

Impact of Scarcity on Schooling

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Abstract

This article examines the effects of poverty on education. Many different aspects contribute to a community becoming disadvantaged such as deindustrialization, high unemployment rates, untreated mental health, and violent crimes. Disadvantaged communities rural and urban face many issues. These issues include broken-down housing, lack of access to professional services, and most importantly inferior education. The education is inferior for a number of reasons; students are showing up to educational institute with numerous problems that the teachers are unable to account for through instruction. The educational institute facilities face structural inadequacies which have been proven to have an effect on the quality of instruction. The teachers in the educational institutes, while qualified, are often times not supported by educational institute administration. Educational institute administrators are busy with their own issues in determining what areas to allocate their limited budget. Poverty is a vast and complex issue that plagues communities in a seemingly endless cycle. However, working together to find effective ways of solving issues caused by poverty, the future can become a brighter for Nepalese youth growing up in poor communities.

Keywords: Poverty, Education, Teaching, Structural Inadequacies, Open Enrollment

Introduction

The recent Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2010/11 shows that 25 percent of Nepali people are below the absolute poverty line. Poverty is defined as the state of being extremely poor (Bell, 1997). Large income deficiencies complicate the task of developing a sense of belonging and community in a given entity (O'Boyle, 2003). People in highly impoverished communities face a myriad of other deficiencies in meeting daily basic needs. As adults in the community, the burden of providing for their families becomes an ever daunting task because of limited mobility or access to meaningful employment (Wilton, 2003). The stress brought on by such conditions can contribute to mental health issues and affect decision making by the members of these communities. Social immobility and the passing of disadvantage through families is clearly linked to family background and personal skills (Mulford, Kendall, Ewington, Edmunds, & Kendall, 2008). Other lifestyle issues can also arise from these conditions, including obesity (Deutsch & Hetland, 2012). This evidence suggests that the cycle is likely to repeat itself as the next generation is born into similar circumstances.

The official monetary poverty line in local prices is NRs 19,261 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2011) per person per year. This is approximately 225 US dollars as of April 2013 transaction rate. It implies that a Nepali consuming approximately 0.6 dollar a day is considered as non-poor. This level is far less than that of the World Bank's 1.25 dollar a day measure, which the Bank terms as extreme poverty. There are intra-country disparities in poverty line and distribution. For example, the poverty line is lowest (approximately 184 dollars) for the western southern plain and highest for capital city Kathmandu (approximately 471 dollars). There are more issues. The interesting one is that the Kathmanduities spend more on non-food items, almost double to food items against the higher expenses in food items for other parts. The proportion of people living below poverty line is highest in the northern mountains while it is lowest for urban hill. The western part of the country hosts higher proportion of poor compared to eastern part. If we use human development concept to measure the poverty, the proportion of Nepali people living in poverty is around 31.1 percent in 2011 (National Planning Commission (NPC) [Government of Nepal] & United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014). This is significant decline by more than 50 percent from as high as 65 percent three

years ago (UNDP, 2011). However, there are vast differences in the measurement process and indicators in the both concepts. Nepal's official poverty measurement is basically based on consumption approach which mainly uses basic calorie threshold. It does not concern how the people maintain their basic living standard. It is also blind to whether there are public investments to enhance the capability so that they can sustain their fight against poverty. In common sense, Nepal's official poverty measurement practice deserves criticisms of money metric approach.

There are many facets to running a successful educational institute. Important pieces necessary to promote a successful educational institute environment include student inclusion, engagement from the community, professional development, and securing funds for meaningful educational experiences. When principals seek to engage family and community members to align them with the mission and goals of the educational institute, students perform better academically (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011). Managing these facets in an effective manner is essential to running a successful educational institute. However, the constant economic struggle finds its way from out in the community, through the educational institute doors, and into the classrooms.

