Re/framing Educational Equity: An international collaboration

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

<u>August 31st – September 2nd 2021</u>

[Conference Website](#)

In partnership with 'Experiments in Education Theory': www.exet.org

(Revised closing date for the Call for Papers - Friday 16 April 2021)

Across the world, nations aspire towards educational equity. Very often this aspiration involves efforts to close what is called the 'education gap' or the 'attainment gap'. Many of these efforts stem from concerns to increase attainment on national, standardised tests so that students might better position themselves in the job market. Such efforts are not without success and many countries can point to a reduction in the gaps between certain groups with regard to such educational attainment. However, it has to be noted that not every nation focuses their efforts on attainment alone; indeed, some would point to other measures for equity in education such as access to higher education or general health and wellbeing.

Whatever the focus, it is notably the case that in some form or other, evaluation takes centre-stage as the means by which policies designed to uplift educational success are judged. However, it is not always clear what procedures would allow for evaluating accomplishment in education on a micro- or macro-level: it is debatable whether or not, and to what extent, measurement can be an instrument of evaluation. That such measurement takes place is a feature of efforts such as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) to demonstrate, at national levels, the ways and means by which education can be positioned, neoliberally, as an individual right and benefit, and an economic good. The question remains, though: what is left unaccounted for by emphasising measurement as the predominant instrument of evaluation?

Furthermore, the very concept of an education gap is often assumed to raise issues of equity across societies that are deeply stratified. That education is tasked to close such gaps is already a great challenge. But there are other complex gaps competing to be addressed, gaps created by those who do, or do not: have access to technology; or who struggle for recognition or inclusion in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

Beyond questions around the general criteria of educational success and the means with which we could ascertain such success, what is also often missed in debates are efforts to question common understandings of education equity: 'the education gap'. For example, it remains a general assumption that the education gap is something that should, as far as possible, be closed, and neither the nature of the education gap nor the question whether such a gap is desirable or not are discussed. From a broader perspective, it needs to be asked what equity in relation to education could mean; that is, what kind of differences and what causes of difference are we prepared to recognise or embrace, and how are we to ascertain equity in the light of the basic condition of difference? Philosophical and sociological discussion, for example, needs to take place so that policy might begin to consider the fundamental approaches that are taken to addressing the challenges posed by aspirations of equity in education.

This conference is part of a larger project working in collaboration with colleagues at the Education University of Hong Kong. The event provides a forum for scholars to debate the nature of educational equity and its relation to academic attainment and achievement. These inequities, and resulting gaps, will be examined through their relationship with education systems that purport to narrow the differences between rich and poor, male and female, advantaged and disadvantaged, etc. In doing so it seeks to address themes such as:

- How might education equity and inequity be defined? What criteria could be used to decide the existence of educational equity or inequity?
- How could the relation between education equity and general individuality and capacity be conceived? What is the relation of equity and difference with regard to education?
- What roles do education equity and inequity play in the broader context of society?
- What does the elimination of inequity in education seek ultimately to achieve?
- What might be the consequences of not achieving equity, e.g. of not narrowing the education gap?
- How might we theorise the existence of differential outcomes so that all might be able to achieve academically or with regard to any other criteria used to define education equity or inequity?
- What is the relation of evaluation and measurement, and how does this relation affect the framing of education equity?
- Whose interests are threatened by efforts to close the attainment gap?

These questions and more are at the heart of any endeavour to create a just and equitable education system. They involve consideration from a variety of standpoints and through a number of disciplinary lenses. The positions taken by politicians and policy-makers centre on ways to achieve success as determined in narrow terms. Perhaps what is required is further reflection on what the achievement of success actually means.

Indicative themes for this conference include:

Re/framing (in)equity: In what ways is equity a driving force for good in developing appropriate theories for mitigating the education gap? How might a drive for an inclusive education system mitigate the effects of education disadvantage? In what ways does theorising about the education gap contribute to an understanding of inclusivity?

Re/framing policy: How does policy at global, national and local levels shape thinking about the education gap? How might individuals and groups engage with theorising about the education gap? How might new partnerships enhance or inhibit educational initiatives and the mobilisation of research?

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<u>Re/framing curriculum:</u> How does the curriculum (in whatever form) engage with a constantly changing and evolving, unequal world? How might curriculum engage thinking about human flourishing? What insights can be gleaned from different theoretical perspectives on curriculum? How might education practitioners engage with the process of curriculum reform to effect deeper understandings of the education gap?

<u>Re/framing assessment:</u> In what ways does National Assessment evidence drive conceptions of education disadvantage and advantage? How does theory contribute to an ever-evolving understanding of the place and form for education disadvantage?

<u>Re/framing Research:</u> What challenges are facing education researchers and how are new research methods being innovated in response to educational challenges? What new questions need to be asked and examined to effect change in understanding educational equity? How are different theoretical perspectives and paradigms creating openings for new questions, new forms of research, critical insights into advantage and disadvantage? How can more innovative research methods contribute to supporting learning and change in challenging times and spaces?

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Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Prof. Sheila Riddell, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
https://www.ed.ac.uk/profile/sheila-riddell

Prof. Gert Biesta, Maynooth University, Ireland
https://www-gertbiesta-com.jimdosite.com/

Prof. Kerry Kennedy, The Education University of Hong Kong
https://oraas0.ied.edu.hk/rich/web/people_details.jsp?pid=15707

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The conference will accept individual papers and symposia, as well as suggestions for roundtables discussions and workshops.

Individual papers

Individual papers require a 400-word abstract. Please note that authors must identify the theme (above) that their abstract addresses. Abstracts should include:

- theme (best fit from the list above);
- title of paper;
- author name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address;
- 4 keywords.

The abstract should be structured to cover:
- focus;
- conceptual framework deployed;
- main argument; conclusions.

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Each paper will be allocated a 30-minute slot (twenty minutes to present with ten minutes for questions). Please note: You are allowed to submit as many abstracts as practical but each person is limited to a maximum of two presentations within the conference.

Symposia

A symposium is a planned event lasting 90 minutes. Symposia organisers are free to decide how their symposium is run. They should provide a chairperson who will introduce the session and highlight relationships amongst the contributions. Symposia organizers should also provide a discussant to offer a critique of the symposium as a whole. The contact person identified on the proposal must act as a link between the conference organizers and other contributors. Symposia are made up of three or four linked papers.

Proposals should include:

- title of symposium;
- name(s), affiliation(s), contact email address of the symposium organiser;
- name of chairperson/discussant;
- symposium presenters
- an outline of 400 words describing the purpose of symposium and relationship between papers. Also to be included are 400-word abstracts for each paper in the symposium, to follow the guidance for individual papers above.

Workshops and roundtables

Workshops and round tables will be scheduled as 90 minute events. Proposals for workshops should include the design and delivery of a learning activity that engages participants directly both in experience and subsequent reflection on theory. A descriptor of 400 words should follow the guidance above for symposia.

Proposals for round tables will indicate the theme to be discussed by a range of stakeholders sharing a range of views and experiences. A 600-word description should be provided that outlines:

- Title;
- Name of organiser;
- Names of discussants;
- Aims;
- Theoretical approach/es taken in the discussion.

Proposals should be emailed directly to ree-conf2020@strath.ac.uk

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(Revised closing date for the Call for Papers - **Friday 16 April 2021)**

For more details and registration, see the conference website.

- Dr Paul Adams
- Dr Karsten Kenklies
- Dr David Lewin

For queries email: ree-conf2020@strath.ac.uk

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