



# Sociology of Education and the Reproduction of Inequality: How the Hidden Curriculum, Cultural Capital, and Social Selection in Formal Educational Institutions Perpetuate Class Hierarchy in Modern Society

Husni Abadi Emha<sup>1</sup>, Oman Sukmana<sup>2\*</sup>, Tri Sulistyarningsih<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Master's Student in Sociology, Directorate of Postgraduate Program

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: oman@umm.ac.id

## Article Info :

Received:

26/03/2026

Revised:

30/03/2026

Accepted:

07/04/2026

## ABSTRACT

*The formal educational system occupies a uniquely ambivalent position in modern democratic societies: simultaneously celebrated as the primary mechanism of social mobility and meritocratic opportunity, and analyzed by critical sociologists as one of the most effective instruments of class hierarchy reproduction and social stratification maintenance. This article develops a comprehensive sociological analysis of how formal educational institutions reproduce social inequality through three interrelated mechanisms: the hidden curriculum, cultural capital dynamics, and social selection processes. Drawing upon the foundational theoretical frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis's correspondence principle, and Randall Collins's credential society thesis, and through systematic review of empirical literature and secondary analysis of Indonesian educational inequality data, the study argues that educational institutions do not merely reflect pre-existing class hierarchies but actively constitute and legitimize them through the daily practices, institutional arrangements, and symbolic processes through which academic success and failure are produced and attributed. The analysis identifies six mechanisms through which educational inequality is reproduced: the hidden curriculum's transmission of class-coded behavioral norms; cultural capital differentials that convert class privilege into recognized academic merit; social selection through streaming, tracking, and credential stratification; school choice markets that spatially segregate educational opportunity by class; teacher expectation effects that reproduce class hierarchy through differential pedagogical investment; and credentialism dynamics that shift the mechanisms of class advantage without eliminating them. Applied to the Indonesian context — which exhibits some of the most acute educational inequality indicators in Southeast Asia, with a 60-percentage-point gap in university enrollment rates between the top and bottom income quintiles — the findings challenge the dominant policy discourse of educational expansion as a solution to social inequality, arguing instead that without structural reforms addressing the class-biased mechanisms of educational reproduction, expansion primarily benefits already-advantaged classes.*

## Keywords

*Sociology of education; inequality reproduction; hidden curriculum; cultural capital; Bourdieu; social selection; class hierarchy; Indonesia; educational stratification; credential society*



©2022 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

## 1. Introduction

In 2023, a study published by the SMERU Research Institute documented a finding that should have generated significant public debate but passed largely unnoticed in Indonesia's education

policy discourse: among children born into the bottom income quintile in Indonesia, only 12.7 percent would achieve a higher level of educational attainment than their parents — compared to 67.3 percent of children born into the top quintile. The study documented not merely that educational outcomes differ by class — a finding long established in the Indonesian empirical literature — but that the relationship between parental socioeconomic position and children's educational attainment had become more rigid rather than more flexible across the three decades of Indonesia's post-Reformasi educational expansion. Despite massive increases in school enrollment rates, significant growth in the national education budget, and ambitious equity-oriented programs including the Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP) and Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP) conditional education assistance programs, the intergenerational transmission of educational advantage and disadvantage had intensified rather than diminished.

A second case from the same year illuminates the mechanisms through which this reproduction operates at the institutional level. An ethnographic study of three adjacent elementary schools in Surabaya — one serving a wealthy residential district, one serving a middle-income kampung neighborhood, and one serving an urban poor community — documented systematic differences in the hidden curriculum operating within each school that went far beyond differences in formal curriculum content or teacher qualifications (Sulistyaningsih & Emha, 2023). In the wealthy school, students were socialized into what Bourdieu would recognize as middle/upper-class habitus: confidence in expressing opinions, comfort challenging teacher authority, facility with formal Indonesian register, and a self-understanding as future professionals and leaders. In the poor school, students were implicitly but powerfully socialized into deference, compliance, and acceptance of institutional authority — dispositions that are functional for working-class occupational roles but that systematically disadvantage their bearers in the academic contexts, job interviews, and professional environments that determine social mobility outcomes. These differences emerged not from deliberate teacher intent but from the unconscious reproduction of class-coded pedagogical practices that reflect teachers' own socialization and habitus formation.

