

Beulah Heights University

Equality in Education

Zakia Tomlin-Harden

April 14, 2019

Abstract

Americans and their representation of education in the 21st century was often perceived as superior to other countries. However, over the last decade, American society could be judged as lacking enthusiasm for sustaining a world-class education. What factors have caused this disparity? Perhaps, it could be the mismanagement of funds, resources, and accountability. In this paper, the author will analyze and assess the value of education in America as it pertains to the 21st century standard of academics. Causes such as inequality, poor funding as well as disregard for educators will be addressed. Furthermore, this paper will identify why the importance of education falters even more within poor communities, minority areas and the quality in which we pride our teachers and educators.

Keywords: education, world-class, America, society, value, academics, citizens, 21st century, inequality

Equality in Education

Education in America can be viewed from various perspectives. However, the role in which the value of education in our society plays can be beneficial or advantageous. The amount of money placed in the educational system undermines the return on investment for many individuals. According to Yanushevsky (2011) "Education is a huge part of the US economy. It is rapidly becoming a \$1 trillion industry, representing about 10% of the US Gross Domestic Product and is second in size only to the health care industry" (p.201). There is a duality in America when it pertains to edification. Education is perceived in the United States as an opportunity for advancement yet; there is not equal access for all. The cost of tuition has caused millions of citizens to occur debt, leaving a deficit in the lives of income earning individuals. The reality of this matter has created a huge disparity as humans strive for economic equality.

The paradigm is whether education is a big business or the key to success. In gauging the value of education, one must hope that the heavy emphasis on testing does not equvalate to learning. Over the past decade, schools have stressed the importance of implementing and passing a test for no other reason than to receive funding, accolades or boost in resources. Yanushevsky (2011) contends "Tests are very useful. Nevertheless, machine-scored tests, which limit the feedback from students and variation of responses, don't consider a student's possible nervousness and a need sometimes to clarify certain questions; thus, they are not 100% reliable estimates of a student's knowledge" (p.87). Hence, how is education valued in America? Therefore,

this paper will analyze the value and equality of education in the American society of the 21st century.

Importance of Education

The American society of the 21st century deems education as a status of prestige, validation and social mobility. Nevertheless, educational standards can differ due to geographic area, economic status, and race. In the 21st century, the elite are not mandated to subpar education. According to Yanushevsky (2011) "Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, don't enter college because they cannot afford it" (p.19). Moreover, the cost of superb education normally is associated with private schools in which again the income disparity for most families alienates their children from the amenities of high technology, social club affiliation, and advanced learning curriculums. "Rich libraries and media centers are important components of just about every private high school, large or small. Private schools also have first-rate athletic facilities along with extracurricular activities such as lacrosse, hockey, swimming, football, and the likes" (Yanushevsky, 2011, p.121).

For instance, take our most recent case of the college admission scam where rich celebrities and citizens of our culture allegedly bribed and paid their children's way into ivy league colleges across the United States. The integrity of the process of education has been compromised, and some people will go through any lengths to circumvent the process. Mackey (2013) states "Local studies have shown that economic factors are greatly attributed to the country's value of educational opportunities" (para.1). The action of such dishonor illustrates how respected the right education is in

our society. “America is considered a powerhouse internationally because its citizens recognize the importance of learning and the fact that continuing growth through knowledge is a powerful tool for maintaining such elite status globally” (Mackey,2013, para.9). Hence, since Americans recognize the importance of education, why doesn't our society place the same value on the teachers, lower-income communities and minorities? Why isn't the importance of equality in education studied as well?

Importance of Equality

Teachers and educators are the lowest paying profession in the educational industry. In the 21st century students graduating from college do not see the benefit in pursuing a career as a teacher due to high student loans and low paying wages. Levi (2018) believes that teachers are not valued enough in our society. The author states further “We don't train teachers as professionals, we don't respect them as professionals, we don't compensate them as professionals” (Levi, 2018, p.3). Therefore, how can Americans emphasize the value of a good education, yet show low worth to our educators? Also, because education is free throughout our society, not every community or neighborhood benefits from the same academic systems. “Education has always been a path to success, especially true for disadvantaged children. So, what had changed? Why was the achievement gap for middle-class children widening? Why were the children of poverty almost entirely left behind” (Yanushevsky, 2011, p.8)? The same holds true for minorities and ethnic groups. For instance, Yanushevsky (2011) mentions” Poor people and minorities were among those who weren't embraced completely in the past and even now in the 21st century by the public education system” (p.22). Therefore, the value of education for all American

citizens should be homogenous. Unfortunately, the reality is that there is a lack of resources, respect, and rights of particular members of our society. Mackey (2013) contends “It is a vital responsibility to the citizens of America to relay this value in education to their posterity” (para.2). Without an equal status in this matter, our society as a whole suffers.

Conclusion

Some may believe that America has not adequately shown its value for education in the 21st century. Perhaps, their ideology is flawed. Meaning, the general perception is that although education is free in our country, the standard of the educational system does not hold equal value as a world-class system for all. The reluctance of government officials and voters following through on an educational agenda has lacked enforcement over the years. As a society who competes in the 21st century with other countries such as South Korea, and China, our motto is that education is invaluable.

On the other hand, our mindset does not correlate to support our stance. Levi (2018) opines “South Korea kicks butt in everything educationally. But here in America, you can do lip service, you can do photo-ops, but you don’t have anything beyond that and that our fault” (p.4). Until Americans place equal weight on the administration and the accountability of excellence in academics, the continuation of inequality, lack of educational reform and the devaluing of our edification system.

References

Levy, G. (2018). Rethinking Education in America. *U.S. News - The Report*, C9–C13.

Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fth&AN=130955033&site=eds-live&scope=site>

Mackey, K. L. (2013). The value of education in today's American society: A glimpse into the current way America supports the educational system. Retrieved from

<https://www.athens.edu/business-journal/spring-2013/the-value-of-education-in-todays-american-society-a-glimpse-into-the-current-way-america-supports-the-educational-system/>

Yanushevsky, R. (2011). *Improving Education in the US: A Political Paradox*. New York:

Algora Publishing. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=390652&site=eds-live&scope=site>