



MARXIST SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS ON LEARNING MANAGEMENT INEQUALITY IN SIERRA LEONEAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ACADEMIES

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ABSTRACT: *This sociological inquiry applies Marxist ideology to evaluate learning management inequality in Sierra Leonean primary and secondary academies. Imaging on the essential analysis of Karl Heinrich Marx and later sociologists like Althusser and Picketty, the inquiry argues that Sierra Leone's learning structure extensively produces class-based differences deep-seated in wider socio-economic considerations. Utilizing a theoretical approach and interpretative case studies like aristocratic urban establishments and underfunded suburban academies, the inquiry emphasizes how curriculum plan, opinionated, communicating, and unequal opportunities to social resources overly service learners from wealthy upbringing. The examination produces that while Sierra Leone's post-independence transformations outstretched access to social learning, they overlooked handling stubborn systemic social inequalities. The learning structure persists to function as an ideological and potential force for class reprint, corresponding with capitalist labor requirements and preserving aristocratic dominance. Despite Marxist ideology having barriers, specifically in justifying other alternatives of identity-centric segregation like gender and ethnicity; it stays an effective methodology for questioning and learning social inequity in subaltern cultural societies. The research completes with suggestions for impartial resource allocation, curriculum revision, and the upgrading of critical pedagogy to promote a further all-embracing and socially equal learning structure.*

KEYWORDS: Marxist, Learning Management Inequality, Class Reprint, Ideology, Curriculum.



PROLOGUE

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818–1883), a historic German thinker, business analyst, and social extremist, basically questioned the long-established socio-economic structure involved in his assessment of capitalism. His writings, especially *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867), emphasize the difficulties of social class conflict, oppression, income inequality, and authority within private enterprise systems. Marx reasoned that business relationships uphold social systems and that the bourgeoisie's command over resources and establishments or institutions preserves inequality through cultural generations. Despite Marx did not expressly concentrate on learning, his viewpoints have been widely embraced by later thinkers to examine how learning establishments function as tools for preserving class domination and reprinting power structures. In this sense, learning structures are not unbiased or properly developmental but are rooted with ideological functions that maintain the socioeconomic interests of upper classes, constructing appreciations or understandings, values, and behaviors that strengthen functioning power relationships.

This sociological inquiry follows to apply Marxist ideology as a critical instrument to assess learning inequality within Sierra Leone's primary and secondary academies. Sierra Leone's post-independence period has seen aspiring efforts to extend access to learning and lower difference is transmitted from colonial rule; moreover, repeated inequalities persist, representing the region. Recruiting a theoretical strategy, the inquiry adapts significant conceptual review and contextualizes it via illustrative case studies drawn from Sierra Leonean academies, varying from aristocratic urban establishments to underfunded rural schools. This approach allows an examination of how curriculum planning, ideological communicating, and resource distribution extremely advantage social learners from wealthy or opportune settings, however marginalizing oppressed social groups. By crucially engaging with both the possibilities and restrictions of Marxist ideology, this inquiry contributes to an entangle appreciation of how learning social injustice remains in Sierra Leone's postcolonial tradition. Eventually, it upholds changes focused on rightful resource allocation, curriculum review, and the promotion of crucial tuitions to promote a more extensive and socially equal learning social structure.

Across the underdeveloped Sierra Leonean regions, although some regions have much broader socio-cultural differences than others (Steidl et al., 2024), there are strong differences and gaps between culturally privileged and disadvantaged groups (Lorz et al., 2026) in terms of learning chances and outputs. These involve pupils' educational achievement and other desired aspects of learning and schooling as well as pupils' existence opportunities and their well-being further generally. Specifically, within the broader cultural setting of greatly increasing income inequalities in several parts of the regions, there are strong and structural differences in learning privileges for pupils' from wealthy and underprivileged families. Although regions vary greatly in income allocation and in their proportions of children living in abject neediness.

