

## **BOUGHT PRIVILEGES, EDUCATIONAL SEGREGATION, STATUS AND PRESTIGE: THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF ELITE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIC CURRICULA IN RELATION TO EDUCATION JUSTICE AND EQUALITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The education of the poor is usually the target of global education politics for a more socially just and equal, and effective and productive society. But according to the present article the real problems in these respects are not about the education of the poor, so much as they are those of the rich upper-class and global elites, whose inheritance of social, cultural and economic power are secured in part through the reproduction in academic education of the values of bourgeois culture and the assumed superiority of its educational code: first in schools and their curricula and then in higher education and theirs. Schools and their curricula are in focus in the article. Using ethnographic and meta-ethnographic analyses an insight into a two-way relationship between the logic of action of elite schooling and the dangerous polarizations of value that can develop through social and academic segregation are presented and a critique of elite educational differentiation, segregation and socialization is given in terms of how elite schools provide skewed access to elite knowledge and future social positions for the children of the dominant socio-cultural and economic class fractions, in ways that counteract meritocracy and educational efficiency, and that also produce alarming concepts of the value of the self and other amongst their students with significant knock on effects for future democratic polity.

**KEYWORDS:** Curriculum; Elite schools; Social justice; Academic curriculum; Education equality.

*PRIVILÉGIOS COMPRADOS, SEGREGAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL, STATUS E PRIVILÉGIO: PAPEL E FUNÇÕES DAS ESCOLAS DE ELITE E CURRÍCULO ACADÊMICO EM RELAÇÃO À IGUALDADE E JUSTIÇA EDUCACIONAL*

### **RESUMO**

*A educação dos pobres, usualmente, é objeto de políticas de educação global para uma sociedade mais justa, igualitária, efetiva e produtiva. Contudo, de acordo com o presente artigo, os reais problemas nesses aspectos não são sobre a educação dos pobres, tanto quanto são os das classes sociais elevadas e elites globais, cuja herança do poder social, cultural e econômico está garantida, em parte, de maneira direta, e de outra parte, através da reprodução de valores da cultura burguesa na educação escolar da elite, assumida sua suposta superioridade e seu código educacional: primeiro na educação básica e em seus currículos, e depois na educação superior. Escolas e seus currículos são o foco deste artigo. Utilizando análises etnográficas e meta-etnográficas, é apresentada a*

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*compreensão de uma relação bidirecional entre a lógica de escolarização da elite e as perigosas polarizações de valor que podem se desenvolver por meio da segregação social e acadêmica. Também, é feita uma crítica da diferenciação, segregação e socialização educacional que têm sido realizadas pelas escolas de elite, em termos de como essas escolas fornecem acesso distorcido ao conhecimento e a posições sociais futuras para crianças das classes dominantes, de forma a contrabalançar a meritocracia e a eficiência educacional, produzindo conceitos preocupantes sobre o valor do “eu” e do “Outro” entre os estudantes, com efeitos significativos sobre o futuro da democracia.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Currículo; Escolas de elite; Justiça social; Currículo acadêmico; Igualdade educacional.

**PRIVILÉGIOS COMPRADOS, SEGREGAÇÃO EDUCACIONAL, ESTADO E PRIVILÉGIO:  
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**RESUMEN**

*La educación de los pobres suele ser el tema de las políticas educativas globales para una sociedad más justa, igualitaria, efectiva y productiva. Sin embargo, según este artículo, los problemas reales en estos aspectos no se relacionan con la educación de los pobres, como lo son los de las clases sociales superiores y las élites globales cuya herencia de poder social, cultural y económico está garantizada en parte por De manera directa, y por otro lado, a través de la reproducción de los valores de la cultura burguesa en la educación escolar de élite, asumiendo su supuesta superioridad y su código educativo: primero en educación básica y en sus currículos, y luego en educación superior. Las escuelas y sus currículos son el enfoque de este artículo. Usando análisis etnográficos y meta-etnográficos, se presenta la comprensión de una relación bidireccional entre la lógica escolar de la elite y las polarizaciones de valores peligrosos que pueden desarrollarse a través de la segregación social y académica. Además, se hace una crítica de la diferenciación, segregación y socialización educativa realizada por las escuelas de élite en términos de cómo estas escuelas proporcionan un acceso distorsionado al conocimiento y las posiciones sociales futuras para los niños de las clases dominantes para contrarrestar la meritocracia y la eficiencia educativa, produciendo conceptos preocupantes sobre el valor de "yo" y "Otro" entre los estudiantes, con efectos significativos en el futuro de la democracia.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Currículo; Escuelas de elite; Justicia social; Currículo académico; Igualdad educativa.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

There is an assumption that economically advanced countries rely on achievement criteria in meritocratic education systems that offer high quality effective and efficient schooling as important keys for individual occupational choices and success, individual and

national financial security and growth and general individual and societal well-being (REAY, 2012). However, this is never fully guaranteed. Capital returns on education investment are never certain and structural education inequalities are rarely easily overcome (BEACH, 2018). Even in what from the outside appear to be economically successful countries that offer generous welfare and educational opportunities to their citizens, education selection and segregation can form significant hindrances, and indeed almost to the extent of undermining any possible foundations for social solidarity and the efficient running of schools in a democratic society (BEACH, 2017, 2018; BROSSARD, 2013).

