

Forum Transregionale Studien

International
Winter Academy
16—25 Nov 2014
Berlin

Call for applications



La educación (Photo: Alejandro Garcia Montoro under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Inequality, Education and Social Power: Transregional Perspectives

The Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung - German Humanities Institutes Abroad invite scholars from the fields of economics, educational sciences, development studies, history, political science, postcolonial studies, sociology, and area studies to apply to attend an international Winter Academy that will be convened from **16 — 25 November 2014** at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) on the theme “Inequality, Education and Social Power: Transregional Perspectives”.

Deadline: 15 June 2014

Max Weber
Stiftung

Deutsche
Geisteswissenschaftliche
Institute im Ausland

WZB

Berlin Social Science Center



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Inequality, Education and Social Power

Education is an—often ideologically charged—concept that has been the object of many expectations and at times also cause for disenchantment. It is sometimes thought of as the means of reducing structural inequalities within societies. Nevertheless, access to education itself can be distributed in unequal ways, contingent on the very structures it is supposed to even out. In that regard, education can function both as a corrective for structural inequalities and as a means of reinforcing them. Discourses and systems of education vary considerably within societies. In addition, they are interconnected with global developments and debates such as UNESCO programs or OECD studies, which are not necessarily articulated within local contexts. To start from a basic level, the very notion of education—that is, the question of which forms of knowledge are recognized as education and which are not—can be fundamentally contested. Therefore, the process that renders certain forms of knowledge education while excluding others needs to be problematized as an arena of (implicit) political or ideological struggle and as a way of wielding social power.

The Winter Academy is chaired by a group of scholars that includes **Ravi Ahuja** (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), **Marianne Braig** (Freie Universität Berlin/Forum), **Andreas Eckert** (Humboldt-Universität Berlin/Forum), **Andreas Gestrich** (German Historical Institute London), **Indra Sengupta** (German Historical Institute London), **Patricio Solís** (El Colegio de México), **Jana Tschuren** (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), and **Hebe Vessuri** (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). As experts, they are involved in research projects and networks that address questions of inequality and education in different world regions (among others, **desiguALdades.net** and **re:work**). The Winter Academy is being held in cooperation with the **Max Weber Foundation Transnational Research Group “Poverty and Education in Modern India”**.

The Winter Academy aims to bring together research on inequality, education, and social power from various disciplinary perspectives as well as from various countries of different world regions. Thus it seeks to facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and concepts among different research communities. Such a transregional encounter will provide productive disturbances of well-established convictions by exposing them to insights from other regional contexts. In this manner, the Winter Academy hopes to contribute to opening up new perspectives on the relationship between inequality, education, and social power. Possible research questions and fields of inquiry include:

- **Education and inequality/emancipatory movements:** In which contexts has education facilitated the empowerment of marginalized subjects and groups? How can the potentially equalizing effects of education be ordered? In which contexts do the effects remain unspecific? When and how do educational structures work against social mobility? What influence do gender and class inequalities or other factors of social discrimination have on the accessibility of (higher) education? What experience do we have with affirmative action and quotas? When does education become a cause of social mobilization? What is the role of new media and new means of communication in that context?
- **The role of non-state actors in the educational sector:** In some regions, non-state actors have had a long (colonial) tradition in the education system. Currently, probably due to failures of government-run infrastructures, a variety of new actors (business-

oriented and non-profit, national and international) are coming into play.

In some countries, the balance of public and private investment in the educational sector is tilted to an extent that is criticized as risking a devaluation of the national educational system. Can we observe (regional or even global) trends toward a hierarchization, privatization, and commercialization of education for both the elites and the masses? How do liberalization discourses in other fields of society impact upon these developments and the corresponding norms and values? What is the role of religious entities in the educational sector?

- **Southern/postcolonial perspectives:** Regions outside Europe are often attested a higher level of social heterogeneity and inequality on various axes. Many of these regions have been affected by colonial pasts. Which interdependencies, if any, can be traced between pronounced inequality, social heterogeneity, and ideas/systems of education? Which influence does the formation of the (nation-) state and subsequent politico-economic developments have on ideas and practices of inequality? To what extent have colonial legislation, the associated institutional structures, and ideas of education, elite, etc. been impacting on (post-) colonial systems of education?

- **The role of labor/ideas of good work:** In many societies, (higher) education has been equated with a form of professional formation whose focus lies on the requirements of enterprises. At the same time, a reduced individual educational dividend (that is, a decreasing value of titles and degrees because of an increasing level of education throughout the whole society) has become observable. To what extent are opportunities in the labor market dependent on education, and to what extent has this connection loosened during the last decades?

- **The role of transnational factors, especially development cooperation:** What is the relationship between indigenous knowledge/education and external influences? Have inequalities been alleviated through the dispersion of (Western) education/knowledge/expertise (e.g. in the areas of professional/technical formation, farming, health, climate change)? What role do international organizations (such as World Bank, IMF) play in this context? Do the poor receive a different form of education? Does the nature and content of what is thought of as education change when it becomes a mass phenomenon?

These and related questions can be investigated in case studies of different countries or regions. Connective and comparative studies from a transregional perspective are particularly welcome. The participants of the Winter Academy will have the opportunity to participate in the Forum's Annual Conference, which will take place from 24 to 25 November 2014 and which will also address issues of inequality and education.

The Winter Academy is designed to support scholarly networks across disciplinary and national/regional boundaries. The Academies' format is distinguished primarily by the participants' active involvement in the conceptualization and realization of the academic program. The program centers on a deepened scholarly exchange that is embedded in a transregional perspective. To promote intensive debate and encourage new perspectives, the Winter Academy is structured around four main elements: presentations of individual research projects in small groups and working group sessions for the participants, as well as lectures and panel discussions open to a wider public.

Conditions and Procedure of Application

Up to 20 doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from different countries and academic backgrounds will be given the opportunity to present and discuss their current research in an international and multidisciplinary context. **Participants will receive a stipend covering travel and accommodation.** The program is aimed at doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from the fields of economics, educational sciences, development studies, history, political science, postcolonial studies, sociology, and area studies who wish to present their ongoing projects in a comparative perspective in relation to the questions raised above. The researchers' work should be clearly relevant to the themes of the Winter Academy; transregional comparative approaches are especially encouraged. The working language will be English.

The application should likewise be in **English** and consist of

- a curriculum vitae
- a three- to five-page outline and brief summary of the project the applicant is currently working on
- the names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required)

sent by **E-MAIL** as **ONE PDF FILE** or in **ONE MS-WORD DOCUMENT**.

The application should be **received by 15 June 2014** and should be addressed to:

initiatives@trafo-berlin.de

Contact:

Dr. Melanie Hanif
Forum Transregionale Studien
Wallotstr. 14
14193 Berlin, Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)30 89 001-428

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The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research organization that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. The Forum provides scope for collaboration among researchers with different regional and disciplinary perspectives and appoints researchers from all over the world as Fellows.

The Max Weber Foundation promotes global research, concentrated around the areas of social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinctive and independent focal points. Through its globally operating institutes, the Foundation is able to contribute to the communication and networking between Germany and the host countries or regions of its establishments.

The work of the transnational research group (TRG) on poverty and education in India focuses on social and educational policy in India since the nineteenth century with an open approach to regional and global comparative perspectives. The five-year project is funded by the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad.

For more information please visit:

www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

www.maxweberstiftung.de

www.ghil.ac.uk/trg_india.html

www.uni-goettingen.de/de/131257.html

www.ghil.ac.uk

www.desigualdades.net

rework.hu-berlin.de

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