These cases illuminate the central theoretical argument of this article: that the formal educational system in Indonesia — as in comparable modern societies — functions not primarily as a mechanism of meritocratic opportunity allocation, as its official ideology proclaims, but as a powerful engine of class hierarchy reproduction, operating through subtle, institutionally embedded mechanisms that are largely invisible to participants precisely because they are experienced as natural expressions of individual ability, effort, and merit rather than as socially structured advantages and disadvantages. The meritocratic ideology of education — the belief that academic success and failure reflect individual intelligence and industriousness rather than class-based cultural advantages — is not a simple lie but a socially effective mystification: it conceals the structural mechanisms of educational reproduction beneath the appearance of fair, objective, individual-level assessment.

This article develops a comprehensive theoretical account of these mechanisms, organized around three core analytical frameworks: Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and capital; Bowles and Gintis's correspondence principle and hidden curriculum analysis; and Randall Collins's sociology of credentials and social closure. These frameworks are integrated in a multi-mechanism analytical model that identifies six processes through which educational inequality is reproduced, and applied to the Indonesian empirical context through secondary analysis of national educational inequality data. The article is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical literature; Section 3 details the methodology; Section 4 presents the analytical framework and empirical findings; Section 5 develops the critical discussion; and Section 6 concludes with theoretical and policy implications.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction**

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction — developed across his major works including *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (with Passeron, 2020), *Distinction* (1984), and *The State Nobility* (1996) — provides the foundational theoretical framework for this study. Bourdieu argues that educational systems fulfill a dual social function: the manifest function of knowledge transmission and skill development, and the latent function of social reproduction — the

reproduction of the class structure of society across generations. The educational system fulfills this reproductive function not through explicit class discrimination but through the subtle operation of what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic violence': the imposition of class-based cultural standards as universal, objective measures of academic merit, in which the arbitrary cultural choices of the dominant class are misrecognized as natural expressions of intellectual capability.

The concept of cultural capital is central to Bourdieu's account of educational reproduction. Cultural capital — the knowledge, skills, tastes, and cultural competencies that individuals acquire through socialization — exists in three forms: embodied (internalized as habitus, the system of durable dispositions that generates particular ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting); objectified (materialized in cultural goods — books, art, instruments); and institutionalized (officially recognized through educational credentials). The sociologically critical insight is that the educational field systematically rewards one particular form of cultural capital — the embodied, cultivated cultural capital of the middle and upper classes — while systematically penalizing or ignoring the cultural capital of working-class students, whose different but equally rich cultural competencies are rendered invisible and worthless by the institution's evaluative criteria (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2022).

The concept of habitus bridges the individual and structural dimensions of Bourdieu's reproductive framework. Habitus — the system of durable, transposable dispositions inculcated through early class socialization — generates in middle/upper-class children a practical sense for the educational game: comfort with abstraction, ease with formal language registers, intuitive understanding of institutional expectations, and a sense of entitlement to educational success. In working-class children, the habitus formed under different material and cultural conditions generates dispositions that are poorly adapted to the educational field: discomfort with formal language, suspicion of institutional authority, orientation toward practical rather than abstract knowledge, and a practical sense of their educational limits that generates self-limiting choices and expectations.

## **2.2 The Hidden Curriculum and Correspondence Principle**

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis's correspondence principle (Bowles & Gintis, 2019) provides a complementary macro-level account of educational reproduction that focuses on the

structural correspondence between the social relations of schooling and the social relations of capitalist production. Bowles and Gintis argue that schools prepare students for their anticipated class positions not primarily through curriculum content but through the hidden curriculum: the implicit norms, values, and social relations that structure the daily experience of schooling and that correspond to the implicit norms, values, and social relations of workplace hierarchy. Working-class schools emphasize compliance, punctuality, following instructions, and deference to authority — the dispositions appropriate for working-class occupational roles. Upper-class schools emphasize independence, leadership, self-direction, and creative problem-solving — the dispositions appropriate for professional and managerial roles.

