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Education: A child's right or a lottery of structural position?

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Böhm, 11th December 2021

Agenda

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- (1) Education as a central dimension of social inequality
- (2) Global educational inequalities

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Education as a central dimension of social inequality

What is social inequality and why should we focus explicitly on education?

Social inequality: inequalities of relatively permanent living & action conditions that are

(a) **socially driven** and **rooted in social structure** as well as

(b) enabling individuals to **achieve generally accepted life goals** in different degrees.

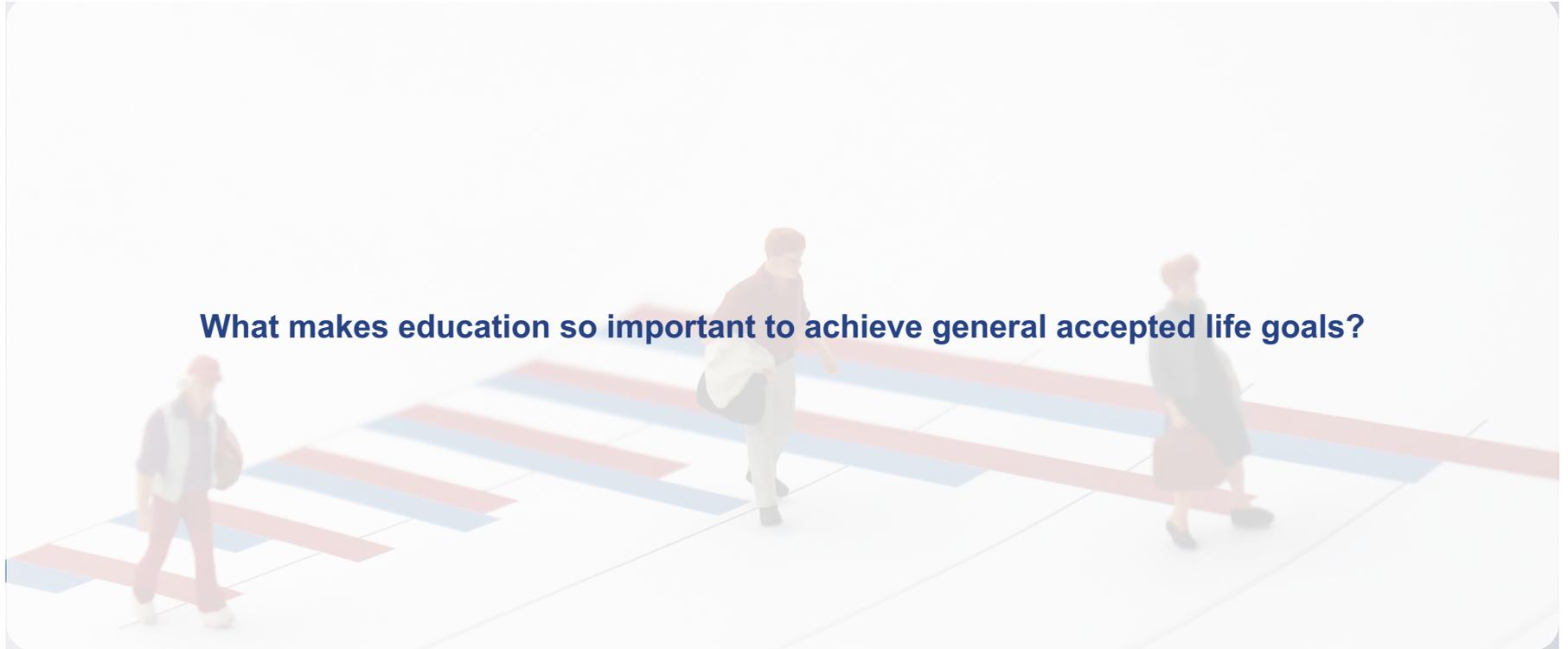


Sources: shutterstock (picture); Huinink/Schroeder 2019: 101 according to Hradil 1987: 144, translation Sebastian Böhm)

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Education as a central dimension of social inequality

What is social inequality and why should we focus explicitly on education?



