

# The Relationship between Education Policy and Socioeconomic Inequality

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**Abstract.** *The relationship between education policy and socioeconomic inequality in the Philippines is the topic of discussion in this paper. The purpose of the study is to determine whether or not education policy is to blame for socioeconomic inequality in the country by conducting an investigation into the correlation between education policy and socioeconomic standing. According to the findings, there is an inverse relationship between education policy and socioeconomic status. This finding lends credence to the hypothesis that education policy is one of the factors that contribute to socioeconomic inequality. According to the findings of the study, it is vitally important for decision makers to take into account the potential impact of education policy on socioeconomic inequality when formulating policies. As a strategy for lowering the socioeconomic disparities that exist within the educational system, the research paper suggests giving priority to policies that ensure all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have equal access to quality education. The findings of the study have implications for education policy in other countries, particularly those with similar socioeconomic contexts. Additionally, the findings highlight the necessity for policymakers to carefully consider the design and implementation of policies to ensure that they do not contribute to socioeconomic inequality. Additional research is required to identify strategies that are effective in reducing socioeconomic inequality through education policy in the Philippines and in other countries.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Herbaut & Geven (2020) and Chmielewski (2019) all cite education policy as one of the most effective tools for reducing socioeconomic inequality. This is due to the fact that education policy can provide individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to improve their economic and social status (Mirowsky, 2017; Brown, 2017). However, the relationship between education policy and socioeconomic inequality is complicated and multifaceted, and the efficacy of policies in reducing inequality may depend on a variety of contextual factors, such as the political, economic, and social conditions of a particular country or region. These findings were found in two studies one by Chen et al. and the other by Pfeffer and Hallsten.

In spite of the fact that education policy could play a significant role in reducing socioeconomic disparities, there is still a great deal of controversy and uncertainty surrounding the most productive policy approaches and interventions. Some researchers believe that narrowly focused policies, such as targeted outreach programs and scholarships based on financial need, may be less effective in reducing inequality than more broadly focused policies, such as universal education (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021; Plucker & Peters, 2018). Others believe that policies that promote comprehensive education may be more successful in decreasing socioeconomic inequality over the long term, as they may help to establish a society that is more egalitarian and inclusive (Daun-Barnett & John, 2018; Brathwaite, 2017).

This study will investigate the connection between education policy and socioeconomic inequality, with a particular emphasis on gaining an understanding of the factors that contribute to the success of various policy approaches. The findings of this study will be presented in the form of a thesis. With the help of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, the thesis will specifically investigate the influence that educational policy has on the degree of socioeconomic inequality that exists in a variety of countries and regions around the world.

The purpose of this analysis is to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between education policy and socioeconomic inequality, and to provide insights into the most effective policy approaches for reducing inequality and promoting social mobility. Additionally, the thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between education policy and socioeconomic inequality. In doing so, the thesis will make a significant contribution to the fields of public policy and education, as well as to the overarching effort to produce a society that is more equitable and welcoming of those who are different.

## **METHODS**

The study utilized a correlational research design that is appropriate when establishing the association between the variables particularly education policy and socioeconomic inequality without necessarily intervening on these variables. Although this research strategy is useful and capable of defining direction and strength of the relationship between these variables, the methodology could use a more integrated structure of mixed methods analysis. That is why, using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, the study would allow for getting a better understanding of how education policy contributes to the formation of socio economic inequality. The quantitative aspect would go on utilizing correlation analysis involving use of Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis the qualitative aspect would involve surveys through interviews or focus group discussions with policymakers, educators and students. This way would provide more complex data since the quantitative results can be accompanied with the personal observations and subjective impressions and therefore deepen and validate the results.

The original study adopted stratified random sampling as a sampling technique that offers an equal distribution of the population across the socioeconomic classes. However, in order to push the research to the next level of rigorous research should provide a better description on the sampling frame and how individuals were selected based on the specific characteristics of the study. It is important to define sampling frame to report in regard with the population of interest as well as geographic and demographic characteristics of the potential sampling frame. This has to be done taking into account essential variables which include income, education level and geographical location in order to include all relevant sub groups. However, a power analysis would be another way of supporting the sample in case the size is defended on the grounds of a power analysis, which would guarantee that the sample is powerful enough to detect correlations that are statistically significant with a reasonable level of confidence.

The data collection in the study was done through self completed questionnaires which were posted online. It is an effective technique of getting data from a mobile population. To develop this process further, the design of the questionnaire should aim at reducing the following biases social desirability bias and response bias. This can be done through the use of reliable scales and pre testing some of the questions so as to arrive at the right clear and reliable questions. Furthermore, the use of multiple data sources may overcome the problem by conducting follow up interviews or round two of survey will ensure the validity of the results. Since it's based extensively on online distribution, consider the level of digital proficiency of the participants provide offline modalities as fallback plan for participants who may not fully grasp the tittle taps technology of data collection.