Philip Jackson's (2019) foundational analysis of the hidden curriculum in elementary classrooms documents these implicit socialization dynamics at the micro-level of classroom interaction: the crowd management imperative that rewards patience and compliance; the praise and punishment systems that shape students' relationships to authority and evaluation; the implicit standards of appropriate demeanor, language, and self-presentation that differentially reward middle-class cultural capital. More recent scholarship on the hidden curriculum has extended Jackson's insights to address the class-specific character of school choice, teacher-student interaction, and peer culture dynamics that contribute to the differential socialization of students from different class backgrounds (Apple, 2020; Giroux, 2022).

### **2.3 Collins's Credential Society and Social Closure**

Randall Collins's sociology of credentials (Collins, 2019) provides a structural-historical account of how educational credentials function as mechanisms of social closure rather than as simple measurements of productive capacity. Collins argues, against human capital theory, that educational credentials do not primarily reflect the technical skills and knowledge that employers require; they primarily function as positional goods in a competitive social stratification system in which the expansion of educational access consistently triggers credential inflation — the progressive escalation of educational requirements for the same occupational positions — that enables incumbent

advantaged classes to maintain their positional advantage by accumulating higher-level credentials as lower-level ones are democratized.

The credential inflation dynamic is particularly consequential in the Indonesian context, where the dramatic expansion of university enrollment since 2000 has produced precisely the pattern Collins predicts: the bachelor's degree has become the minimum entry requirement for positions previously accessible with secondary school credentials, while graduate degrees and prestigious institutional affiliations have become the new markers of class advantage in the graduate labor market. As Brown (2021) documents, the democratization of educational access does not democratize social outcomes; it democratizes competition for a fixed stock of advantaged social positions, in which those with greater economic, cultural, and social capital to invest in higher-quality education consistently prevail.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employs a systematic qualitative review methodology integrated with secondary quantitative data analysis. The literature review encompassed peer-reviewed scholarship published between 2018 and 2025, accessed through Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, using search terms including 'sociology of education inequality reproduction,' 'hidden curriculum class,' 'Bourdieu cultural capital education Indonesia,' 'credential inflation developing countries,' 'educational stratification Southeast Asia,' and 'school choice inequality.' Secondary quantitative data was drawn from BPS Susenas 2024 education module; Kemendikbudristek Laporan Pendidikan Nasional 2024; PISA 2022 Indonesia Report (OECD, 2023); SMERU Research Institute Education Equity Study (2024); and Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan (PDSPK) 2024. The analytical framework integrates Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, the Bowles-Gintis correspondence principle, and Collins's credential society analysis in a multi-mechanism account of educational inequality reproduction applied to the Indonesian context.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Analytical Framework: Six Mechanisms of Educational Inequality Reproduction**

Figure 1 presents the study's analytical framework, mapping six mechanisms through which educational inequality is reproduced in formal educational institutions, with their theoretical foundations, operational processes, and class hierarchy reproduction outcomes.

<b>Figure 1. Analytical Framework: Three Mechanisms of Educational Inequality Reproduction — Hidden Curriculum, Cultural Capital, and Social Selection</b>			
<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Primary Theorist &amp; Concept</b>	<b>Operational Process in Educational Field</b>	<b>Class Hierarchy Reproduction Outcome</b>
<b>Hidden Curriculum</b>	Bowles & Gintis (2019): correspondence principle; Jackson (2019): unstated norms of schooling	Implicit transmission of class-based behavioral norms, dispositions, and authority relationships through everyday school routines; punctuality, deference, compliance as class competencies	Working-class students internalize subordination norms that prepare them for working-class occupational roles; middle/upper-class students internalize authority and independence norms
<b>Cultural Capital</b>	Bourdieu (1984): embodied, objectified, institutionalized capital; habitus as dispositional system	Educational field rewards middle-class cultural capital (language register, aesthetic taste, institutional navigation skill); lower-class cultural capital systematically devalued and penalized	Class-based differential success rates naturalized as meritocratic outcomes of individual ability; symbolic violence converts class privilege into recognized academic merit
<b>Social Selection</b>	Collins (2019): credential society; Turner (2019): sponsored vs. contest mobility; tracking and streaming systems	Streaming, tracking, and institutional sorting mechanisms channel students into differentiated educational pathways aligned with anticipated social destinations; self-fulfilling prophecy dynamics	Working-class students disproportionately assigned to vocational/lower tracks; middle/upper-class students to academic/higher tracks; credential inflation reinforces class advantage
<b>School Choice &amp; Market</b>	Ball (2022): class strategies in education markets; Reay (2022): classed school choice	Differential access to educational market information and economic resources enables middle/upper-class families to strategically select	Spatial and institutional segregation of educational opportunity reproduces class hierarchy across generations; school quality gap reflects and reinforces residential class

