

A Child's Education

Belmina Malagic

Sport and Medical Sciences Academy

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When we are young, we are not aware of the importance our childhood holds. Trips to the playground, breakfast at grandmas, and the kisses from mom before bed all leave a lasting effect on our future. As we grow, we tend to forget these minor adventures, yet they never truly leave our mind. It is human nature to forget that the environment a child is raised in completely molds their character. Children learn from what they see and act from what they learn. Every child deserves the basic life skills, social interactions, and a set of morals that follow them from childhood into adulthood, in order to truly live a successful life. One right that fails to be delivered properly, if delivered at all, is the education distributed to children within countries worldwide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states, in Article 26, that “Everyone has the right to an education” (United Nations, 1948). Children are entitled by international laws to an education and are even advertised as future leaders so they can help their countries progress. But due to the environment that a child is raised in, whether it be poverty or war ridden, the countries fail to provide the education children need to become those leaders. The lack of education leads to an unending cycle, leaving future generations without the access to knowledge that every child deserves.

The United States provides one of the most vast and intricate educational systems in the world. It offers a free education from grade levels K-12 that is directed by its federal government, specifically The U.S. Department of Education. They are in charge of establishing policies, collecting data, and directing focus on the educational issues that form within the U.S. (Loo, 2018). Additionally, the federal government provides students entering higher education loans and grants known as the Federal Student Aid program. There have even been federal laws placed into action to ensure that a conventional education is distributed to American children. In

many public schools, there is a provided free breakfast, lunch, transportation, and school supplies. With 50.6 million children currently attending primary and secondary school in the U.S., there is a single goal of starting children in school and completing it through adulthood (Loo,2018). According to research students at Texas Tech University and Eastern New Mexico University, the importance of an early childhood education stems “...to teach the child the letters, numbers, colors, shapes and forms as well as teach them to interact with other children. There is an attempt to encourage language, discussion, give and take and develop some preliminary social skills,”(Shaughnessy & Kleyn). Access to an early education provides children with an easier transition for later in life as they enter society. The U.S. is dedicated to their children receiving primary and secondary education, as well as pursuing a higher education. This education allows for children to receive better opportunities in the future, exposure, and necessary life skills. It does what many countries fail to do, start education from early childhood and continue on into adulthood.

As great as education is in the United States, this isn't the case in other countries around the world. The U.S. is home to one of the best higher education systems in the world, however there are a multitude of nations that lack support for any form of education. Examining the educational structures of foreign countries involves taking into account several factors of the country's environment. The country's economic status, government intervention, outbreaks of conflicts, and humanitarian needs create difficulties to provide any formal education to their citizens. In 2006 there were over 115 million children not receiving a primary education, let alone any higher education (Save the Children Editors, 2006). Children weren't able to begin, nor enter, an educational setting because of the environment they were being raised in. Countries that experience severe poverty do not have the funding to begin enrolling children in an

education or in times of war give resources to educational institutes. Out of hundreds of countries and millions of children, the most prevalent situations of the education crisis emerge from the regions of Africa and the Middle East.

The vast reasons behind failure to educate fall back onto the government being incapable of funding and advocating for them. This then leads to what seems like a never ending cycle. With conflicts of war and corruption comes the aftershock of crippling economic and legislative systems. Africa is a continent that suffers immensely with conflict, corruption and poverty, leading its countries to take 8 spots out of the 10 most undesirable places to receive an education in the world (Imchem & Ndem, 2020). The poverty and conflict percentages within those countries are some of the highest, causing a neglect on the future of citizens. Once a child is born into poverty, it becomes the only thing they know. They grow up with the bare minimum to survive, learn, and develop. Eventually, they will raise their own children in the same circumstances, creating a loop of not only poverty, but lack of knowledge to get out of it.

In the country of Niger they suffer a humanitarian crisis, which causes the country to suffer with less than 10% funding going to support the educational needs of their poorest children (CGD Editors, 2018). Poverty causes these children to not be able to afford continuing, or even starting, an educational path. In comparison to the United State's 98% rate of finishing primary school, there was an alarmingly low rate of only 30% for the entirety of Niger (CGD Editors, 2006). This rate is the equivalent education distribution as the United States had in the year 1776. The overall literacy rate for Niger is categorized into one of the lowest internationally. As this issue consumes Niger, it also creates crises to neighboring countries. Even in the country of Liberia "approximately 80 percent of schools were destroyed in the 1989–1997 civil war, and the 2003 war caused further conflict. Now, fewer than 15 percent of teachers

hold professional qualifications,” (Save the Children, 2006). Teachers become targets because if they cannot teach children, children will never learn. Even though many fail to meet qualifications, teachers do their best to present children with some education. But destruction of schools and economic systems leaves many children to never develop the proper skills, nor capabilities to move forward in life.

