

Course Title: Inequality and Education

Credits: 2

Course Duration: September 23 to 27, 2019 (Everyday)

Timings: 9:30 AM to 12 noon

Instructor: Prof. Sadhna Saxena

The objective of the course is to introduce students to the discourse on inequality and education with a special focus on understanding the stratified education system itself. Also, to engage with the question, if social and economic equality is achievable through such an iniquitous education system or the education system is a product of the iniquitous social system itself? In this context, the role of supposedly neutral disciplines like science and mathematics classes will also be investigated to understand if these help in overcoming or at least questioning social hierarchies.

In India, multiple cultures, castes, languages, religions, ethnicities and economic classes co-exist with strict power hierarchies. Consequently, marginalised groups face multiple discriminations in larger society that is reproduced in the education system including, in classrooms. Gender, of course, intersects in all these categories. Interestingly and disturbingly, some of these hierarchies, like caste, remain the most resilient. Working and theorising in the area of 'education and equity' has therefore been a huge challenge. Despite the rhetoric of equality the State's role in sustaining educational inequalities has also been investigated by many scholars.

Furthermore, the objectives of education have been a topic of constant debates and contestation. These range from status quoist, functionalist and instrumental objectives (like the ones spelt out in the draft NEP: foundational literacy and numeracy skills) to the objectives of transforming societies. In practice, these translate from skill training and vocational education to the teaching of education, philosophy and sociology focussing on values, ethics, citizenship, justice, equity, equality and so on. The objectives undergo changes with the changing context. So do the educational opportunities. In the context of commodification and privatisation of education there is an increasing policy thrust on the instrumental objectives. Therefore, building deeper understanding of stratification and inequality, that is, unequal access and quality of education to different social and economic classes has acquired more urgency. As have the issues of knowledge, power and ideology.

Generally, unlike other disciplines, science and mathematics are considered neutral disciplines and therefore, seen as equalisers inside the classrooms. This means that the science and mathematics classrooms will automatically, by the very nature of the disciplines, address social and economic inequalities. Such assumptions tend to make the science and mathematics teachers blind to the classroom inequalities which impact learning. The course will also try to engage with such claims/understanding of neutrality of these disciplines.

The course will therefore be covering the following topics:

1. Inequality and education;
2. Education and stratification;
3. Education and social change;
4. Science and Mathematics classrooms and issues of social inequality;
5. Education and social movements, experiences from the field

Following is the list of suggested reading which would be referred to during the course.

Suggested Readings

Bowles, Samuel. (1977). 'Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification' in *Power and Ideology in Education* by J.Karabel and A.H. Halsey (Eds.). New York: OUP. 118-135.

Coleman, James S. (1967). "The Concept of Equality and Educational Opportunity'. Paper presented at a conference in Harvard, Cambridge ,October 21.

Chanana, Karuna . (2008). *Interrogating Women's Education*. Delhi: Rawat Publications.

Durkheim ,Emile. (1977). 'On Education and Society' in *Power and Ideology in Education* by J.Karabel and A.H. Halsey (eds.). New York: OUP.92-105.

Madan, Amman. (2015). *Education and Social Stratification: An Introduction*

Madan, Amman; Rama Sastry and B. Ramdas. (2019). 'Social Movements and Educational Change'. *Economic and Political weekly*. Vol. LIV(5): 45-52.

Nambissan, G. B. (2009). *Exclusion and discrimination in Schools: Experiences of Dalit Children*. Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and UNICEF.

Saxena, Sadhna. (2012). 'Is equality an Outdated Concern in Education?'. *Economic and Political Weekly*.47 (49): 61-68.

Saxena, Sadhna. (2000). *Shiksha Aur Janandolan*. Delhi: Granthshilpi.

Velaskar, Padma. (2013). 'Quality and Inequality in Indian Education: Some Critical Policy Concerns'. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*. 7(1): 58-93.

Velaskar, Padma. (2013). 'Sociology of Educational Inequality in India: A Critique of New Research Agenda' in *Sociology of Education in India* by Geetha B. Nambissan and S. Srinivasa Rao (eds.). New Delhi: OUP. 103-129.

Readings related to Science and Mathematics teaching will be added later.