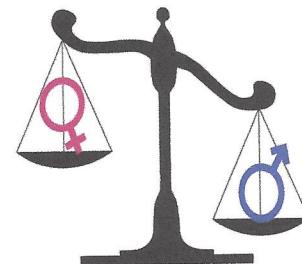


OVERVIEW

Every morning, students around the world wake up early and go to school. For those in rural villages, this can mean walking many miles in sweltering summer heat or freezing winter cold. In underdeveloped countries, girls may watch from home as their male counterparts go to school. In other places, children may want to go to school but be forced to work to help provide for themselves or their families instead.

Access to and quality of education is impacted by a number of factors. Gender, race, and income play roles in shaping how much education a child will receive and the effectiveness of that education. For example, malnutrition is known to affect brain development, which can inhibit a child's ability to problem-solve and pay attention. Compared to their affluent peers, this often means that children from poorer families struggle, fall behind, or do not understand what is being taught in the classroom. In developing countries, girls may be married at very young ages before they are able to complete their education.



Over the last two hundred years, the number of children around the world enrolling in primary school has grown from 2.3 million students to over 700 million. Now at least 90% of children at least begin primary school. Focusing on the opportunity gap alone has not proved to be enough. Once students make it to school, they also need to succeed and complete their classes.

The achievement gap - or the differences in student success in the classroom - has many causes. It can stem from unstable housing, poor health, family economic stress, limited after-school and weekend high-quality learning experiences, and insufficient resources at school.

In the United States, education has historically been viewed as an opportunity for equalizing the American society; however, research shows that while the achievement gap attributed to race differences has narrowed significantly, the gap between rich and poor students has grown substantially. Today, family income is a better predictor of success than race. Is this because wealthy parents invest more time and money in education for their children? Is it because lower-income families find themselves stretched for resources and time?

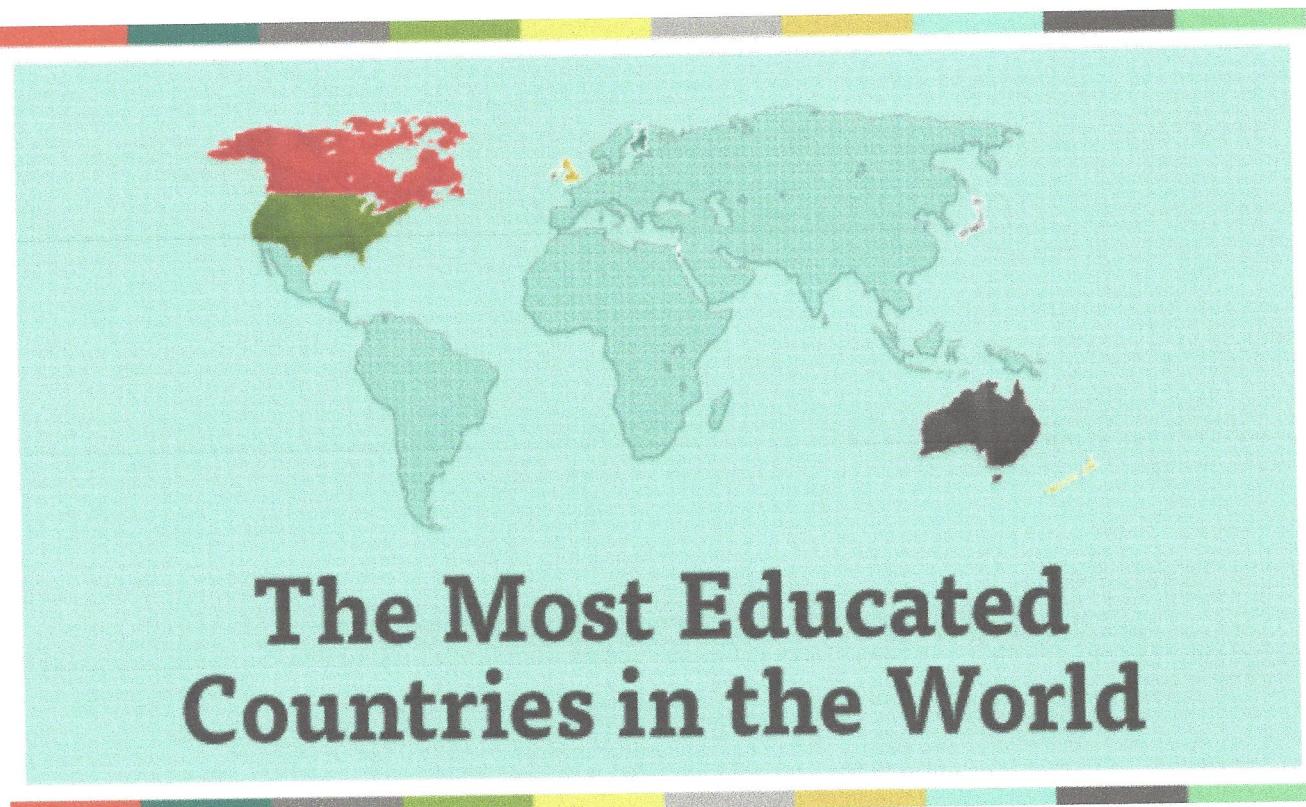
No matter what the cause, experts agree that parents play the most important role in forming a child's personality and cognitive ability in the years before children start school. Globally, studies show that children born into poverty will hear 30 million fewer words than their wealthier peers in their first years of life. The differences in average levels of education between rich and poor countries also remains significant. Currently, 100 million children are not completing their primary education. Without significant innovation, it could take up to one hundred years for students in developing countries to average the same number of years of education as students in developed countries.