Bought privilege is one way in which inequalities and injustices are reproduced in education systems and efficiency is put at risk (BALL; BOWE; GERWITZ, 1996; VAN ZANTEN, 2009; WEIS; FINE, 2012). It operates when families have economic capital enough to be able to pay for tutors and test-whisperers for their children, or to buy homes in “good” post-code areas, or places in prestigious independent and private elite schools (ibid.; BEACH, 2018). However, the social world is an outcome of an accumulated history that cannot be reduced to an instantaneous mechanical equilibrium between interchangeable agents based on such forms of economic exchange alone (BOURDIEU, 1986). Other mechanics of exchange involving different social elements and in different forms and amounts are also involved (ibid) and, moreover, economic capital also functions in different ways in different circumstances and for different individuals (THERBORN, 2018).

It helps to enable those with enough of it to access social institutions, shape futures of and in those institutions, and to access educational privileges (POSECZNICK, 2013; WEIS; FINE, 2012), even in countries such as the Nordic countries that are internationally recognized as strongly democratic (BEACH, 2017), and even during their most golden-periods of new deal welfare capitalism (THERBORN, 2018). Yet even if selection to and in education systems also operate in relation to obdurate and ascribed social, racial and ethnic identities and values as well as in relation to places of origin and domicile, these factors have always been demonstrated to correlate positively and strongly with the possession of economic and cultural capital (BALL; REAY; DAVID, 2002; BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1964; HATCHER, 1998; KENWAY; FAHEY; EPSTEIN; KOH; MCCARTHY; RIZVI, 2016, 2018; YANG HANSEN; GUSTAFSSON, 2018; WEIS, 1989).

In countries like the USA and the UK bought privilege is an obvious and easily accounted for source of inequality in education and society. Buying a place in the right socially selective elite school or university is common, open, and will almost always help to cement future opportunities, and rich families can and do use their economic power and capital to try to secure status, future prestige and qualifications for themselves and their offspring (BALL; BOWE; GERWITZ, 1996; WEIS; CIPPOLLONE; JENKINS, 2013; WEIS; FINE, 2012). But yet at the same time there is no evidence to support the claim that separating elite groups and classes from others is particularly educationally effective (FORSEY; DAVIES; WALFORD, 1984, 2008; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018; SULLIVAN; HEATH, 2003). Indeed the evidence is that it probably isn't. The sector is very diverse with elite schools that confer the kind of status that gives access to elite higher education and prestigious positions with high incomes forming only one small part (BEACH, 2018) and also producing socialisation effects that might be considered to be extremely problematic in a democratic society (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014; JONSSON; BEACH, 2013, 2015; KENWAY et al, 2016).

There is just something about private education it seems, that contributes to a sense of value and a widely held belief that private schools are better (DELAMONT, 1989; KENWAY et al, 2018; SULLIVAN; HEATH, 2003; WALFORD, 1986, 2009) and this sense or feeling operates to the extent that many families would only ever consider a private sector education for their children (KENWAY et al., 2016; WALFORD, 2009). Based on ethnographic research and meta-ethnographic analyses, the present article problematizes the possibilities and effects of elite schooling from the perspectives of education efficiency, justice, equality and democracy. A particular focus is placed on the use of education to protect (and even justify) wealth and class exclusivity and the socialisation effects of elite education selection and segregation.

## **2 BOUGHT PRIVILEGES: THE PROTECTION OF CLASS EXCLUSIVITY**

In an extensive and highly internationally acclaimed multi-sited global ethnography Kenway *et al.* (2016) investigated seven global elite selective schools that were strongly

sought after and that lived up to the demands of securing a potentially very bright future for their pupils through variously embellished but non-the-less distinctly masculinist, class-ridden and exclusionary practices (KENWAY *et al.*, 2018). The schools were based on an updated British public school model. They were imbued with public school pomp and tradition, but they also operated with a modern curriculum, and used modern political slogans and high level technology to capture the imagination of their clientele by demonstrating a consciousness of current globally recognised skill and competency needs and challenges (KENWAY *et al.*, 2018).