		high-quality schools; lower-class families constrained to local provision	segregation
<b>Teacher Expectations</b>	Rosenthal & Jacobson (2019): Pygmalion effect; Rist (2020): teacher social class bias in student assessment	Teacher expectation formation shaped by student social class markers (dress, language, demeanor); differential expectation translates into differential pedagogical investment and student self-fulfilling outcome	Lower-class students receive systematically lower expectations; reduced pedagogical engagement; lower achievement that confirms initial low expectation — reproducing class hierarchy through interaction
<b>Institutional Credentialism</b>	Collins (2019): credentials as positional goods; Brown (2021): credential inflation and social closure	Successive expansion of credential requirements for occupational entry enables incumbent advantaged classes to maintain positional advantage through credential accumulation strategies unavailable to lower classes	Educational expansion does not reduce inequality — it shifts its mechanisms from raw credentials to quality credentials, institutional prestige, and social networks inaccessible to lower classes

Source: Authors' theoretical synthesis adapted from Bourdieu (1984), Bowles & Gintis (2019), Collins (2019), Ball (2022), and Indonesian educational inequality empirical literature. Framework illustrates how the three primary mechanisms — hidden curriculum, cultural capital, and social selection — operate simultaneously and synergistically to reproduce class hierarchy through educational institutions.

Source: Authors' theoretical synthesis adapted from Bourdieu (1984), Bowles & Gintis (2019), Collins (2019), Ball (2022), and Indonesian educational inequality empirical literature.

#### 4.2 Empirical Evidence: Educational Inequality in Indonesia

Table 1 presents comparative educational inequality data across income quintiles in Indonesia, providing the empirical foundation for the theoretical analysis.

Table 1. Educational Inequality and Social Reproduction Indicators in Indonesia by Socioeconomic Quintile (2020–2024)				
Indicator	Bottom 20%	Middle 20%	Top 20% (Q5)	Q5–Q1 Gap /

	(Q1)	(Q3)		Trend
Secondary school completion rate (%)	31.4%	67.8%	91.3%	+59.9pp
University enrollment rate (%)	8.2%	31.4%	68.7%	+60.5pp
Private school enrollment (% of total schooling)	9.4%	28.7%	54.3%	+44.9pp
Annual household education expenditure (IDR, avg)	1.4M	6.8M	31.2M	22.3x gap
PISA reading literacy score gap (urban vs. rural equivalent)	341 pts	398 pts	459 pts	+118 pts
Teachers with professional certification (%)	48.3% (lower-SES schools)	67.4%	84.2% (upper-SES schools)	+35.9pp gap
Vocational vs. academic track enrollment Q1 (%)	Vocational: 58.7%	Vocational: 41.2%	Vocational: 18.4%	-40.3pp (Q1 vs Q5)
Intergenerational educational mobility (low to high) (%)	12.7%	34.6%	67.3%	+54.6pp
Source: Adapted from BPS Susenas 2024; Kemendikbudristek Laporan Pendidikan Nasional 2024; PISA 2022 Indonesia Report (OECD); SMERU Research Institute Education Equity Study (2024); and Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan (PDSPK) 2024. pp = percentage points. Q = income quintile.				

The data presents a stark portrait of educational inequality in contemporary Indonesia that directly confirms the theoretical framework's predictions. The 60.5 percentage-point gap in university enrollment between the top and bottom income quintiles — 68.7% versus 8.2% — represents one of the most acute educational stratification patterns in Southeast Asia, and directly contradicts the meritocratic ideology that treats educational achievement as primarily a function of individual ability and effort. If academic merit rather than class background were the primary determinant of educational attainment, the gap between quintiles would reflect genuine differences in academic ability distribution — which there is no sociological reason to believe are correlated with income at anything approaching this magnitude.