Africa is a focal point for struggling educational systems. In the country of South Sudan, over 70% of the child population is out of school (Save the Children Editors, 2006). Their children do not get close to receiving an education. What is an even greater issue is the largest subgroup failing to receive an education is young girls. There are several circumstances that cause this to occur. Young girls are forced out of school due to high demands of child brides, arranged child marriages, poverty, and overall cultural sexism (Save the Children Editors, 2006). Girls have gone from being a statistic on groups that fail to receive education to having their own statistics as to why they don't receive it. These countries maintain an environment of constant violence, tainted cultural views, and incapability to escape poverty. To the poorest and vulnerable children of Africa, it's a matter of surviving, rather than venturing to school to receive an education.

The other reasons behind the failure to educate fall back onto the government being incapable of funding and advocating for it. With these conflicts a country faces the aftershock of a crippling economic and governmental systems. When looking at Middle Eastern countries, there is an abundance of conflict scenarios. For instance, Syria's issues of war cause the rate of primary school completion to drop to 51%, due to the lack of educators and fundings overall (CGD Editors, 2006). Even in recent years, Syria has encountered greater war events that have displaced more than 2.6 million children within the country, as well as another 2.5 million in

neighboring countries (Imchen & Ndem, 2018). Syria has suffered years of war, causing a multitude of children to be born into it and only know it. They are incapable of being in their own homes, breaking a cycle of war, and even raising their own kids in a better environment. This only leads to no access to attend school or continue any form of education, on top of the psychological traumas that come from these situations.

A similar scenario is set for the children of Afghanistan. Afghanistan faces a severe need for humanitarian relief. Their children suffer with poverty and the constant threats to their lives. About 3.7 million children are out of school and approximately 60% of them are females (Imchen & Ndem, 2018). The everlasting conflicts of war create unlivable environments for people of any age. Mirwais is a 14-year-old boy from Afghanistan. The only thing he says is “I dream of a country that is not at war,” (Save the Children, 2006). Children not only suffer from not receiving an education, they have to suffer the psychological effects and developmental delays of childhood due to events of war and poverty (CGD Editors, 2018). Not only is Mirwais one of many who won't continue getting an education, but he is one who won't be able to erase the images of war from his mind. Even though countries are entitled to provide young children the stability of some kind of education, it has come to a point in which countries have become too much of a dangerous living setting to be capable of doing anything but aid their people in survival.

This lack of education is not only affecting current children, but the entire future population. As generations pass on, the aftermath of social issues will eventually be left for the children who lack educational structure to lead. “For millions of children and young people, it will mean a future where they are unable to find productive employment, engage in active citizenship, or shape better futures for themselves, their families and their communities,”

(Imchen & Ndem, 2018). Countries with low education rates produce low functioning members of society. The issues of these children fail to be recognized due to them being viewed as a micro issue on a macro scale. There is no denying that when a child lacks early, or any, education they will function poorly. It is a matter of breaking the cycle of not educating and ensuring that each child is given a fair chance to learn. According to a former member of the United Nations educational reform department, Katerina Tomasevski "There are a large number of human rights problems, which cannot be solved unless the right to education is addressed as the key to unlock other human rights. Education operates as a multiplier," (Shaughnessy & Kleyn, 2012). She makes it clear that the world has a million problems to address but breaking the cycle that is the lack of education will eventually address each of those problems. Education isn't a right that can be overlooked, it's a right that can change the world.

International education will struggle to be equal everywhere. There will be conflicts between nations, economic instability, and varying cultural beliefs. These issues, however, should not be the reason a child is deprived of receiving an education that could empower them. Kerry Kennedy explained in his research of the importance of education that "Economies and societies depend on a well-educated citizenry that can contribute to new ideas and innovation, economic productivity, a socially just and fair society and a society that understands and respects those who have contributed over a lifetime to these areas of achievement, (Kennedy, 2014). There is no way for society to prosper without the distribution of education. The environment a child receives their education in impacts how fulfilling that education is. Children enduring war, poverty, and lack of resources in their countries will never receive the same education as a child within the U.S.. Society depends on the children they raise. When a child is raised in an environment that fails to deliver proper care and education, the world fails that child. Children

are to be the future leaders of societies, but in order for them to even come close to leading and not failing, they need to be educated in success.

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