

Causes of illiteracy

Illiteracy in individuals stems from different, generally inter-related causes which, together, create a series of often insurmountable barriers for those concerned.

For instance, for someone born into an underprivileged milieu to parents with little formal schooling, the likelihood of being illiterate or experiencing serious learning difficulties will be higher. This is known as intergenerational transmission of illiteracy.

The following are the most frequent causes of illiteracy in adults:

- Parents with little schooling;
- Lack of books at home and lack of stimulation as to the importance of reading;
- Doing badly at or dropping out of school—many have not completed high school;
- Difficult living conditions, including poverty;
- Learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dysorthographia, etc.

Adults aged 45 and over with low literacy skills have the distinction of belonging to generations for whom there were attractive job opportunities despite a lower level of schooling. A very large number of them have always worked in the same field, founding their families, and thus have never felt the need to go back to school.

Owing to the closing of many companies over the past few years, especially in the manufacturing and primary sectors, these people have found themselves out of work, and are often unable to find a new job, because they have difficulty reading and writing. Also, they lack the necessary skills to meet current market requirements or to register in training that would allow them to requalify.