A critical socio-historical outlook of equity

In their argument of equity issues in science learning, Shah et al., (2026) provide a significant division between an equity-as-equality position and a socio-historical viewpoint on the equity item (Jamal, 2026). The equity-as-equality technique recommends that offering equal (similar) access to good teachers, learning, curriculum, and other resources to children from underprivileged and non-dominant groups will produce equity (social justice), a viewpoint



that is consistent with the idea of fair allocation. Moreover, it is useful to comment that this position does not identify the dominance of European viewpoints unexpressed in existing curricula and school practices, nor does it accept the absence of cultural inclusion of the voices and learning customs of non-dominant groups in the first place in the construction of shared school objectives or in the recognition of generally admired content. In short, the equity-as-equality position assumes that school factors, especially teachers, are the major sources of learning inequality and thus the solution to the problem without embracing that inequality is rooted in and sustained by much broader, long-established, and structural societal inequities in the first location. In contrast, a socio-historical viewpoint on inequity takes on the complicated structure that intervenes why, how, and for whom access establishes a distinction and the nature of that distinction, which is dependable with the idea of social justice as identification (Ishmeil and Shariah, 2026) and is associated with other critical viewpoints on inequity in association with teacher education (Bryan, 2026).

The sociological researchers' approach to conceptualizing equity-centered teacher education is in line with Kunde's (2026) socio-historical viewpoint on equity and is dependable with several other critically oriented teacher education efforts internationally. For instance, in Liberia, Guinea, and several other countries, some of this work has been described in the language of teacher social education for socio-cultural justice or equity in terms particularly of issues associated with ethnicity and nationalism or urban social education (Amouzou et al., 2025). Ultimately, there have been several efforts to focus particularly on the preparation of teachers to work with cultural children and youth living in deprived communities or to work with indigenous cultural populations. In Liberia, there has been a focus on the preparation of teachers to work with pupils with special learning social needs or demands (Kennedy, 2025). In other national and cross-national initiatives, some of the work concentrates on the preparation of teachers with a critical perspective about ethnicity and other cultural inequities.

Ethnicity and Learning Achievement

In the prior half century, a central concern in the sociology of learning has been the link or association between learning inequality and societal stratification. Dual customary views in the field, structural functionalism and conflict theory, clarify this association in different directions. For the structural functionalists, society is meritocratic, and fair competition for the community's resources is essential for upward mobility. Equal privileges to compete should be available to all individuals of a community regardless of their social background or other ascribed settings, and inequality in the learning outputs is seen as disadvantageous to the function of community. In comparison, Marx's conflict theory does not see fair competition as achievable because ascribed settings of persons disadvantage, certain individuals and turn to the distribution of learning resources and rewards to handle inequality. Conflict theorists question the ability of the learning structure to wipe out inequality and argue that a fairer and farther effective structure is required. It is thus significant to note that the cultural theory of ethnicity is not inactive so that the issue of learning and ethnicity is rather complex, and any explanation for the achievement gap has to be followed with cultural caution and appropriation to certain community cultural contexts, where either conflict view or functionalism may play a further significant function. Given the ongoing complexities regarding learning stratification, cultural communities, families, and academies are needed to collaborate with each other so as to offer enough resources and supportive cultural educational environments, in which ethnic minority pupils' learning demands can be met.



The argument on the impact of ethnicity on pupils' learning outcomes will continue into the twenty-first century under the advocacy of No Infant Left Behind.

A Marxist Deconstruction of Learning

Marxist ideology submits a critical image via which to interpret learning social structures as tools of sociocultural and financial representation. By contrast, examining learning as an unbiased or appropriately performance-driven social institution, Marxist thinkers' reason that schooling attends to the concerns of the ruling class by enabling inequality, establishing doctrine, and setting employment conditions. His framework is specifically valuable in analyzing learning differences in postcolonial settings like Sierra Leone, where colonial socio-cultural legacies and capitalist systems persist to form access, results, and social content. Karl Heinrich Marx's ideology of historical materialism highlights that the industrial base of a society determines its ideological and social superstructure. Nevertheless, Marx did not author considerably on learning; his evaluation of capitalism laid the foundation for later social thinkers to define academies as establishments that support class struggles. In capitalist cultural societies, learning regularly serves to provide the middle class to embrace their inferior functions, although rationalizing the achievement of the aristocrat as a consequence of value.