Sources: shutterstock (picture)

Education as a central dimension of social inequality

Dimensions / instrumental goals of social inequality in modernized societies

Economic Dimension

Prosperity

education, knowledge, income, wealth, property



Welfare Dimension

Security, Health

social security, employment opportunities, health risks



Social Dimension

Integration, Social Recognition

networks (family, partner, friends), prestige, power, discrimination



Emancipatory Dimension

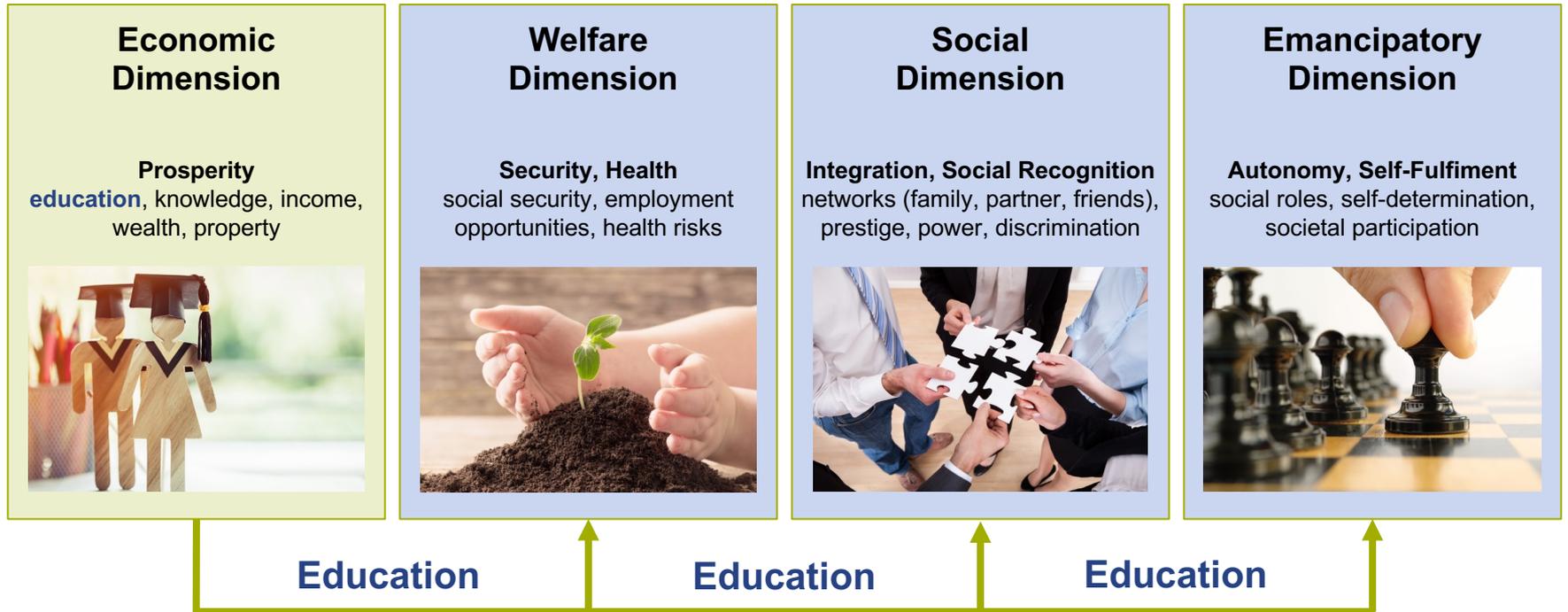
Autonomy, Self-Fulfillment

social roles, self-determination, societal participation



Education as a central dimension of social inequality

Dimensions / instrumental goals of social inequality in modernized societies



Education as a central dimension of social inequality

Why is education so important?

Education as a an important resource to achieve other individual life goals

- placement on the **labour market** (Blaeschke / Freitag 2021)
- higher life expectancy by **healthier lifestyle** (Becker 1998)
- position on the partner & **marriage market**
(Blossfeld / Timm 2017)
- achieving **self efficacy** (Becker / Lauterbach 2016)



Education has a strong impact on overall life satisfaction

(Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018)



Picture: shutterstock

Agenda

Education: A child's right or a lottery of structural position?



