

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO- ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND TEST PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF MONGOLIA

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The relationship between family background and school performance is well-known. Some variables are widely used in educational research to describe the socio-economic background of students in empirical studies in developed countries. However, the ones in research in developing countries receive relatively little attention. In general, the most influential background variables on student performance tend to be those that are related to the socio-economic status of the family, often indicators of parental educational level and occupational status as well as cultural possessions and home educational resources (e.g. Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Martin, Foy, Mullis, & O'Dwyer, 2013; OECD, 2016). However, these factors and their role might be different in developed countries than in developing ones, especially regarding the variables describing the home environment. The goal of the present work is to reveal the relevant background variables in relation with school success among Mongolian students. The study is a part of a research focusing on student resiliency. The results could help in the identification of the disadvantaged background. Data were collected by the Educational Evaluation Center of Mongolia. The sample consisted of 5th (N=3,356), 9th (N=1,969) and 12th (N=3,248) graders from 100 schools from all 21 provinces. Mathematics, reading, science and humanities were assessed with paper and pencil tests. In addition, background questionnaires were also filled out with some frequently used questions from the PISA and the TIMMS surveys and some additional ones focusing on the Mongolian context. The analysis revealed only low correlations between parental educational level and performance in all measured areas. An ANOVA showed notable differences in the performance of students whose parents did not attend school and those whose parents had university degrees. Owning certain possessions were relevant indicators of students' test performance. Among all grades and all measured areas, the most relevant possessions were the following: more than one additional piece of clothing, non-stop electricity, toilet, television, computer and laundry machine at home. The results confirm that the influence of family background is stronger in the case of reading than of mathematics. According to the results, the relation between test performance and traditionally used variables describing the family background, such as parental educational level or number of books at home, is weak. However, significant differences were found in students' performance in relation with the variables representing the country-specific home environment, which differ for Mongolia from the ones generally used. The reported findings suggest that the generalisability of the relationship between family background and school achievement revealed in developed countries is restricted. Taking this into account is essential in the educational research of developing countries.

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