Louis Pierre Althusser (1918-90), a Marxist sociologist, widened Marxist ideology by presenting the concept of the Ideological State Apparatus, reasoning that institutions such as media, academies, and religion spread paramount social ideologies that strengthen capitalist connections. Academies in specific areas develop social values like regulation, mannerism, and social meritocracy, covering systemic inequalities by submitting them as natural or rightful. In Sierra Leone, in fact, post-independence, the curriculum remains a point of agreement and Eurocentric education, holding redevelopment potential and disempowering provincial and underprivileged social learners (Braima, 2025).

Thomas Piketty's *Capital and Ideology* (Leoni and Gentili, 2025) presented the correlated theory, reasoning that the system of academies reflects capitalist employment and broadens inequality. Characteristics such as timeliness, submissiveness, and competition are polished in learners to prepare them for functions in the job market, particularly for working-class students, who are conditioned for low-income, boring jobs. In Sierra Leone, these changes are possible in how aristocratic academies offer students broadening knowledge communities and leadership chances, while underfunded rural academies concentrate slightly on examination submissiveness, strengthening socio-economic differences.

While not strictly a Marxist, Pierre Bourdieu a French sociologist, presents complementary insights through his concept of cultural capital (Thakur et al., 2026). He argues that students from wealthy settings own the linguistic manners, social conducts, and symbolic learning that correspond with academic social anticipations. This cultural alignment provides them an inbuilt benefit, always misjudged for real reasoning or hard labor. In Sierra Leone, kids from wealthy families usually prosper in English-subdued, Western-influenced social curricula, while learners from provincial regions are regularly alienated by content that imitates strange social norms and learning structures.

Antonio Francesco Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony introduces another measure to the Marxist review by exposing how agreement to dominance is protected through social ideology rather than force (Zandra, 2024). In the sociological context of Sierra Leone,



academies often advance the idea that achievement is truly an outcome of effort, hiding the systemic limitations that prevent the development of underprivileged social learners. Through textbooks, academy mottoes, and institutional ceremonies, the social structure inculcates a faith in meritocracy that frustrates critical issues. This establishes what Picketty calls the “hallucination of equality,” directing underrepresented learners to internalize mental inability as an individual inadequacy rather than a structural question (Dhar et al., 2026).

The Materiality of Marxist Ideology in Sierra Leonean Learning

Learning inequality in Sierra Leone is not simply the outcome of hidden mismanagement or cultural insufficiencies; rather, it is fully fixed within a wider socio-economic structure that privileges aristocratic interests. Marxist ideology provides a critical structure to know how learning operates both ideologically and materially to represent class struggles. Although post-independence policies directed at standardizing access, useful differences continue between rural and urban learners, as well as between private and public institutions. This division examines how core Marxist theories like curriculum management, class reproduction, ideological authorization, and readiness for capitalist labor are clear within Sierra Leone’s learning field.

Curriculum Command and the Interests of the Aristocrat

Command over ideological social tools, particularly the curriculum, is central to protecting class domination in Marxist thinking. In Sierra Leone, the curriculum is primarily designed and controlled by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE), with minimum participation from underprivileged communities (George, 2024). Over seventy percent of curriculum judgments are made centrally, often without significant input from rural or marginalized groups (Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, 2020). This centralization aligns with Althusser’s theory of the Ideological State Apparatus, whereby prevailing values and global outlooks are spread through learning structures to reinforce existing authority connections (Sharmar, 2026).

Although current revisions, like the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Senior Secondary Education (Senarath, 2026), introduced subjects like Sciences and Technologies to foster relevance and contextual learning, implementation remains uneven. Urban aristocratic academies, like Prince of Wales and Saint Edward’s Secondary School, benefit from abundant resources, including modern laboratories, Information Communication Technology infrastructure, and qualified teachers, empowering them to adopt current curricula efficiently. Conversely, rural academies like Magbema Secondary School in Rokupr, Kambia, lack electricity, laboratories, and qualified teachers, strongly limiting curriculum delivery. According to the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (2022 - 2026), over sixty percent of rural academies lack steady electricity and access to digital learning instruments.