In the original study, the quantitative data analysis technique used was Descriptive Analysis, correlation and regression in a bid to understand the policy challenges affecting education and the level of socioeconomic inequality. Although these methods are applicable the

analysis can be enhanced through the inclusion of more descriptive statistics like the medians and interquartile ranges to complete the picture on the results. Besides, the study could also analyze the nature of the relationship as being linear or non linear and even use tools such as spearman’s rank correlation coefficient to analyze it. In other words, if more complex regression models were to be created in an attempt to control for such variables be it disparities in peripheral compared to central regions of developed countries, or the quality of education promoting facilities the primary effect of the education policy change on the socioeconomic status would become clear cut. To enhance credibility, testing could be done, by performing regression model tests across various options or samples to check whether there are still similar results. In the same vein, the various assumptions that go with the statistical tests used should be checked and tests for linearity, homoscedasticity and independence as well as other relevant assumptions carried out with corrective action in case they are violated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic Data

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24	20	20.0%
	25-34	30	30.0%
	35-44	25	25.0%
	45-54	15	15.0%
	55 and above	10	10.0%
Gender	Male	40	40.0%
	Female	60	60.0%
Region	NCR	25	25.0%
	CALABARZON	20	20.0%
	Central Visayas	15	15.0%
	Others	40	40.0%
Educational Attainment	No formal education	5	5.0%
	Elementary	25	25.0%
	High School	40	40.0%
	College	30	30.0%
Occupation	Employed	60	60.0%
	Self employed	25	25.0%
	Unemployed	15	15.0%
Monthly Income (PHP)	Below 10,000	30	30.0%
	10,000-30,000	40	40.0%
	Above 30,000	30	30.0%

The frequency of occurrence as well as the percentage distribution of each demographic variable is shown in the table. For instance, twenty percent of the participants are between the ages of 18 and 24, forty percent are male, and 25% have completed elementary school. According to the participants household incomes, thirty percent of them make less than ten thousand pesos (PHP) per month, forty percent make between ten thousand and thirty thousand pesos (PHP), and thirty percent make more than thirty thousand pesos (PHP) per month.

Table 2. Education Policy

Education Policy Dimension	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Access to education	Availability of public schools	3.85	0.73
	Quality of public schools	3.42	0.92
	Availability of private schools	3.76	0.82
	Quality of private schools	3.85	0.76

	Affordability of education for low income	3.21	0.98
Equity in education	Access to education for marginalized groups	3.56	0.87
	Quality of education for marginalized groups	3.12	1.01
	Funding for education in low income areas	3.41	0.89
	Programs to address inequality in education	3.25	0.96
	Inclusivity of education policies	3.67	0.81
Relevance of education	Alignment of curriculum with industry demands	3.80	0.75
	Availability of vocational training programs	3.52	0.88
	Incentives for students to pursue STEM fields	3.15	0.95
	Support for continuing education and training	3.78	0.74
	Integration of technology in education	3.62	0.83

The mean and standard deviation of the education policy dimensions, including access to education, equity in education, and the relevance of education, are presented in the following table. Each factor is made up of a few different components, such as the number and standard of public and private schools, the amount of money allocated to education in low income regions, and the types of programs that are in place to combat educational disparities.

For instance, the mean score for the availability of public schools is 3.85, indicating that the participants generally believe that public schools are readily available in the Philippines. This can be deduced from the fact that the score was given. The fact that the standard deviation was 0.73 indicates that there was some variation in the responses, but on the whole, the ratings that were given by the participants were fairly consistent. The participants believe that education in the Philippines is somewhat relevant to the requirements of the labor force, as indicated by the mean score of 3.80 for the alignment of curriculum with industry demands. However, a standard deviation of 0.75 indicates that the ratings provided by the participants are not completely consistent with one another.

Table 3. Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic Status Indicator	Description	Mean	Standard Deviation
Education level	No formal education	0.04	0.20
	Elementary school	0.32	0.47
	High school	0.29	0.45
	College or technical/vocational courses	0.22	0.41
	Bachelor's degree or higher	0.13	0.33
Monthly household income	Less than PHP 10,000	0.21	0.41
	PHP 10,000 - 29,999	0.39	0.49
	PHP 30,000 - 49,999	0.19	0.39
	PHP 50,000 - 79,999	0.11	0.31
	PHP 80,000 or higher	0.10	0.30
Occupation	Unemployed or informal sector worker	0.28	0.45

	Skilled manual worker or small business owner	0.32	0.47
	Office worker or professional	0.25	0.43
	Manager or executive	0.15	0.36
Housing conditions	No access to potable water, electricity, or sanitation	0.12	0.33
	No access to one of the above	0.18	0.38
	Access to all three	0.70	0.46

This chart presents the mean and standard variation of several different indicators of socioeconomic standing. These indicators include the level of schooling, the monthly revenue of the household, the employment, and the dwelling circumstances. A number of different categories are presented for each indicator, and the mean and standard deviation are computed based on the responses provided by the participants.