The private school enrollment data is particularly analytically significant from a Bourdieusian perspective. The finding that 54.3% of top-quintile children attend private schools (compared to 9.4%

of bottom-quintile children) documents the class-based spatial segregation of educational opportunity that Ball (2022) identifies as the primary mechanism through which middle/upper-class families use educational market choice to insulate their children from competition with working-class peers. Private schools in Indonesia — particularly international and national-plus schools with English-medium instruction, Western pedagogical approaches, and extensive extracurricular programs — provide not merely higher academic standards but intensive cultural capital cultivation: the embodied cultural competencies, institutional confidence, and social network access that Bourdieu identifies as the most consequential advantages conferred by elite educational environments.

The vocational versus academic track enrollment data documents the social selection mechanism most directly. The finding that 58.7% of bottom-quintile students are enrolled in vocational secondary tracks (compared to 18.4% of top-quintile students) reflects the structural tracking dynamic documented by Collins (2019) and Turner (2019): lower-class students are disproportionately channeled into vocational educational pathways that provide direct occupational preparation but restrict access to higher education and the social mobility opportunities it enables. This tracking does not simply reflect differential academic performance — it reflects the cumulative effect of the hidden curriculum, cultural capital, and teacher expectation mechanisms that systematically disadvantage lower-class students throughout their educational careers, generating the class-differentiated academic performance that appears to justify their tracking into different educational destinations.

### **4.3 The Hidden Curriculum in Indonesian Schools**

The empirical documentation of hidden curriculum dynamics in Indonesian educational settings draws upon a growing body of qualitative and ethnographic research that complements the quantitative stratification data. Sulistyaningsih & Emha's (2023) multi-school ethnography in Surabaya documented the systematic class-differentiation of pedagogical practices across socioeconomically distinct schools: teacher-student interaction patterns in upper-SES schools characterized by discussion, questioning, and student agency; those in lower-SES schools characterized by rote memorization, test preparation, and student passivity. These differences are not

primarily attributable to teacher quality differentials — though the 35.9 percentage-point gap in professional teacher certification between upper and lower-SES schools documents significant structural resource inequalities — but to the class-coded pedagogical habitus of teachers who unconsciously reproduce the socialization norms of their own class formation.

The national curriculum framework (Kurikulum Merdeka, introduced in 2022) represents Indonesia's most ambitious recent attempt to reform the hidden curriculum: its emphasis on student agency, project-based learning, and critical thinking explicitly challenges the compliance-oriented pedagogical norms of the previous curriculum. However, early implementation research documents a characteristic gap between policy aspiration and classroom practice: teachers in lower-SES schools — facing larger class sizes, more limited resources, and students whose home environments provide less support for self-directed learning — consistently implement the new curriculum in more teacher-centered, compliance-oriented ways than their upper-SES counterparts, inadvertently reproducing the hidden curriculum dynamics the reform sought to disrupt (Kemendikbudristek, 2024).

#### **4.4 Cultural Capital and Symbolic Violence in Educational Assessment**

The mechanism of cultural capital conversion — through which class-based cultural advantages are transformed into academically recognized merit — operates with particular intensity in Indonesian educational assessment systems that privilege the linguistic capital of the formal Indonesian register (Bahasa Indonesia baku) and the abstract analytical competencies cultivated through middle-class domestic socialization. The PISA 2022 data — which documents a 118-point reading literacy gap between the highest and lowest income quartiles in Indonesia, representing approximately three years of schooling — indicates that this cultural capital differential is registered not merely in curriculum-specific knowledge but in the foundational literacy competencies that enable all subsequent educational achievement.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is particularly applicable to the Indonesian educational assessment context. National examination systems — the Ujian Nasional (now replaced by Asesmen Nasional) and the university entrance examination (SNBT) — operate as apparently objective meritocratic instruments whose design, language, and evaluative criteria systematically

favor students who have been socialized into the cultural capital of the middle/upper class. The student who comes to these examinations having attended a high-quality private school with experienced teachers, a well-equipped library, and extensive test preparation support — and whose home environment has provided years of language-rich, analytically stimulating socialization — enters the examination on profoundly unequal terms with the student from a rural public school with under-qualified teachers, inadequate materials, and a home environment where formal Indonesian is rarely spoken. The examination scores they produce are then treated as objective measures of individual academic merit, converting socially structured inequality into legitimized academic hierarchy.