- (1) Education as a central dimension and outcome of social inequality
- (2) **Global educational inequalities**

Global educational inequalities

Theory: the macro level



Global educational inequalities

Theory: the micro level

Which social factors influence the opportunities of a child's educational path?

(Hilmert 2005)



self selection

(Boudon 1974, Gresch 2012; Dumont et al. 2013)

- primary factors of origin
- secondary factors of origin



external selection

(Stubbe/Bos 2008; Maaz/Nagy 2009; Blossfeld et al. 2015 Maaz et al. 2006)

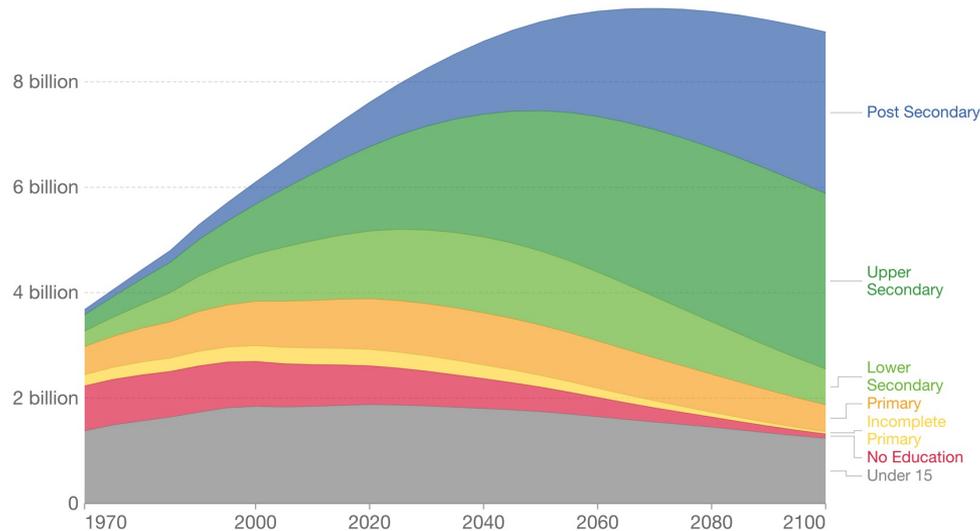
- institutional barriers
prerequisites of schools / vocational education / universities
- tertiary effects of social origin
selective assessment by external persons (e.g. teachers)



Global educational inequalities

Evolution of educational distribution

Projected world population by level of education



Source: Our World in Data (2021): data based on IASA global projection, Medium SSP2

modernization theory seems to be right:

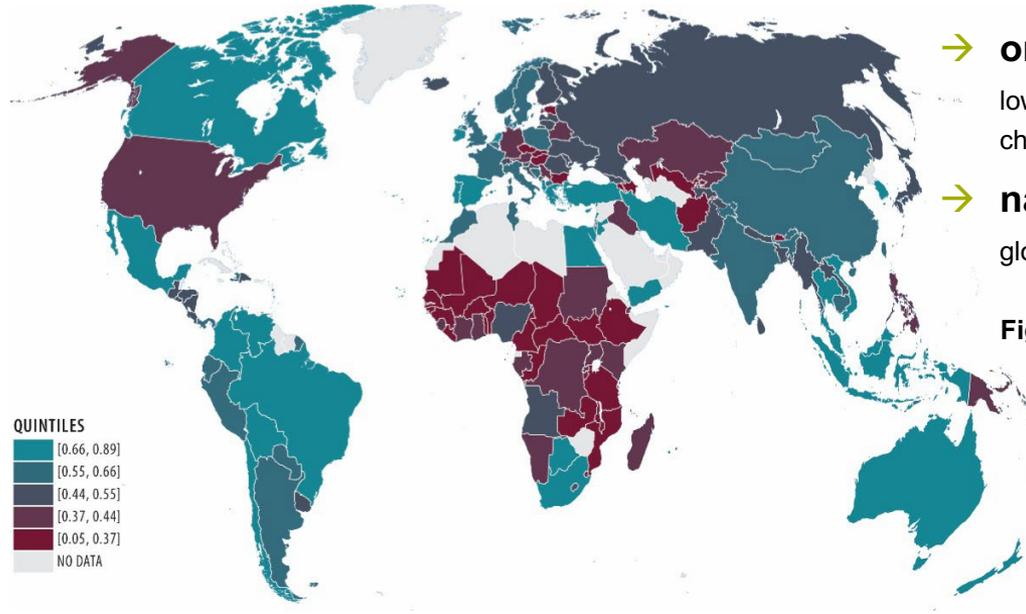
(Steuerwald 2016; Hradil 2012)