Furthermore, Kamanda (2026) reasons that Sierra Leone’s curriculum holds subtle aristocratism, digital and urban bias and privileges Western education structures and English language mastery. This disadvantages rural and working-class learners, efficiently acting as an ideological screen that strengthens the interests of the urban aristocrat. Imitation of Class Inequality.

Class imitation remains a central concern in Marxist critiques of learning. Socio-economic differences are clearly imitated in patterns of school access and conduct. A 2026 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report points out that rural dropout rates are



approximately twenty-five percent higher than urban counterparts, with poverty, juvenile matrimony, and long journey distances as significant contributing reasons (UNICEF Sierra Leone, 2026). Although the Education for All (EFA) policy extended admission post-independence, it was unsuccessful in handling qualitative differences rooted in class and geographical social location.

Children from wealthy households normally attend private or well-resourced government schools, benefiting from advanced facilities, extracurricular programs, and highly qualified teachers. For instance, the Sierra Leone Grammar School in Freetown maintains a teacher-student ratio of 1:12 and offers STEM clubs and robotics programs, positioning its students favorably in national and international evaluations (Bah, 2025). In contrast, schools like Luke's Commercial Secondary in Kenema Town often face overcrowding, teacher absenteeism, and lack basic laboratory facilities, which hinder student learning outcomes (Samura, 2024).

Bourdieu's theorization of cultural capital helps explain these differences. Learners from aristocratic families benefit from parental literacy, social capital, and English language fluency and exposure to world cultures that align with institutional expectations. These embedded benefits protect continued inequality, where learning strengthens existing social division rather than allowing social mobility.

Ideological Legitimation of Inequality

Learning also reproduces inequality ideologically. Althusser's idea of the Ideological State Apparatus expresses how academies normalize the existing class system by promoting meritocracy and individual duty, consequently covering systemic limitations encountered by disadvantaged learners. Slogans like "hard work brings success" and "every child can make it" are pervasive in school mottos, textbooks, and assemblies (Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2026). Moreover, these social narratives often overlook systemic facts like hunger, poverty, and emotional stress.

Rural learners, for instance, experience high degrees of psychological trauma owing to food insecurity, poverty, and exclusion reasons that considerably hinder academic performance (UNICEF Sierra Leone, 2026). Ultimately, academies occasionally handle these issues pedagogically, preserving a culture of silence. The rural academy context indicates to emphasize submission and agreement, discouraging judgmental questioning a strategy aligned with Picketty's theory that the hidden curriculum feeds tolerant compliance of socio-economic levels.

Learning as Readiness for Capitalist Labor

From a Marxist viewpoint, academies serve not simply as learning spreaders but as institutions conditioning learners for their social functions within the capitalist system. Sierra Leone's learning structure stresses discipline, punctuality and obedience, character traits aligned with employment social expectations, yet it insufficiently prepares youth for the actualities of a decreasing corporate sector.

Notwithstanding efforts to promote technical and vocational learning, these programs are underfinanced, stigmatized, and often disordered from labor business demands. For instance, a 2024 survey by Jalloh shows that over seventy percent of vocational graduates remain unemployed or participate in informal sector activities. The Sierra Leone Youth



Unemployment Rate exceeded 3.94% in 2025 (Statista Research Department, 2026), emphasizing the disagreement between learning outputs and economic actualities. Several rural youths, with limited access to quality training, are held in a cycle of joblessness - what Marxists refer to as the “excess population” (Gregus, 2025). This structural disconnect emphasizes the function of learning in reproducing economic exploitation rather than promoting real social mobility.

