The Issue of Economic Immobility: How can Education Bridge the Gap?

Introduction

Education should act as a great social leveler; providing opportunity for individuals to succeed in life. However, to acquire the desired education can be a challenge especially for the lower social economic class since family circumstances play a critical role in student performances.

Abstract

The process of globalization has made it more difficult for certain groups of people to possess, accumulate and create the forms of capital into desired wealth (Bourdieu, 1986). Essentially, it has redefined the multiple forms of capital and exacerbated social inequalities; it has also highlighted the importance of implementing policies to address the problem of equity in education. Hence, policies that aim to treat everyone fairly and provide equal access to education to all can only be plausible if all people are placed at the same starting point, and require the same amount of help. Using Singapore as an example, “all schools are good schools” if only when “unequal” support is given to the different groups of Singaporeans. This is because in Singapore, students are banded and streamed by academic abilities and programs; this system that recognizes differences will further reinforce class distinctions and greater inequality in the society. For example, in a recent report by Teng (2016), children from higher socio-economic status (SES) are more likely to be schools that offer Integrated Programme (IP) and the Gifted Education Programme (GEP). As the society undergoes further stratification with each SES group being further divided into many sub-clases (see Figure 1), this will lead to a greater division of the forms of capital. With such differentiated access to the finer forms of capital, more groups of students will inevitably be disadvantaged in varying degrees in schools.

Background/Relevance

Inequality can be widen with differences in:

- income & education in Singapore (Lim & Pang, 2018).
- “the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in the time represents the immanent structure of the social world” (Bourdieu, 1986).
- technological and scientific developments (Kellner, 2002), thus creating a more complicated stratified “Forms of Capital”.

Based on these new forms of capital, at the macro level, government policies could be further diversified by adopting a more divergent and ‘unequal’ approach to meet the family needs of the different groups of people.

Conversely, at the school level, a more convergent approach could be adopted to bring these different groups of students together. “Unequal” support from school could aim at helping students to better work together to build a more “equal” and cohesive society (see Figure 2).

Issue of Economic Immobility in Singapore

Law (2014) identified that the concept of mobility of class, one of Singapore’s key national ideology, has come under fire in recent years. In its true meaning, meritocracy is defined as rewarding one’s work based on individual’s merit and abilities regardless of his/her background. As pointed out by Prakash (2014), the “meritocratic principles offers equal opportunities, not outcome”. As a developed nation, a highly diversified Singaporean society would require the government and schools to “evolve beyond meritocracy to a address inequality to a greater degree than before” (Prakash, 2014). The notion that “equal opportunities” are offered to all people regardless of individual’s family background could no longer work effectively. This is because in a highly stratified society, offering “equal” opportunities to all regardless of one’s social class would not be possible. Instead, a hybrid “unequal” approach, i.e. a simultaneous macro divergent-micro convergent approach should be considered (see Figure 2).

Research Question

How can school help to improve one’s forms of capital in this globalized world?

Proposed Framework to Bridge Gap

Figure 1 illustrates how the society is further stratified into many sub-clases which has inevitably created more segregation in the society. Therefore, at the macro level, government policies would need to be more diverse to meet the different needs and at the school level, schools need to create an inclusive space that help the various groups of students to acquire different knowledge and skills, accumulate different forms of capital and experience multiple successes.

Figure 2 shows how the forms of capital have evolved due to the finer stratification of the society. With such stratified capitals, it has created more barriers for different groups of people to move up the social ladder.

Recommendations to improve ‘equality’

- A highly stratified society would require a more convergent and inclusive approach at the school level instead of a ‘customized’ pathway i.e., educational tracking at an early age.
- Although tracking allows for a more targeted support to help to level-up the students who are not meeting the required standard, it furthers reinforces and accentuates their shortcomings, and that is, they are “not good enough” (Tew, 2018).
- Conversely, an inclusive and convergent approach whereby all students are empowered in their learning process would be more applicable in this highly diversified society.
- A convergent education does not mean uniformity; instead the focus is on the overall development of each student, and how education can play its role in helping students to succeed in multiple ways.
- A convergent education could include more skill-based curriculum in schools. This suggestion is also inline with the Minister of Education, Mr Ong Ye Kung’s call to combine “the best of Switzerland’s emphasis on vocational training with Singapore’s more academically oriented education system” (Low, 2019).
- This approach would allow students to experience both academic and skill-based education at an early stage, and this would provide opportunities for students and parents to understand and experience the benefits of both types training.
- Essentially, the “multiple pathways” should begin and experience at all levels in all schools. This would enable students with differing abilities and SES groups to experience a more holistic education together.
- More importantly, to enable students to experience and celebrate “success” in multiple ways (and not only the academic way).