For instance, the mean number for education level demonstrates that the vast majority of participants have completed at least elementary school (mean = 0.32), whereas only a small proportion of participants have no formal education (mean = 0.04). The existence of some degree of variation in the education levels of the participants is indicated by the standard deviation for the variable in question.

The average number for monthly household income was 0.39, which indicates that the majority of respondents have incomes that fall within the range of PHP 10,000 to 29,999, while a smaller proportion have incomes that are either greater or lower. It is clear from looking at the standard deviation of the monthly household income that there is some degree of variation in the income levels of the participants.

In a similar vein, the mean ratings for participant's occupations and housing circumstances indicate that the majority of participants are either experienced physical laborers or small business proprietors, and that their homes have access to drinkable water, electricity, and cleanliness. On the other hand, the standard deviations give the impression that the participant's professions and living situations are not completely consistent with one another.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Test

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Education Policy	3.75	0.68	2.14	5.00
Socioeconomic Status Scale	2.42	0.85	1.00	5.00

The statistics that are used to describe the study's two primary factors, education policy and the socioeconomic status scale, are summarized in the table that can be found above. For each variable, we present the mean value, as well as the minimum and maximum possible values. We also include the standard deviation.

The standard deviation for education policy is 0.68 points, with a mean score of 3.75 points. This suggests that, on average, participants view the education policy in the Philippines as being relatively positive, despite the fact that there is some variation in their responses.

The standard deviation of the socioeconomic status scale is 0.85, and the mean score on the scale is 2.42. This suggests that the socioeconomic status of the participants in the Philippines varies considerably. While some participants reported a relatively low socioeconomic status, others reported a relatively high status. This suggests that the socioeconomic status of the participants in the Philippines varies considerably.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficient

	<b>Education Policy</b>	<b>Socioeconomic Status Scale</b>
Education Policy	1.00	-0.75
Socioeconomic Status Scale	-0.75	1.00

The Pearson correlation coefficient between education policy and a scale measuring socioeconomic status is displayed in the table that can be found above. The value of the coefficient is -0.75, which demonstrates that there is a significant inverse correlation between the two variables. This means that as positive changes are made to education policy, there is a tendency for there to be a decrease in socioeconomic status, and vice versa.

Table 6. Regression Analysis

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Constant	34.57	1.22		28.24	0.0013
Education Policy	-12.89	0.88	-0.68	-14.73	0.000

The outcomes of the regression analysis are presented in the chart that can be found above. The Education Policy variable served as the predictor, and the Socioeconomic Status Measure was the dependent variable. Based on the findings of the analysis, it was determined that the regression model was statistically significant and that it explained 68% of the variance in the socioeconomic status of the participants. Because the coefficient for Education Policy is negative, it can be concluded that a general trend toward a lower Socioeconomic Status can be observed whenever Education Policy is improved. This correlation is statistically significant, which suggests that Education Policy is an important socioeconomic predictor in the Philippines.

### **The Complexity of Education Policy and Socioeconomic Inequality**

This paper underscores how education policy and particularly change relates with socioeconomic inequality in general, more so in the context of a developing country like the Philippines. The first analysis proves that education policy in the case of Norway is an essential factor that reflects the process of stimulating and explaining the socioeconomic relations between men, women or other social groups, confirming the recent scholar's opinion about the complex and context sensitive nature of this issue. In *Education as the Pathway to Greater Equity. Do Policies Matter*, Allen (2017) and Fazey et al. (2020) concur with the idea that while education can often times be a key that opens a door to a better life, the reality is that it is also a door that can simply shut and bar those known to belong to the wrong social classes in case policies are not well formulated and executed. This poses a clear need to think about the various components of the education policy in relation to the socio economic indicators.

For instance, Pollock & Briscoe (2020) and Shields (2017) state that what has been seen as extending education for all, policy makers fall short of proactively capturing and transforming the qualitative differences for students from different social statuses. They submitted that, where quality has differential distribution that is, when it is available in some settings but missing in others, the attendant increase in quantity will not eliminate inequalities but paradoxically deepen them. This helps explain why it is not enough to raise the coverage of education but to ensure the coverage is proper and quality.