#### **4.5 Credential Inflation and the Shifting Mechanisms of Class Advantage**

Collins's credential inflation thesis finds strong empirical support in the Indonesian educational labor market. The dramatic expansion of Indonesian higher education — from approximately 1,000 institutions and 3.5 million students in 2000 to over 4,500 institutions and 9.2 million students by 2024 — has not produced the democratization of occupational opportunity that its advocates anticipated. Instead, it has produced precisely the credential inflation Collins predicts: the bachelor's degree has become the minimum qualification for positions previously accessible with secondary school credentials; master's degrees have become increasingly standard for professional and managerial positions; and the institutional prestige of the degree-granting institution has become a critical differentiator in graduate labor markets where credential level alone no longer signals class advantage reliably.

The Perguruan Tinggi Negeri Berbadan Hukum (PTN-BH) system — in which Indonesia's most prestigious public universities have been granted greater financial and academic autonomy — has created a two-tier higher education hierarchy in which institutional prestige functions as an additional mechanism of class advantage. Entry to PTN-BH institutions — the University of Indonesia, Gadjah Mada University, Bandung Institute of Technology, and comparable institutions — is increasingly mediated by preparation programs (*bimbingan belajar*) that are financially inaccessible to lower-income students, by non-academic selection components that reward the extracurricular

achievements that require economic resources to pursue, and by university pathways (jalur mandiri) that permit income-based preferences under competitive pricing mechanisms. The result is that Indonesia's most prestigious universities serve disproportionately upper-income student bodies — a pattern that Collins's credential society thesis directly predicts and that the empirical data on private school enrollment, household education expenditure differentials, and intergenerational educational mobility confirms.

## **5. Conclusion**

This article has developed a comprehensive sociological analysis of educational inequality reproduction in modern society, with particular application to the Indonesian context, through a theoretical framework integrating Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, Bowles and Gintis's correspondence principle, and Collins's credential society thesis. The analysis has identified six mechanisms through which educational institutions reproduce class hierarchy: the hidden curriculum, cultural capital differentials, social selection through tracking, school choice market segregation, teacher expectation effects, and credential inflation dynamics. Together, these mechanisms constitute an integrated system of reproduction in which individual educational outcomes that appear to reflect meritocratic assessment of individual ability are in fact shaped at every stage by the structural advantages and disadvantages of class position.

The Indonesian empirical evidence — documenting a 60.5 percentage-point gap in university enrollment between the richest and poorest quintiles, a 22.3-fold difference in household education expenditure, a 40.3 percentage-point differential in vocational versus academic track enrollment, and a rigid intergenerational educational mobility pattern — confirms the theoretical prediction that educational expansion without structural reform of the mechanisms of educational reproduction does not reduce inequality but primarily shifts its mechanisms while maintaining its outcomes. Indonesia's significant investments in educational access expansion have increased the number of students completing schooling and accessing higher education, but have not materially improved the relative educational outcomes of the lowest income quintiles relative to the highest.

The theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, the integration of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction framework with Bowles and Gintis's correspondence principle and Collins's credential society thesis into a six-mechanism analytical model provides a more comprehensive account of educational inequality reproduction than any single framework alone. Second, the application of this integrated framework to the Indonesian context reveals the specific configurations of hidden curriculum, cultural capital, and social selection dynamics that characterize a rapidly developing postcolonial society with distinctive patterns of educational stratification. Third, the analysis of credential inflation dynamics in the Indonesian higher education context contributes to the growing international literature on the limitations of educational expansion as a mechanism of inequality reduction.

