



The Role of Poverty in the Education System

It is my assumption that most of the world believes hard work can get you far. We've all seen those films of a child in poverty who has to work harder than everyone to get to at least the same position as their classmates, or an extra ridiculous amount of work to surpass them. The moral of these stories is usually something like, "oh, poverty only makes a difference if you let it... you just have to try a little harder". As good as this sounds, it's frankly misleading.

It is also my second assumption that society loves to overlook many of the advantages wealth can play in the education system. One of my favorite informative examples from sociologist Julie Aldercrot, happens to be the biggest and first advantage some lucky humans are given. Most of a human's crucial growth happens within their first one-thousand days of living. It may not be so obvious, but now would be the time where we are most valuable and suspected to change. Covering the cost of prenatal vitamins, good doctors, health food, medicine, health coverage is not something everyone can afford. We know that an absence of any of those things can play a huge role in child development. Consequences of malnutrition or improper care, will unfrantly lead to developemntal problems. That is information I personally take for granted and overlooked. This would be considered the first advantage 'wealthy' children are given.

That might have been slightly off topic yes, but I felt it was worth mentioning. An advantage before the competitive battle of school has even begun. Now's the time, I think we need to establish an uncontrollable definition of what wealth can equate to. I do believe wealth equals opportunity. The more wealth the more opportunities. Someone who doesn't have to worry about cost can have a huge variety of schools, programs, text books, tutors, ect, to choose

from. Some even travel far around the world for the ideal school of their choice. Private lessons, and extra classes are just some of the extensive ways wealth can determine someone's grades.

There is also one contradiction that has always stuck out to me. Scholarships are given out to the students who are the smartest. But these grades are determined through two distant and very different things: grades are determined by the ability to perform academically successful on tests, and grades are determined by the teachers biased and pre convinced options in the individual student. Which is not something I've mentioned yet. When the teacher takes the individual student as a factor in grading, that doesn't necessarily mean it's for the worse. A teacher can take into account the student's growth (which can be determined by wealth), or the student's individual needs (also determined by wealth). The thought of altering grades like this has its pros and cons, but overall it feels extremely messy. The act of adjusting grades based on conditions that are underlying effects of wealth really isn't what the school system should be about.

In an ideal world, any and all school related resources would be provided to all students. But with the way society is running now, it feels like a completely different type of environment is needed for this to become a reality. I don't think any of us can disagree with the fact that life for struggling students is unfair. Ask yourself why you aren't doing anything to make it better.

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