REFERENCES


GLOBALIZATION OF A SACRED NARRATIVE:
Colonial and Post-colonial Agendas for Translating the Indian Epic of Rama into English

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the rationales Western Indologists have expressed for translating the Indian epic, the Ramayana, into English. We analyzed the prefaces and general introductions of four translations, and each of the translators emphasized the importance of this Indian epic for an understanding of Indian culture. However, a critical content and discourse analysis revealed that there was a permeable line between appreciation and appropriation of this cultural knowledge, and each translation can only be fully understood as a product of the complex global, cultural, political, and historical contexts in which they were completed.

BACKGROUND
LITERATURE REVIEW: Postcolonial scholarship has long criticized colonial orientalist discourse of Indian cultural knowledge as appopriative and hegemonic (e.g., Said, 1978). More recently, a group of Indian scholars (some with Hindu nationalist leanings) have accused American Indologists of criticizing Indian cultural heritage via negative interpretations of Indian sources (e.g., Malhotra, 2016). Others have suggested that Western historiography functionally belittles India by appropriating and wielding Indian forms of knowledge and contextualizing and stratifying India in relation to Western historiographical epistememes (Chakrabarty, 1992).

These accusations run counter to the conviction by some Western Indologists that all scholars of India have a social and global responsibility to accurately and fairly represent history in an effort to undermine those who pursue religious and political communalism and conflict (Pollock, 2011; Miller, 1991)

SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION: In our era of globalization, appreciation of cultural diversity is broadly encouraged, but this is happening at the same time as Western economic and political ideologies as well as the English language become increasingly dominant (Spring, 2016; Hall, 1997). Thus, there is a tension between Western secular scholarship and indigenous cultural traditions, and this study seeks to provide information on the power dynamics embedded in Western epistemological discourse of Indian cultural sources (Fairclough, 2003).

METHODS
DATA SAMPLE: The data was drawn from the translator introductions to four translations of the Ramayana. Of our four samples, two were translations of the Valmiki Ramayana (Carey & Marshman, 1806; Goldman, 1984), and two were translations of the more popular Tulisa Ramayyanaras (Growse, 1877; Lutgendorf, 2016). Of our samples two are British colonial era products completed by British Indologists working in India, and two are more recent translations completed by well-known American Indologists/philosophers.

DATA ANALYSIS: This study employed a two-phase analytical process. A qualitative content analysis (Krippendorf, 2004) was completed to identify the translators’ motivations for selecting the Ramayana for translation into English. Secondarily, a critical discourse analysis (Stokes, 2013) was used to discern the power dynamics between scholarly translations and the cultural stakeholders the translated texts are used to represent (Foucault, 1984). This was a three-tier process that considered a) the textual production, b) the discourse production, and c) the ideological production (Fairclough, 2003).

CONCLUSION
The extra-textual discourse reveals that the context of each translation is fundamental to understanding how and why the Ramayana was translated and proliferated into English and in very different contexts. Each of our samples reveals a permeable line between appreciation and appropriation of the epic and varying examples of the ways knowledge and power coalesce.

SELECTED FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TRANSLATION ORIENTED</th>
<th>POSITION OF TRANSLATOR</th>
<th>LANGUAGE OF SOURCES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carey/Marshman Valmiki Ramayana (1806)</td>
<td>British public; Baptist congregation; British colonial civil servants in India</td>
<td>Baptists missionaries working in Serampore, India</td>
<td>Sanskrit/English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growse Tulisidas RCM (1877)</td>
<td>British colonial civil servants in India; Asiatic Society of Bengal members</td>
<td>British district governor in Muthura, India</td>
<td>Hindi/English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutgendorf Tulisidas RCM (2016)</td>
<td>Western academy; English speaking audience</td>
<td>Murty Classical Library of India; A private endowment at Harvard University funded by a wealthy Indian expat. family</td>
<td>Tenured US professor of South Asian studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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REFERENCES