- **growing importance of higher education**, in terms of absolute & relative numbers
- **value shift** (education as a civil right), high demand by **labour markets**, increasing **wealth**

Global educational inequalities

Global absolute educational mobility

Fig. 2: Absolute mobility around the world (1980s cohort)



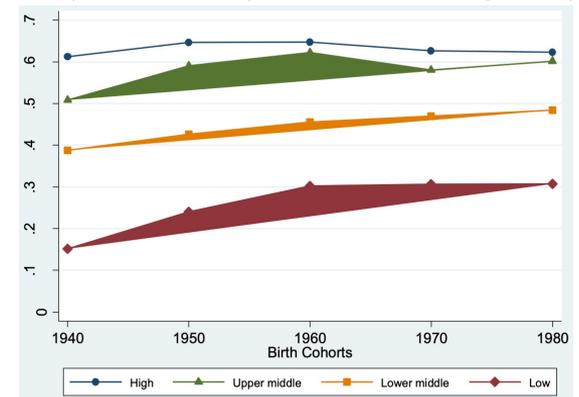
→ **on average:** mobility declines x development

lowest mobility in Africa Sub-Sahara, higher in Asia, best chances for children in high income countries.

→ **narrowing gap between rich & poor societies**

global educational expansion lower educational inequality slowly

Fig. 3: Upward mobility in education (accounted for ceiling effect)



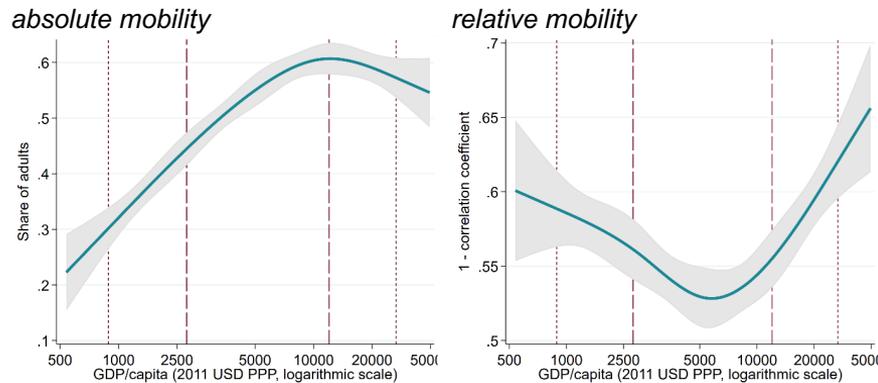
Source: Van der Weide et al. 2021: 14ff.

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Global educational inequalities