The Communities Impact on Poverty

A community is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common (Bell, 1997). With some communities a common characteristic people share is earning an income that is at or below the federal poverty line. Some of the factors that contribute to people entering poverty and remaining in poverty have to be examined to gain a deeper understanding. These factors include but are not limited to social immobility, concentration of poverty, stressful living conditions, poor education, and a lack of opportunities to exit poverty.

Merely working to exist is a struggle that many adults face when living in poverty. The concentration of poverty has exacerbated the toll taken on the families who cannot move out of such conditions. In the early development of the United States (U.S.) it was necessary for the poor and affluent to interact due to the constraints of the time. However, the advancements of transportation, communication, and construction has led to a new understanding of living. This understanding is that one could separate work life from home life. Meanwhile, the poor could not afford better transportation or better housing and remained in their living conditions.

The Public Educational Institutes Impact on Poverty

An educational institute is an institution for giving children instruction. Educational institutes in all communities deserve the bare essentials when it comes to education, highly qualified teachers, current textbooks, and safe and adequate facilities (Powers, 2004).

When there is no money being allocated toward educational facilities, educational institutes cannot be updated. The problems of poverty described previously shows that growing up poor has grossly adverse effects on the human mind and future living conditions. Growing up poor cuts the amount of opportunities one would have had to be prepared for life's hardships by immense proportions. Further indicators examined for student achievement is the quality of teachers in the building.

Teachers

Since impoverished educational institutes are usually in dangerous or perceived to be dangerous neighborhoods, the teachers in the building may also feel that tension. That perceived tension can affect their decision making skills causing instruction to falter. Teachers have become increasingly Caucasian, middle class, and female, despite changing demographics in education (Wasonga, 2005). This fact compounded with the beliefs and perceptions of impoverished communities play a role in how well one is able to teach. The media's role in shaping the opinions and beliefs about poor communities has far worse implications for the people living in impoverished communities than those who don't. These misguided beliefs and opinions are then brought into the educational institutes by the teachers, students, and administration and a self-fulfilling prophecy is created.

Students

When students go home they may be in a place where they do not feel safe. Basic physiological needs should be met in order for learning and motivation to occur according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Wilson & Madsen, 2008). Another factor contributing to impoverished students falling behind their wealthy counterparts is the availability of enrichment summer programs. Impoverished educational institutes face many difficulties in preparing their students for success beyond high educational institute. Some of the difficulties fall on the shoulders of the students while other difficulties are out of their control.

When students go home, they may be exposed to some type of abuse, whether it is physical, verbal, or sexual. These

forms of abuse can also occur at educational institute, leaving a student in a no-win situation. The high caseload of counselors and other mental health practitioners in impoverished communities affects their quality of work (Yanagisawa, 2011). This affects the students who need the expertise but are unable to receive quality care because they cannot afford better services. However, an emphasis on correcting individuals only addresses part of the problem and does not address the larger societal issues. Impoverished communities are impoverished for a reason, there are little to no material resources, high rates of unemployment, and overall stressful living conditions (Wilton, 2003). Students living in these communities suffer from the same things that affect their parents. Much of their free time, including summers, may be devoted to working to help support the household or spent abusing drugs and alcohol as an escape from the pressures in their lives. This reality leaves very little room for interest in summer enrichment programs. This is concerning because as children grow, their overall psychomotor capacity will increase (Luce & Deutsch, 2014), but they need education to develop it. Along with the psychomotor development, their gross motor development is lacking without the physical education classroom providing an important setting for students to learn healthy activities that can be participated in over the course of a lifetime (Myrum, Deutsch, & Christianson, 2012).

The summer learning loss that occurs among students more significantly affects students in a lower socioeconomic status (SES) (Green, Lewis, Kent, Feldman, Motley, Baggett, & Lewis, 2011). The summer learning gap is an extension of the shortcomings in kids who grow up in impoverished neighborhoods. In order to combat this, initiatives are needed to provide summer enrichment opportunities for students living in poverty. An opportunity was provided by Green his research team which provided a summer enrichment program. The results indicated that the students who participated in the program experienced little to no loss in learning giving them a step ahead of other students at their educational institute.