Illiteracy, the inability to read or write, is also a concern worldwide. More than 781 million people are illiterate, roughly 10% of the world's population. It is estimated that if all students in low-income countries learned basic reading skills, more than 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. Illiteracy is known to disproportionately impact women and the wellbeing of their children. If all women achieved secondary education, there could be 49% fewer child deaths in low-income countries. In addition to benefits for women and their children, research shows that an increase in literacy brings about an improvement in economic development and decrease in crime and conflict.

Research shows that gender also plays a role in education. Around the world, millions of girls are not in school. Females face a number of barriers to education, including early and forced marriage, domestic slavery, gender discrimination and violence, and school fees. Despite research that indicates a positive impact on their families when girls attend school, girls from poor families are still the most likely to drop out of school. Experts estimate that if these barriers are removed for young girls there could be a significant impact on social change. The girls' future wages would increase, infant mortality could decrease, and economies would grow.

Technology also plays a critical and transformative role in improving access to education for people in both developed and developing countries. In India new technology is making it possible to avoid land-based telephone and internet education to deliver learning opportunities directly to students. India also uses EDUSAT, a communications satellite, to provide student access to educational materials at a reduced cost. In Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is working to provide the country's 600,000 primary and secondary schools with internet access, computer equipment, and learning materials by 2022.

Around the world, different cultures will continue to emphasize different aspects of learning and teaching to fit their own norms and values. Factors such as infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions will also continue to play a role in the level and quality of education. Across the globe the fight for a better global education must continue. Parents must fight for their children's future, teachers must fight for better classrooms, and principals for better schools.



TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

accelerated learning: an intense method of study that encourages material to be learned in a relatively short time, allowing academically able students to progress through school more rapidly than others

achievement gap: in education, the disparity in academic performance between groups of students



advanced placement (AP): the placement of a student in a high school course that, if successfully completed, offers college credit

affluent: having a great deal of money; wealthy

blended learning: an educational program in which delivery of content and instruction is at least in part provided via digital and online media with an element of student control over the time, place, path, or pace

developing country: a poor, often agricultural nation, with an underdeveloped industrial base seeking to become more advanced economically and socially

discrimination: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex

disenfranchised: deprived of the rights of citizenship, such as the right to vote or the right to obtain education

disparity: lack of similarity or equality

dropout: a student who withdraws from school

dual-language immersion program: a classroom program that aims to create bilingualism/biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural competencies for all students through instruction in two languages for non-native speakers of one of the languages

educational inequality: the difference in the learning quality and results experienced by students from different groups, most often measured by grades, GPA scores, test scores, dropout rates, and college completion rates

e-learning: learning conducted via electronic media, typically on the internet

gender gap: the discrepancy in opportunities, status, and attitudes between men and women

Gender Parity Index (GPI): a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education by males and females which is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education

intergenerational illiteracy: the situation where parents or grandparents are illiterate and the children are not

International Baccalaureate (I.B.): a non-profit educational foundation offering four programmes of international education that develop the intellectual, personal, emotional, and social skills needed to live, learn, and work in a rapidly globalizing world

learning disability: a disorder that is made evident by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities

learning gap: the disparity between what students were expected to learn by a particular age or grade level and what they actually learned

literacy: the ability to read and write

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): the United States government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students which supports standards-based education reform on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education

opportunity gap: the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities

out-of-school children: children who are not actively attending school

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): a test conducted every three years by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), these tests are based on application of knowledge rather than memorization of facts and are taken by fifteen-year-olds around the world to assess performance in mathematics, science, and reading

poverty: the state of being extremely poor, inferior in quality or insufficient in amount

primary education: the first stage of formal education in a range of basic subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics

remedial education: a basic skills education designed to assist students so they achieve expected competencies in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy

refugee: a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster

rural area: a geographic area that is located outside cities and the centers of towns

secondary education: refers to the last four years of formal education (grade nine through grade twelve in many countries)

standardized test: any form of test that requires all test takers to answer the same or similar questions which is scored in a consistent manner so that the relative performance of individuals can be compared

STEM skills: an educational focus on science, technology, engineering, and math that is deemed important because the skills and knowledge in each of these disciplines are essential for student success in life and deeply intertwined in the real world

tertiary education: the educational level following the completion of secondary education which includes universities, community colleges, nursing schools, research laboratories, and distance learning centers

tuition: the charge or fee for instruction, as at a private school, a college, or university

urban area: a well-developed city area in which most inhabitants have nonagricultural jobs and includes a density of structures such as houses, commercial buildings, roads, bridges, and railways