They charged high fees too, which also helped to cement a sense of value, but these costs were more symbolic than exclusionary for the globally hyper-rich clientele the schools regarded as their consumer-base (KENWAY *et al.*, 2016). They were high enough to keep an elite status but insignificant for the global economic elite consumer. They formed part of a complex choreography of reputation, history and tradition that was intended to securely protect elite identities for both the schools and the families that used them (*ibid.*).

Iconic symbols of cultural strength and relationships to the state and the economy were present at all of the schools in Kenway *et al.*'s sample. Students were described as learning to lead, and distinguished and powerful alumni were always on display in the visual and virtual ecology of the school, to support this image (KENWAY *et al.*, 2016, 2018). As with the school called Cromwell School in Erlandson and Beach (2014), the schools were loaded with symbols of an ornamental and cultivated past that was embellished further through the use of an iconography of high water marks of distinction, of enduring dominance, of cultural opulence and of an academic curriculum that conjured a sense of history and exclusiveness in contemporary global circumstances (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014). Exalted ornaments of school power hailed very willing clients of the schools and conveyed a notion that money cannot lead to power without merits of the kind passed on through schools like these.

As described also in Delamont (1989), Wakeford (1969) and Walford (1991), gaining access to these kinds of schools is however not just about buying a place (KENWAY *et al.*, 2016, 2018). Instead it requires a certain tact that develops from recognising and responding appropriately to mutual identifications of markers of legitimacy and prestige that work as

value identifications linking both the family and the pupil to the values and traditions of the schools and back again (WEIS et al, 2013). Schools, their reputation, patrons, alumni and their relationships with the State and high (economic, cultural, political and even sporting) capital locked in with the values and ambitions of the students and students' families as part of a coordinated and balanced complex of fine distinctions of mutual acceptance (DELAMONT, 1989; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018; POSECZNIK, 2015; WALFORD, 1984; WAKEFORD, 1969). Individuals and institutions mutually reinforced each other's position and value through a complex yet coordinated set of trade-offs that were choreographed from inside a variety of embodied and institutional practices whose main goal was to reinforce the idea that these schools can prepare their students for an influential future and that the students are worthy of this (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018).

Yet at the same time as they guaranteed value recognition and heightened chances of a highly rich future, value was not in itself really added by the schools, despite their elite curricula, the high performance levels of pupils, or the life-trajectories of alumni (DELAMONT, 1989; WALFORD, 1991). Instead status was conferred on status through curricula that allow the dominant class to assert the superiority of its knowledge through an exclusive content delivered to a highly selected group of learners from elite backgrounds who are provided with every possibility to succeed (BEACH, 2018; BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1964; VAN ZANTEN, 2009).

But there are dangers in these kinds of schooling for an exclusively selected privileged class (ibid.; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2019; WAKEFORD, 1969). Instead of producing effective and efficient schooling with high levels of return on value investment, the levels of intellectual return value are low, social mobility is restricted, and the schools also seem to incubate and nurture hierarchy-legitimizing myths among their pupils, who are also at the same time most likely to become tomorrow's academic, political, cultural, civic, business and community leaders: with this then creating a double-edged problem. Efficiency of education and meritocracy are sacrificed for social and cultural reproduction, and value affordances develop that can have serious knock-on effects in the future within the socio-cultural and political superstructure (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1964; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018; VAN ZANTEN, 2009). Power is not only inappropriately and inefficiently accrued by the children

of those with power, this process is disguised and the advantages it gives are hegemonically rearticulated as ones that are fair and fully deserved (BEACH, 2018).

Gilbertson (2014) described some of these features in local elite schools in Hyderabad, India. As in the new global elite schools in the research by Kenway et al (2016, 2018), even there the values of elite class histories were valorised through choreographies of tradition copied from the traditional British Public Schools and updated versions of their curricula to satisfy expectations about current needs and modernisation demands. But as in the schools in Kenway et al's work, these schools only copied tradition, as despite all their pretence to history and enduring cultural value, there was nothing authentic about them, except the tendencies to ironize power among the pupil/student population and the effort to constantly iconise their own exclusivity and that of the schools (BEACH, 2018). The schools conferred status on status, were inauthentic toward history, and created and used class choreographies of embellishment to establish a mirage of adding value where no real value was actually created for anyone (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014; GILBERTSON, 2014; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018). Thus the following key points emerge:

1. Bought privileges guarantee access to contexts and curriculum contents that enforce a monopoly of dominant class patronage and concentrate the communication of upper-class cultural capital to upper-class pupils in segregated places of instruction.
2. The schools do not add real value. Displays of symbolic capital illustrate a sense of value of the schools and their clientele through orchestrated class choreographies that embellish, enforce, enhance and protect senses of exclusivity through acts of mutually indulged instrumentalism. Thus,
3. Although there is an assumption that achievement criteria in relation to elite education curricula and effective and efficient schooling are keys to occupational and financial success for economically advanced and technologically and culturally sophisticated nations, their economic growth and the people in them, this assumption of school value and effective instruction is erroneous
4. This doesn't matter either for the schools or for those who use them. Neither those who run the schools nor the families using them are interested in adding to common values. Their interest lies in protecting and reproducing class exclusivity

Delamont (1989), Kenway et al (2016, 2018), Lacey (1970), Sullivan and Heath (2003), van Zanten (2009), Wakeford (1969), Walford (1986, 1991), Weis et al (2013) and contributors to Forsey, Davies and Walford (2008) and Weis (1989) have all also pointed to one or more of these points when indicating that there is no evidence to support the claim that using elite schools that separate elite groups and classes from others is more educationally effective than using for instance comprehensive schooling is (BEACH, 2018) or that there is any reason to suspect there would be. Selective elite schools are in a separate league that is only accessible to players based on their possession of extensive levels of cultural, symbolic and economic capital (BEACH, 2018; BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1964; BROADY; BÖRJESSON, 2008; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018) which the schools perpetuate (VAN ZANTEN, 2009). And it is not despite but thanks to these things that the families that use them would only ever consider such a school for their children.

However, what is surprising, and is more difficult to explain is how, at the same time, places in such schools have also been sought for lower-middle and working-class families in new-deal capitalist (neo-capitalist) nations as a route to social and economic advancement (LACEY, 1970; VAN ZANTEN, 2009), and how the State pays for this with the help of government taxes; which thus not only provide a guaranteed economic supplement to many of these schools, but also a means for the social legitimation of all of them, through a hegemonic double function that connects the reproduction of elites to claims about social mobility and ideas of meritocracy (BEACH, 2018; LACEY, 1970; VAN ZANTEN, 2009). Moreover, there is an obvious logic to this. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) pointed to decades ago, the ability of a group to make its knowledge into knowledge for all is related to that group's power in the larger cultural, social, political and economic arenas; which is exactly what the upper-fractions of the bourgeoisie are doing in these circumstances (BEACH, 2018; VAN ZANTEN, 2009).

Susan Dewey (DEWEY, 2006) has examined these issues in a study of the reproduction of status in India and how power was replicated not produced through elements of the British colonial education system that were maintained and used as markers of prestige by dominant socio-cultural groups. Studying English Medium Schools she wrote that to only note that language and power are intimately connected is to profoundly underscore the ways

in which schools function as symbolic capital for dominant groups in ways that bear down heavily on attempts to modernise and democratise a nation (VAN ZANTEN, 2009) and identified how, from their very inception, the schools she investigated segregated pupils and cemented hierarchies through an unwritten charter that represented far from simply just another imperial legacy. These schools were institutions for the contemporary Indian elite in circumstances where rather than being a colonial imposition, English had emerged as a language of choice, and as a means by which the dominant social order was reproduced (JOHNSON, 2009; DEWEY, 2006). This seems to have happened in some African countries too (MODIBA; STEWART, 2018). And in central and South American nations similar patterns are visible in relation to Spanish and Portuguese, if perhaps eventually even more distinctly (MILLSTEIN; CLEMENTE, 2018). It is repeated again and again on an international basis (VAN ZANTEN, 2009) and is a global phenomenon! But what of the socialisation effects of these schools and their curricula on the students themselves?

### **3 SEGREGATION, SELECTION AND STEREOTYPES IN ELITE ACADEMIC SCHOOLS**

There have been many accounts of the development of educational differences in attainment, interest and study among pupil groups in the history of the sociology of education, as well as numerous investigations of socialisation effects of education on ascribed and self-ascribed pupil identities and experiences in different schools and schools in different places (BEACH, 2018). Theories that have been developed to account for these differences range from and include social reproduction theory, social stratification theory, differential association theory, anomie theory, cultural production theory, subcultural formation theory, reaction formation theory, differentiation polarization theory (JONSSON; BEACH, 2013, 2015). Most of the theories have, with the exception perhaps of differentiation polarization theory, generally been applied to education by sociologists and socio-linguists rather than developed within and from educational contexts by education researchers (see also e.g. WEIS, 1989, Ed.).