Barriers of Marxist Ideology and involvements

While Marxist ideology provides a strong lens for disclosing learning inequality, it is not without its barriers. Critics reason that it overstates economic systems at the cost of other identity markers like ethnicity, language, and gender considerations highly significant in Sierra Leone’s difficult socio-political environment. As Cluley (2026) put it, the Marxist viewpoint overstates economic reasons in the determination of societal shifts and systems, thereby overlooking or disregarding other similarly useful factors like race and gender. Furthermore, the postcolonial concept provides viewpoints into how colonial legacies shape learning. A further discussion would benefit from incorporating these insights alongside Marxist critiques (Iqbal and Mustaq, 2026). Nevertheless, Marxist ideology remains a valuable tool for assessing class-based inequality and institutional reprint of opportunities in Sierra Leone with reference to primary and secondary academies.

Educational inequality as a District problem

Throughout the regions, although some districts have much broader differences than others, there are serious differences and gaps between historically fortunate and disadvantaged cultural groups in terms of learning opportunities and outcomes. These involve pupils’ school achievement and other desired aspects of learning and schooling as well as pupils’ life opportunities and their well-being further generally. Specifically, within the broader context of dramatically increasing cultural income inequalities in many parts of the country, there are tough and structural differences in learning opportunities and outcomes for pupils’ from high and low-income families. Although districts vary considerably in income distribution and in their proportions of children living in poverty, no district does well educationally for its children who live in poverty (Thomas, 2026).

In several districts there are also systemic differences in learning opportunities and outcomes for boys and girls; pupils from majority or dominant ethnic or language groups compared with pupils from minority or non-dominant groups; pupils perceived as “fit” and those with special learning needs or disabilities; and pupils whose families are settled locals in comparison to newly settled pupils’. In short and not shockingly, the national cultural problem of learning inequality is complicated or mixed, printed and reprinted within and across regional cultural spaces and strengthened by learning structures characterized by underlying structures of inequality (Laborde, 2026).

Social Inequality and Schooling

Social inequality in education is nationally observed in regions in which children are brought up in unequal families; they enter school with unequal cognitive, cultural, and linguistic assets and attain unequal levels of community achievement. Moreover, they make unequal choices, leading to unequal levels of learning and socio-cultural reproduction. Nonetheless, the latter varies across communities, demonstrating that the way school itself is organized matters. The timing of the admission process and the level of discrimination within the



cultural structure are especially useful, along with the pupil social mix they generate. As districts implement government policies to fight learning inequality, simply expanding education does not prove effective since it only delays social admission. More qualitative policies then seem necessary, such as limiting early inequalities and concentrating on disadvantaged families, which in turn requires wider social policies.

Equity and initial teacher learning

The words “inequality” or “equality” and “inequity” or “equity” are usually used mutually in the teacher learning literature, although, as St.Denny (2026) suggests, these are not direct concepts philosophically or in practice, and the learning environment in which they are fixed or rooted is constantly changing. Several discussions lean on the supportive, while sometimes dark, distinction that “learning inequality” or “equality” refers to differences among population groups in learning outputs, usually measured quantitatively (pupils’ achievement levels, school graduation rates, and school attendance rates), while the words “inequity or “equity” are associated not only with inequality or equality, but also with value assessments about the availability (or absence) of structural but correctable differences, among population groups in terms of allocation of chances or privileges and resources as well as observations and outputs. With the former, the strength of the terms is mainly about uniformity (equality) or difference (inequality), while with the latter, the strength of the terms has mainly to do with general fairness and social justice (equity) or general unfairness and social injustice (inequity).

Dual goals of teacher learning for equity

Across the nation there are multiple efforts to construct initial teacher education for equity aimed at the dual goals of preparing teacher candidates who have the education, skills, and character to promote the learning of pupils nationally not well served by the social welfare system and, at the same time, to identify and challenge the intersecting structures of inequality in academies and society that reproduce inequity. Working simultaneously toward these dual objectives sets equity-based early teacher education, in the direction the sociological researcher theorizing it here, apart from other initiatives or pathways that utilize the language of “equity” but assume that teachers and academic reasons are the primary source of learning inequality and thus, the primary solution. One example is the “Teach for Sierra Leone”, an alternative route into teaching and teacher deployment along with many of its nation-wide originations (Kamanda and Fofana, 2026). Although there are variations by program and district, at the general policy stage, these initiatives tend to recognize teachers as both the primary cause and the primary solution for academy inequity and often characterize poverty and other social elements as social justifications or reasons utilized by teacher educators to explain away their own inefficiency at graduating teachers who can promote pupil achievement despite consistent learning inequities. Because learning programs that work from these beliefs see teachers and academies as both the cause and the answer to the problem of inequity, they concentrate on recruiting intelligent young people into the academies where they are expected to learn key teaching skills but not helped to educationally deconstruct (and consider how to challenge) the institutional patterns and structures that perpetuate inequalities at the outset.