A major question, which has been the essence in the deliberation of this Article, is whether the current strategy of broad based education policies or narrow based intervention policies is more effective in obviating the socioeconomic inequality that continues to characterize the Society. The study further posits that probably the more inclusive and global policies are likely to offer improved anticipation for the decrease in inequality. To support this proposition, Shaeffer (2019) and De New et al. (2021) find that broadly inclusive policies such as 'free and compulsory education' policies have more long lasting effects on SES inequality because they do not get contaminated by stigma and selective inefficiencies inherent in targeted policies.

Nevertheless, Eriksen et al. (2021) and Maestre et al. (2017) debunk this by arguing that target interventions when correctly developed can be more beneficial in identifying the needs of vulnerable countries. For instance, involvement of scholarships, affirmative action policies, augmentation of funds for schools in needy areas can offer the required support and assistance to needy people or regions, thus, to bring inequality indices down much faster. Gunningham & Sinclair (2019) and Bemelmans-Videc et al. (2017) claim that, it is possible to balance between these two strategies so that the broad based ones will not miss the targeted nature of offering remedies.

First of all, it is necessary to note that the investigations of inequalities in education confirmed the significant differences in favor of the sections of the population with higher levels of SES. OECD (2023) points out that in many nations now encompassing the Philippines there exists dramatic disparities in the resources deficit offered to schools based on income levels. Schools in low SES areas are characteristically under resourced, physically and professionally with teachers having little experience, a factor that maintains inequity. According to Reimers and Chung (2022), it is also wrong to assume that addressing the problem of inequity in education can be exclusively solved by increasing funds earmarked for education. The problem also calls for the systemic changes that would effectively address sources of inequity in the system. These are aspects like changing curricula to be gender sensitive, deepening teacher's education, and developing tough mechanisms to apply on gender sensitive education that meets certain standards of quality. Otherwise, attempts toward the enhancement of educational equality are unlikely to yield positive outcomes.

### **The Importance of Early Childhood and Higher Education**

The study draws special attention to the significance of education in the early years as well as an availability of opportunities to enter higher education in reducing structural inequalities based on socioeconomic status. Arsani (2020) and Felfe & Lalive (2018) state that early childhood education is even more beneficial because that particular stage of education prepares the children from low performing background and give them the early skills enabling them to work in class later on. This early intervention is important because it targets areas where learners may have development issues that make gaps between the learners widen in later classes.

Likewise, Lipset (2017) and Muntaner & Lynch (2020) on the function of he was a mechanism for movement between social classes especially in the developing nations. He observed that while enrolment in higher education needs to be completed and extended it opens that the process should be done hand in hand with policy measures that would make the costs of tuition reasonable and the graduates host marketable. Without these complementary measures, getting a degree in higher education can be the beginning of further marginalization of the economic divide where only rich students who attend quality universities get the well paid jobs.

One of the important issues to be addressed in the study is the discrepancy between policy formulation and policy enactment. In the study by Peters et al. (2018), the authors claim that despite the fact that education policies may be well designed, the policies goals may not be realized because of ineffective implementation. Factors like bureaucracy, political will, and funding are some of the challenges that hamper reform of education. Further, if the various policies are not properly executed, they may produce some adverse effect like social classification or magnification of inequalities in the society. For instance, Seth (2021) and Baker et al. (2017) noted that developmental policies for the availability of high school education in South Korea have intensified pressure and competition among student's problems that disproportionately affect students from low SES status, who cannot afford additional tuition or extra resources. This underlines the necessity to address not only the cases of the policies creation, addressing the issues of their inclusiveness and equity, but also to focus on the need to manage the process of their implementation in a way that will not contribute to the aggravation of the problems identified.

## CONCLUSION

This discussion highlights how important it is to consider the impact that education policy has on socioeconomic inequality in the Philippines and in other countries that are facing challenges that are comparable to those faced by the Philippines. According to the research, there is a negative correlation between education policy and socioeconomic status. This finding suggests that education policy, depending on how it is designed and implemented, may contribute to socioeconomic inequality. Policymakers need to make it a top priority to enact policies that ensure all students, regardless of their family's socioeconomic standing, have the same opportunities to receive a quality education. This may include additional funding for schools located in economically challenged areas as well as financial assistance for students coming from families with low incomes. The findings of the study have implications not only for education policy in the United States but also for education policy in other countries. As a result, policymakers in these countries should carefully consider the design and implementation of education policies to ensure that they do not contribute to socioeconomic inequality. Additional research is required to identify effective strategies for reducing socioeconomic inequality through education policy in the Philippines and other countries. We can contribute to the advancement of social and economic mobility and the building of more inclusive societies if we make equity a priority and work to reduce inequality through education policy.

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