Differentiation polarization theory is a little different to the other named theories above. It is a product of ethnographic research and an example of the cumulative development

of theory grounded on detailed bottom up ethnographic investigations about the flow of rewards in school, the development of the pupils' self-image through or in relation to the flow of rewards, and the formation of distinct identities and even student sub-cultures in relation to these developments (BEACH, 2018). And it pointed out that Western style schooling produced a polarized social structure amongst its pupils through various subtle internal forms of temporary, permanent and semi-permanent (fluid) differentiation processes (ABRAHAM, 1989; BALL, 1981). This is something that also Berggren (2013) has identified in Sweden. Even there, from the ages of 15-16, pupils are separated into academic learners on the one hand and practical ones on the other, who are then educated separately and with little contact between them (JONSSON; BEACH, 2013, 2015), with this separation and exposure to a highly differentiated set of curriculum experiences following and extending old principles of educational differentiation that are well recognised internationally and historically, and that work as a part of a normalising of ideology to keep people in their place (BERGGREN, 2013).

Jonsson and Beach (2013, 2015) investigated the effects of the separation of young people into different study programs along these lines in terms of the evolving identities of learners in selective academic programs at a historically elite school in a well to do area. The school was chosen for these reasons. It was a school in which only selective academic programs were taught and it had a dominant elite history and distinct status in the region. There were two main research questions in the investigation. They concerned (i) what it was about the young people in the school that was different to other similarly aged learners according to the young people themselves, and (ii) how did extended exposure to selective education in the school seem to influence their developing appreciations of self and other along these lines. They were investigated based on ten typical attributes provided by participants to describe learners on an academic preparation program, such as the one they attended in a school like theirs, and ten to describe learners who engaged in vocational studies on a practical program, such as vehicle maintenance, building and construction, hotel and catering etc., in another school.

The research was conducted with 224 individuals (150 females, 73 males, one undisclosed) on the third and final year of a selective academic study program in one of three

schools involved in a national ethnographic research project concerning the effects of elite education. There were 110 on the social science, 67 on the natural science, and 46 on the aesthetic program (one undisclosed). They were asked to use 10 descriptive attributes for a typical person on a program such as their own and 10 for a typical student on a practical-program. These could be either one word or one or more phrases for each item and the task was completed individually and voluntarily.

The number of words and phrases used on average to describe an academic and a practical-vocational learner were roughly the same but the content and characteristics differed significantly, and along the lines of common stereotypes relating to generalized in- and out-group identities. Academic program learners had attributed themselves qualities such as being as compliant, cooperative, intelligent and hard-working individuals, with good career prospects (JONSSON; BEACH, 2015). The characteristics attributed to vocational learners were different. They were described as a group and attributes such as challenging toward authority and rebellious were common, as were descriptions of them not being interested in or having any real need of academic studies. They were expressed as unable to obtain real value from a theoretical education and they were also often described as academically lazy, as substance abusers, and as having inferior language skills. Chart 1 below summarises these results.

**Chart 1.** - In- and out-group attributions of academic learners to themselves and others

<b>In-group attributes: i.e. academic learners</b>	<b>Out-group attributes: i.e. vocational learners</b>
<p><i>Normal</i>, neat, polite, quiet, nice, stable, calm, proper</p> <p><i>Performance orientation</i> hard working, high-performance, ambitious, competitive, motivated, active, committed, interested, targeted, high demands on themselves</p> <p><i>Career orientation</i> plans for the future, possibility to choose among many good professions, <b>ambitions</b> toward a responsible well paid (professional) job</p> <p><i>Compliant</i> easily controlled, care about others' opinions of them, obedient, disciplined, orderly, well behaved, dutiful</p>	<p><i>Rebellious</i>, non-conformist, aggressive, disrespectful, loud, take more risks, show offs, go one's own way, messy, extrovert, cool, sexy, daring</p> <p><i>Lazy</i>, careless, sloppy, unmotivated, unengaged, easy-going, low demands</p> <p><i>No value for theoretical education</i> difficulties understanding theoretical content, attention difficulties, using their hands (not heads)</p> <p><i>Substance abuser</i> who uses tobacco excessively, drinks a lot and is confused</p> <p><i>Defective language</i>, limited vocabulary,</p>

	poor writer
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Source: Beach (2018).

As discussed in Beach (2018), these kinds of contrasts are very handy for a dominant group to use for motivating gaps in income, power and influence over society in general. Moreover, the analysis showed in-group attributes were often grouped and positioned against strict opposites for the out-group. Typical examples were.

**Chart 2.** - Examples of grouped dichotomies about academic and vocational learners

<b>Academic (in-group) learners</b>	<b>Vocational (out-group) learners</b>
Motivated, intelligent, committed	Unmotivated, unintelligent, uncommitted
Rich, middleclass, high grades	Poor, working-class, low grades
Academic, educated parents	Non-academic, uneducated parents
Culturally aware, refined	Culturally unaware, unrefined
Quiet, intellectual, think a lot	Loud, physical, not thinkers
Quick, logical and rational	Ignorant slow, irrational and instinctive

Source: Beach (2018).

