HOW POVERTY AFFECTS LEARNING

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Poverty affects children’s learning through internal and environmental factors. Poverty has been found to affect the biological aspects of child development. As a result, disparities in learning and performance are further wrenched apart by socioeconomic status (SES). Findings from University of Washington study suggest that children aged five, belonging to low SES exhibited less specialization in brain regions that are associated with reading skills (Katsnelson, 2015). Furthermore, the part of the brain associated with memories—the hippocampus—houses a lot of stress receptors. Families in low SES are more exposed to stress than middle and high SES. Hence, families under low SES tend to have worse memory than the other two groups (Farah et al., 2008).

As for environmental factors, poverty affects access to education and reference materials. In fact, it hinders access to even the most basic of needs, such as home, water, food, and others that some of us can obtain. Certainly, differences of scores in measures of skill such as English proficiency, reading comprehension, literacy, and the like can be explained by socioeconomic status (Koo, 2008).

While we champion for education as a weapon for a bright future, it is a dream that could be unattainable for most children of our country. Actually, results from 2017 survey indicate that 3.6 million Filipino children and youth, aged 6 to 24, are out of school (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). However, this does not mean that all children in school have it easy. Of course, we are familiar with anecdotes of children from remote communities that have to walk—for others, literally cross rivers—to get to school. We also acknowledge that not all schools have sufficient facilities and materials.
In the case we eye the revision of educational policies, perhaps we should zoom in and out of the picture to see how things tie together to form our problems. Recent issues like reading comprehension, language proficiency, and language education have deep roots that we should account if we are really seeking to provide quality and accessible education.

References:


