantage backgrounds, and as a result have lower attainment and face greater challenges compared to their middle class peers.” Still, many constraints were present during the research, as factors, such as lack of capital, material deprivation and lack of meritocracy are often interconnected, so it can be quite hard to distinguish the extent to which each of these factors affects lower attainment rates in LICS. Moreover, LICS rarely keep accurate records on their statistics, which questions the reliability of the data used for causation and correlation.



Even though enough data is present, from which a conclusion can be drawn, further research is needed to investigate the extent to which LICS remain poor as a result of low educational attainment and the extent to which different social factors, attitudes, norms and values regarding the importance of education, are influencing the final outcome. Furthermore, factors within family can have an impact upon motivation of children to attend higher education. Moreover, society can be disadvantaging for the children, as well.

This case was describes by Paul Willis in his study on lads, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Willis draw a conclusion that on average, lowe class scored worse than middle class students, and the reason for this was the fact that boys through that they are rebelling against the capitalistic society by not studying. Basically, their way of showing the lack of meritocracy was lower educational attainment, thus lower-class jobs and entering the vicious cycle of poverty. By rebelling against the system, they became the part of that exact system. So, the question for the future research remains: how do you fight inequality, if your position within the society is pre-established?

## REFERENCES

- Aldridge, A. (2003). **Consumption**. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Althusser, L. (1970). **Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses** (Notes towards an Investigation), La Pensé
- Banyard, K. (2010). **The Equality Illusion**.
- Bashiruddin, A. (2019). **Teacher development and teacher education in developing countries**. [Place of publication not identified]: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.
- Bernstein, B. (2003). **Theoretical Studies Towards A Sociology Of Languag**. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2011). **Schooling In Capitalist America**. Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books.
- Branden, K., Avermaet, P., & Houtte, M. (2013). **Equity And Excellence In Education**. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Cudd, A. (2006). **Analysing Oppression**. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, K., & Moore, W. (1945) Some Principles of Stratification, **American Sociological Review**, 10(2).
- Dolby, N. (2004). **Learning To Labor In New Times**. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Green, A. (1997). **Education, Globalization, And The Nation State**. St. Martin's Press.
- Harman, D. (1976). **Expanding Recurrent And Nonformal Education**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harris, D. (2005b). **Reading Guide to Davis and Moore**, [www.arasite.org](http://www.arasite.org).



- Heaton, T., & Lawson, T. (1996) **Explaining class differences in educational achievement**. In: Education and Training. Skills-Based Sociology. Palgrave, London.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-13883-8\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-13883-8_4)
- James, H. (1916). **Problems Of Higher Education In India**. Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co.
- JRF. (2020). **Poorer Children’S Educational Attainment: How Important Are Attitudes And Behaviour?**. [online] Available at: <<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poorer-children%E2%80%99s-educational-attainment-how-important-are-attitudes-and-behaviour>> [Accessed 16 November 2020].
- Kariya, T., & Rappleye, J. (n.d.) **Education, Equality, And Meritocracy In A Global Age**. pp.98-108.
- Kirby, M. (2000). **Sociology In Perspective**. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Lawson, T. (2009). **Education And Training**. Palgrave MacMillan.
- MacDonald, R., & Marsh, J. (2005). **Disconnected Youth?**. Houndmills [England]: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Malice, M. (2019). **The New Right**. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Malott, C. (2011). **Critical Pedagogy And Cognition**. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Mandler, P. (2020). **Crisis of the meritocracy**. [Place of publication not identified]: OXFORD UNIV Press.
- Markovits, D. (2019). **The Meritocracy Trap**. New York, N.Y: Penguin Press.
- Murayama, K., Pekrun, R., Lichtenfeld, S., & Vom Hofe, R. (2012). *Predicting Long-Term Growth In Students’ Mathematics Achievement: The Unique Contributions Of Motivation And Cognitive Strategies*. **Child Development**, 00(0), 1-16. University of Munich. Available at: <[https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Murayama-et-al\\_2012\\_CD.pdf](https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Murayama-et-al_2012_CD.pdf)> [Accessed 16 November 2020].
- Parsons, T. (1964). **Social Structure and Personality**. Free Press.
- Robbins Report (1963). **Higher Education REPORT Of The Committee Appointed By The Prime Minister Under The Chairmanship Of Lord Robbins 1961-63**. [online] London. Available at: <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html>> [Accessed 16 November 2020].
- Smith, P., Pepler, D., & Rigby, K. (2010). **Bullying In Schools: How Successful Can Interventions Be?**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trigg, E., Mohammed, T., Ford, L., Montgomery, H., & Vidler, V. (2010). **Practices In Children's Nursing E-Book**. 3rd ed. Elsevier.
- Wiseman, A. (2010). **The Impact Of International Achievement Studies On National Education Policymaking**. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald, p.126.
- Women. Men. Different. Equal. (2007). **Equal Opportunities Commission: Annual Report & Accounts April To September 2007**. [ebook] London. Available at: <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/231125/1034.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/231125/1034.pdf)> [Accessed 16 November 2020].
- Young, M. (n.d.). **The Rise Of The Meritocracy**. 59-67.



Young, M. (ed.) (1971). **Knowledge and Control**. Collier-Macmillan.