When looking at the differences presented in the two charts what we can see is that the elite learners from the segregated academic programs assign themselves attributes distinctive of an intellectual middle-class human being who constantly strives to be high attaining and aims toward becoming a competitive and ambitious future leader with high levels of motivation. This fits very well with the descriptions about global elite education choosers and their self-understanding and ambitions described earlier in relation to research by Kenway et al (2016, 2018). However, also identified in the research by Jonsson and Beach (2013, 2015) is that control over impulses and a high level of working capacity is mentioned often and that descriptions often referred to the academic elite learner as intelligent, educated, cultivated and well-informed whilst the opposite descriptions we used for vocational learners as uncultivated individuals with a weak vocabulary, who were not well versed in public debate and that self-selected and were fit (only) for physical rather than intellectual work. They were described also as unable to master primitive drives and were often described as feared because of them being experienced as both threatening and aggressive (JONSSON; BEACH, 2015).

Some common elements of the stereotypes about the poor held by the rich seem to be directly reproduced here (BEACH, 2018). The first stereotype was one that states that the poor and lower classes do not find any value in education generally, and particularly not in a

theoretical education. The second was that their parents don't become involved in and aren't as committed toward their children's education as middle-class parents are. The third was that they were lazy in school and outside, and that this together with their low intelligence and lower commitment to schooling, accounted for their lack of educational, social and economic achievements. The fourth stereotype stated that substance abuse was common and that low-income people are linguistically deficient so their children enter school with a smaller vocabulary and a defect language in comparison with others.

Each of these stereotypes are completely false. For instance, nothing could be further from the truth than the idea of the lazy poor, as statistics clearly show that low-income parents have to (and will willingly) work on average 1.2 full jobs a year just to make ends meet. They are far from lazy. They may be exploited in low-income, zero-hour, flexi-time contracts or as casual labour (thanks in part to stereotypes such as those maintained by the rich) but they are definitely not lazy (BEACH, 2017, 2018). The same false consciousness applies with respect to the stereotype about substance abuse. Statistics actually show that higher income people drink more than others whilst other forms of substance abuse are distributed equally (JONSSON; BEACH, 2015). And concerning linguistic deficiencies, although the reading speed of low-income pupils is generally lower than average, this does not really say anything about language skills as such or that there is a superior and an inferior language practice. However, regardless of how true they are as indicators, there is no doubting firstly the existence of the two different sets of attributes or that the feelings of difference from and deference toward others that the elite learners referred to intensified during their academic studies (JONSSON; BEACH, 2013), with this suggesting a socialisation effect that sets a very precarious foundation for a just and equitable future society (JONSSON; BEACH, 2015). They describe themselves as self-controlled, cultivated, conscientious, active, intelligent, aware and interested individuals who are very different to the stupid and uneducated "primitive" concrete thinkers with concentration difficulties in practical and vocational education study programs. They describe themselves as civilised, aware and cultivated and these others as uncivilised, uncultivated, irrational and in need of moral guidance and surveillance in both their own best interests and the interests of the societies they are part of (BEACH, 2018).

This is very similar to the socialisation effects of elite schooling discussed in the international literature previously and it may seem to be a very surprising outcome from an investigation of educational effects in an iconically democratic country such as Sweden, with its internationally acclaimed highly just and equitable education system. But of course really there should be no surprise as the reproduction and reinforcement of the hegemony of the dominant class is what elite education always does and has always done according to van Zanten (2009) and ethnographic researchers such as Delamont (1989), Dewey (2006), Gilbertson (2014), Posecznick, (2013), Walford, (1986), Wakeford, (1969), Weis et al (2013) and contributors to Forsey et al (2008), Walford, (1991) and Weis (1989). It is what these schools are for. They are for producing leaders (Kenway et al, 2016, 2018). Like the ruling colonial elite in books such as Orwell's *Burmese Days*, they are trained to see themselves as members of a special group who are the bearers of civilisation, rationality, self-control and autonomy, due to acquisitions of judgement and taste through the bourgeois cultural and educational capital acquired from their families and through elite studies, whilst others are less worthy (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1964; ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014; KENWAY et al, 2016). They may ironize about their superiority in school and society but they nevertheless still express the privilege of the upper socio-cultural and educational strata as obvious, and as expressing a position of achievement that grants (and in their eyes should grant) certain entitlements and cultural standing (BEACH, 2018; ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014; JONSSON; BEACH, 2015). Academic learners from elite segregated school contexts describe themselves as intelligent, committed and motivated, and vocational learners as unintelligent, uncommitted, unmotivated, undeserving and unfit for academic work, with this being the reason why academic students should have better grades in school followed by better university studies followed by better jobs with greater income potential: at least according to the elite academic learners themselves (BEACH, 2018).