Absolute vs. relative educational mobility

Fig. 4: Intergenerational mobility vs. GDP



absolute mobility

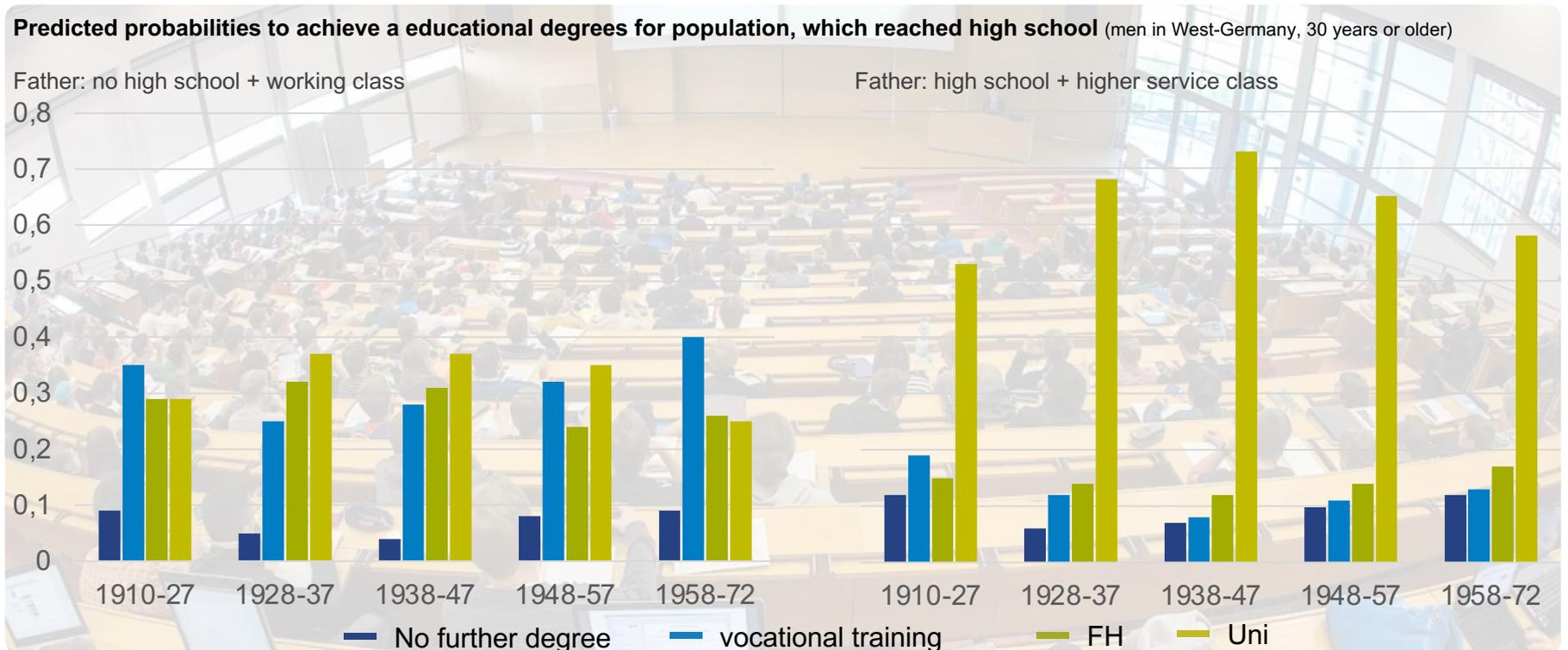
- **poverty trap** in poor countries
low threshold for surpassing parents education, but also low capacity
- **ceiling effect** for rich countries
many parents who already reached highest education

relative mobility

- high mobility, but low level in **poor countries**
almost no variation in parents education: majority have no education
- low mobility in **mid-income countries**
existing inequality in parents education + low infrastructure investment
- high mobility in **high-income countries**
rich countries start interventions to hamper educational immobility

Global educational inequalities

What happens after high school?



Global educational inequalities

Factors determining educational opportunities

Social origin (parents) only one important factor, others are...

- **grandparents** play a role as well (Büchler / Lohmann 2021)
- **sibling order**: advantage for first borns (Björklund & Jäntti 2020)
- rising **educational homogamy** on the partner market (Blossfeld / Timm 2017)
- **horizontal educational inequalities**: specific choices of girls & boys (Hägglund / Lörz 2020)
- **migration background** with significant disadvantages, but also with advantages (OECD 2019)
- **genetic variation** + interplay with social background (Stienstra et al. 2021)

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Summary

SUMMARY



- **education** as a primary resource to avoid social inequality
- **global educational expansion** enhances overall educational opportunities
- huge + persistent **global educational inequalities** that differ by income status
- **highly stratified education systems** drive educational inequalities by social origin

Source (picture): shutterstock

Appendix

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