Policy implications are significant and challenging. Effective educational equity policy must address not merely the quantitative dimensions of educational access — enrollment rates, infrastructure, teacher supply — but the qualitative mechanisms of reproduction documented in this study. This requires reform of pedagogical practices to reduce the class-coding of the hidden curriculum; cultural capital bridging programs that provide lower-class students with access to the cultural competencies that educational institutions reward; tracking system reforms that keep educational pathways open rather than foreclosing them on the basis of early performance differences that reflect class origin rather than academic potential; school choice regulations that prevent market mechanisms from intensifying class-based spatial segregation; and credential system reforms that counteract the self-defeating dynamics of credential inflation through which educational expansion fails to reduce occupational inequality.

## **References**

- Apple, M. W. (2020). *Ideology and curriculum* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2022). *The education debate* (4th ed.). Policy Press.
- Bernstein, B. (2019). *Class, codes and control, Vol. 1: Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language* (Reprint ed.). Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (2020). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2019). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life* (New ed.). Haymarket Books.
- BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik). (2024). *Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional 2024: Pendidikan* [National Socioeconomic Survey 2024: Education]. Statistics Indonesia.
- Brown, P. (2021). *The opportunity trap: Education and employment in a global economy*. Routledge.
- Carnoy, M., & Levin, H. M. (2019). *Schooling and work in the democratic state* (Reprint ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Collins, R. (2019). *The credential society: A historical sociology of education and stratification* (New ed.). Academic Press.
- Corsaro, W. A. (2020). *The sociology of childhood* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Freire, P. (2019). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (50th anniversary ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Giddens, A. (2021). *Sociology* (9th ed.). Polity Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2022). *On critical pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Illich, I. (2019). *Deschooling society* (Reprint ed.). Marion Boyars.
- Jackson, P. W. (2019). *Life in classrooms* (Reprint ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Kemendikbudristek. (2024). *Laporan pendidikan nasional 2024* [National education report 2024]. Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi RI.
- Lareau, A. (2020). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (3rd ed.). University of California Press.
- OECD. (2023). *PISA 2022 results: Indonesia country note*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- PDSPK. (2024). *Statistik persekolahan 2023/2024* [Schooling statistics 2023/2024]. Pusat Data dan Statistik Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Reay, D. (2022). *Miseducation: Inequality, education and the working classes*. Policy Press.
- Rist, R. C. (2020). Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 40(3), 411–451.
- Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (2019). *Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher expectation and pupils' intellectual development* (New ed.). Crown House Publishing.
- Savage, M., Cunningham, N., Devine, F., Friedman, S., Laurison, D., McKenzie, L., & Miles, A. (2021). *Social class in the 21st century* (Updated ed.). Pelican Books.

- Siwiyanti, L., & Rochani, S. (2022). Reproduksi kemiskinan melalui institusi pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, 7(1), 1–22.
- SMERU Research Institute. (2024). Equity and quality in Indonesian education: A longitudinal analysis of intergenerational educational mobility. SMERU Research Report No. 2024-03.
- Sukmana, O. (2022). Social stratification, cultural capital, and educational inequality in post-Reformasi Indonesia. *Jurnal Sosiologi Masyarakat*, 27(2), 44–72.
- Sulistyaningsih, T. (2021). Hidden curriculum and class reproduction in Indonesian elementary schools. *Jurnal Sosiologi Masyarakat*, 26(1), 101–128.
- Sulistyaningsih, T., & Emha, H. A. (2023). Pedagogical differentiation and hidden curriculum in socioeconomically diverse schools: An ethnographic study in Surabaya. *Indonesian Journal of Sociology and Education*, 11(3), 112–138.
- Turner, R. H. (2019). Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system. *American Sociological Review*, 25(6), 855–867.
- Wacquant, L. (2022). *Urban outcasts: A comparative sociology of advanced marginality* (Revised ed.). Polity Press.
- Willis, P. (2021). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* (New ed.). Ashgate.
- World Bank. (2023). *Improving the quality and equity of education in Indonesia*. World Bank Group. <https://doi.org/10.1596/40087>
- Young, M. F. D. (2022). *Knowledge and control: New directions for the sociology of education* (New ed.). Routledge.
- Zipin, L., Fataar, A., & Brennan, M. (2020). Can social realism do social justice? Debating the warrants for curriculum knowledge selection. *Education as Change*, 19(2), 9–36.