#### 4 DISCUSSION

Reay (2012) described a socially just school system as one where children - independent of class, gender and ethnicity- could receive a good education and attain their

fullest intellectual potential! And she expressed that this kind of education was reflected in the Nordic education systems, but hardly elsewhere (such as in countries like the UK and the USA), where segregation and bought privilege were rife through private fee paying schools that provide a pipeline to elite university education and high status future jobs. She added also that open and inclusive schools of the kind she felt existed in the Nordic countries were also essential to the efficiency of economically advanced countries, where they would provide high quality, effective and efficient schooling for individual choices and national economic efficiency and growth. Yet even in the Nordic countries' economic and social segregation is profound, leading also to educational segregation (SOU 2017:35; YANG HANSEN; GUSTAFSSON, 2018), and working class youth are eventually systematically grouped by/in the educational system into vocational programs and middle- and upper-middle class youth into academic ones, with this selection being both based on and reproducing dangerous stereotypes. Just as in the elite schools in the research by Kenway et al (2016, 2018), the elite portions of the Swedish school system actually nurture hierarchy-legitimizing myths among the youth who currently seem most likely to become tomorrow's academic, political, cultural, civic, business and community leaders (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2018; JONSSON; BEACH, 2013, 2015). Like the society it is part of (THERBORN, 2018), rather than being socially just, the education system is perhaps just a little less in-just and unequitable than those in other countries (BEACH, 2018).

To a certain extent the reduced levels of open injustice and the continuing presence of some existing socio-cultural and socio-economic equity in Sweden compared to most other countries, although now significantly challenged by recent turns to a center-right social, educational and economic politics (THERBORN, 2018), owe their existence to a recent history of social democratic consensus politics with high levels of economic investment in a welfare state and strictly limited possibilities to obtain bought privileges. Fully private fee-paying schools were very few. But this isn't the case today, following the decentralization and privatization reforms of the late eighties and early nineties and the very clear subsequent growth of extreme inequality (Beach, 2018). Educational inequality of access and performance are now greater than at any other time in the post-WW2 period (SOU 2017:35; YANG HANSEN; GUSTAFSSON, 2018) and between 1985 and the early 2010s the growth

in social and economic inequality has been the largest among all OECD countries (THERBORN, 2018), as the average income of the top 10% of income earners has gone up to 6.3 times that of the bottom 10 (from 5.75 to 1 in 2007 and 4 to 1 during much of the 1990s) and the richest 5 economic individuals now own and control of more resources than the poorest 50% of the population.

Overall quality and efficiency gains from a new and more effective school system are often argued to legitimate the increasing differences in inequality. These claims are made both in Swedish politics and globally. But whether these gains do legitimate such changes, or ethically can or should be allowed to do so, is questionable. And moreover so too is the objective claim of such increases having taken place anyway (or even being possible). In line with research cited earlier, by for instance Gilbertson (2014) and Kenway et al (2016, 2018), the possibilities to buy privileges in the education system do not represent investments in efficiency or standards as such. Instead they only guarantee access to contexts and curricula for the dominant class who obtain exclusive privileged access to the official communication of upper-class cultural capital as educational content. Efficiency and meritocracy and social justice and equity are all sacrificed for social exclusion and social and cultural reproduction (BEACH, 2017, 2018). Moreover, whilst Kenway et al's (2016) research makes it thoroughly clear that although it is unquestionable that the rich are seen to excel in school and society today while the poor fail, this is thanks to the exposure of the rich to elite education and curricula and the dispossession of the poor from this right, along with their exposure to forms of social, economic, historical and material violence in society (true precarity), and ideological and symbolic violence in schools and through their curricula in use (BEACH, 2018; BROSSARD, 2013; DEWEY, 2006; GILBERTSON, 2014).

For the global poor "the nation" has often first robbed them of their right to own their own means of sustenance (through for example Land Acts, Colonialisation/ism, slave-taking, transport and trading, and the privatization of the means of production), and it has then misrepresented them (in terms of their best interests), and finally also even vilified them through politics of criminalisation and educational statistics in the so-called (but usually privately owned) public media and (in their absence) in the incubation spaces of dominant values in elite education programs, schools and classrooms (BEACH, 2018; DEWEY, 2006;

JOHNSON, 2009; KENWAY et al, 2016, 2018; LACEY, 1970; MILLSTEIN; CLEMENTE, 2018). Bought privileges, other forms of segregation, and the exposure of the children of the rich to an elite education on their own terms (ERLANDSON; BEACH, 2014), whilst the poor at best obtain access to watered down bourgeois curriculum codes in symbolically violent institutions that obstruct the development of the consciousness of the working class and poor as classes for themselves rather than in themselves, means that we need to ask therefore very seriously what kind of education justice is being made available through current education policy today, for whom, by whose actions, from what, and with what outcomes and consequences.