Theorizing equity-based early teacher learning toward the dual objectives above establishes a subtle but useful pressure. On the one hand, teacher educators involved in equity-based teacher learning education benefit from the deeply-held assumption that teachers play a



useful role in impacting the education, skills, and life opportunities of all pupils, particularly those customarily not well-served by the structure. On the other hand, nevertheless, these teacher educators also accept that equity can never be achieved solely by multiplying the access of disadvantaged pupils to excellent teachers. The difficulty of teacher learning for equity, then, is to figure out how to operate productively and constructively within this tension. How should teacher educators who acknowledge that equity cannot be achieved mainly by good teachers formulate the objectives of teacher readiness and know both the potential and the restrictions of their initiatives? How can a teacher education program, which is itself intersected by several structures of social inequality, help teacher candidates develop a comprehension of those structures? The sociological researcher's opinion here is that the point of teacher education for equity is to see these pressures as generative and as consideration for ongoing inquiry by identifying the duty and ethical aim of teaching and teacher social education and by embracing the tendency of human social agency in establishing reform.

Teacher psychology and learning inequality

Learning inequality is widespread and complex, driven by both wider systemic forces, such as income inequality and unevenly resourced schools, and individual psychological influences. Sociological research on the psychological element of learning differences has primarily focused on pupil cognition, particularly how the conduct, beliefs, and feelings of pupils from disadvantaged groups shape individual learning achievement. Emerging social research, nevertheless, emphasizes the usefulness of the psychology of another group in forming learning differences: teachers. Consequently, the role of teacher cognition in preserving or lessening learning differences. In doing so, express a model of the ways in which teachers, often despite their best intentions, may contribute to learning inequality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address learning inequality in Sierra Leone, the following strategic actions are proposed:

- Review the national curriculum for contextual equity: Adapt content to reflect local realities, linguistic variety, and indigenous knowledge. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE), in collaboration with local learning experts and community representatives, can lead a phased rollout through curriculum revision panels.
- Ensure equal infrastructure and resource allocation by prioritizing investment in rural academies for textbooks, laboratories, Information Communication Technology, and teacher housing by engaging stakeholders like the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE), and development partners like the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- Encourage inclusive and engaged policy formation by engaging teachers, learners, and disadvantaged cultural communities in curriculum design and learning policy procedures. Local academy boards and rural learning offices can coordinate consultations during revision rounds.



- Step up teacher training in critical and inclusive pedagogy by incorporating modules on critical thinking, social justice, and collaborative learning approaches in teacher education by engaging the teacher training colleges, universities, and Sierra Leone Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) with assistance from academic institutions.
- Extend assistance structures for disadvantaged learners by increasing scholarship programs, school feeding, and psychosocial services to lessen dropout and upgrade outcomes. With assistance from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary School Education (MBSSE) and Non-Governmental Organizations, this can be incorporated into functioning social protection structures.

CONCLUSION

The Marxist ideology remains a significant and powerful framework for understanding learning inequality in Sierra Leone. It exposes how academies operate not as neutral social spaces but as institutions that reproduce class opportunity through curriculum design, resource distribution, and ideological communicating. Despite reforms since independence, learning in Sierra Leone continues to follow colonial legacies and capitalist needs, advantaging aristocrat learners while disempowering the rural and working-class majority. To move beyond critique, Sierra Leone desperately demands a transformative learning tradition. This means rethinking policy to encourage equal resource distribution, revising curricula to reflect local learning structures, and furthering critical pedagogy that empowers learners to counter structural injustice. Only through such systemic change can learning achieve its promise as a power for social justice, not social reprint.

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