When one family experiences generational poverty it is no surprise they are underachieving by societal standards. Lack of educational opportunities, joblessness, and undiagnosed mental illness are just a few of the issues faced by families living in poverty. This reiterates that disadvantage is passed through generations (Mulford et al., 2008). A feeling of inadequacy and failure is a feeling that too many students feel, and once they become adults, those feelings do not simply disappear. In order to address these issues, people would have to understand what caused them in the first place. These issues can be addressed, but need to be handled strategically.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that poverty involves the lives of people. It is not an abstract force that plagues people rendering them incapable of escaping it. The difficulty in addressing all of the issues caused by poverty would be too much for any community to handle, so prioritizing what needs to be addressed could be an effective way to handle the situation. This way less important issues may be dealt with indirectly as a result of taking care of more major problems. Addressing the educational setbacks caused by poverty will be an ongoing task for educational institute administrators. Many major problems can be addressed by promoting a positive educational institute environment, strong leadership, engagement from the community (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011), as well as securing funds. With these four issues being addressed, it can help mitigate the stressful day-to-day conditions which contribute to making the educational institute environment an unsuccessful one.

Things necessary for a positive educational institute environment include clear expectations, supportive structures and services, and positive leadership (Mulford et al., 2008). With clear expectations, building staff and students understand what the boundaries are and are held accountable if they don't follow protocols. This builds an environment that becomes self-regulating because everybody is invested in upholding the expectations. Supportive structures and services such as teacher development and social skills for students help teach the correct behaviors on how to deal with situations that arise during the educational institute day. If integrated into the curriculum teachers begin to become mindful of how their words and actions are perceived by students. Additionally, students will begin to understand why they are at educational institute in the first place. Positive leadership shows that the principals and administrators are committed to persevere through times of adversity such as not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or educational institute wide behavior issues. Seeing that type of commitment can motivate others to believe in what the administration is trying to accomplish through establishing a positive educational institute environment.

Although establishing a positive environment within a educational institute is a challenging task, it is just as important to recognize what makes the environment of the community positive. Principals who were able to align educational institute goals and community goals had better success within the educational institute (Mulford, et al., 2008). Community involvement is one of the major factors that benefits a educational institutes success. When the teachers and members of the community believe that their students can succeed despite struggling with poverty, the students are more likely

to achieve at higher levels. When the community becomes involved, people have a vested interest in making sure that their children are getting the services they need to be successful. It takes a collective mindset to positively influence the students in impoverished educational institutes (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011). Without community involvement, the actions of the students, teachers, and administration are left unchecked. Since educational institute funding comes from the local tax base, people should feel more invested in the educational institutes of their community. When employment becomes nonexistent, the academic performance of the student may suffer due to heightened levels of stress.

Securing educational funds is necessary for a successful educational institute environment, but there are many different avenues to explore to secure them. The use of grant writers and the proper use of tax dollars could help fund educational opportunities for the students. States that relied more heavily on local revenues showed an inequitable distribution of educational funding (Moser & Rubenstein, 2002). Most people just want to be able to go to work and earn a decent living. This cannot happen if there is a lack of employment opportunities and a lack of social mobility (Wilton, 2003). With more ways to earn money, the educational institutes can begin to allocate such money towards various areas. Areas include updated facilities, better educational institute supplies, and quality teachers which can help improve the academic performance of the students (Powers, 2004). While funds are being secured, the support of the community could be the backbone for ensuring that the money is going where it needs to. The students deserve the best possible educational opportunities, but it cannot happen if the budget is underfunded every year.

Poverty is something that is inherent in society as long as money is involved, but the people living in poverty should have better opportunities to exit. The way people living in poverty are viewed affects how they are able to live. Due to the increasing wealth gap, more students are born into poverty than ever before. Without the proper structures in place and the proper mentality of the general public and elected officials, inequality will persist. This can be avoided if the proper measures are taken now and we start investing in our future with our time, resources, and understanding.

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