The problems brought about through bought privileges are obviously ones that need to be eliminated in the name of social justice and equity in education and society. These schools are incubators of class bias and top down disparagement that reproduce repulsive attitudes and values towards others, similar to ones described in for instance Frantz Fanon's books *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, as typical for the justification-narratives of the colonizer towards the conquered native humans from the colonial era that should not be tolerated in modern open social democratic countries (BEACH, 2018). But another problem to be confronted is such seriously negative social stereotyping also seems to develop even in segregated and elite schools with what appear to be open forms of selection (JONSSON; BEACH, 2013, 2015; LACEY, 1970).

In these schools elite high-performing students assign themselves attributes distinctive of an upright and intellectually ambitious, cultivated and politically well-informed, competitive and hard-working homo sapiens, with a strong leadership and/or professional potential, whilst they assign others attributes of having insufficient self-discipline and reasoning skills, and of even being both threatening and aggressive, and therefore in need of external monitoring and control. These are standpoints that are common in elite schools across time and national and international space according to for instance van Zanten (2009). But they also reflect the views and attitudes of factory owners towards labour as disclosed by Engels in England one and a half centuries ago; as filthy, vile, exploitable and disposable; and they have been found as out-group negative stereotypes of people who are defined as needing the skills and attitudes for success in our knowledge societies, but lacking the capacities

necessary to acquire them (BEACH, 2017). They are expressed as at best ordinary and at worst a dull or even backward and immature risk to themselves, their schools, society, and even future European prosperity (BEACH, 2018). Moreover, as also Kenway et al. point out (2016, 2018) there are other important political problems embedded here too (BEACH, 2018).

Academic learners from elite (and often very socially segregated and academically selective schools or programs) tend to become the business, political and intellectual leaders in positions of power in our future societies, with great influence over future politics; including educational policy formulation (VAN ZANTEN, 2009). Donald Trump (and before him G. W. Bush) is an example of this problem of bought privilege and socialisation through elite schooling in the USA, as are David Cameron (the former Prime-Minister) and Boris Johnson (who is a contender for the post) in the UK. They combine openly anti-democratic and highly elitist values with poor social skills and moderate (at best) judgement capabilities in countries where elite schooling is as common as milk and honey and has created a massively socially skewed political and cultural superstructure where up to two thirds of high/supreme court judges and top government advisors in the civil service come from elite (often highly and even unhealthily segregated) private education backgrounds, as do over 60% of the US House of Representatives and current ministers in the British government.

It is perhaps not by chance then that public services in these countries have recently shrunk through austerity measures levelled by decision makers at the poor; that research shows that they both fear, deride and despise; to levels not experienced for over 60 years, whilst educational inequality is higher than it has been for 100 years. And it is perhaps not by chance either, that levels of incarceration are massively socially skewed and higher per-capita in these countries than in any other Western industrialised nation and that they over-represent black and other poor ethnic minorities.

In illustration currently the UK courts incarcerate twice as many people annually as other European countries of comparable size do, such as for instance Spain and Italy. Like education the Law is formally expressed as based on independence and neutrality, but currently both of them are both in theory and in practice highly political, highly ideologically biased, and distinctly socially and culturally reproductive it seems. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* (BEACH, 2018). However, at the same time things may be worse in many

respects today than in the recent past. Schools and instruction in them are producing greater levels of despair and inequality now than they have, in Western countries at least, for more than half a century. Education levels of the poor are often targeted as a way of responding to this. But according to the present article, the real problems are less those of the education of the poor as they are those of the rich (and global elites) whose inheritance of social, cultural and economic power are secured through bought privilege and the reproduction in academic curricula of the values of bourgeois culture and the assumed superiority of its educational code (BEACH, 2018; BROSSARD, 2013; VAN ZANTEN, 2009).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Many young people have been and are being historically, politically, ideologically and socially constructed as impossible, failing and hopeless students in schools today, at the same time as others (the elite and successful) construct and present themselves as (but have never really been seriously proven to be) talented hard-working and well informed. But their successes are mainly attained through a reproduction of ideology that reflects material advantages and uneven distributions of power and (often bought) privilege. Overcoming this situation is a significant curriculum challenge (VAN ZANTEN, 2009). How this may be accomplished will have to be a subject that is considered in other articles however.

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