

Education Equity: Challenges and Suggestions

By Matthew Lynch



Equity in education has long been an ideal. It's an ideal celebrated in a variety of contexts, too. Even the Founding Fathers celebrated education as an ideal, something to which every citizen ought to be entitled. Unfortunately though, the practice of equity in education has been less than effective. That is, equity is a difficult ideal to maintain and many strategies attempting to maintain it have fallen far short in the implementation.

The most obvious and horrendous element, of course, is the No Child Left Behind Act. But even Obama has notably dabbled in an attempt to manage equity in education. A 2013 report called, "For Each and Every Child", reported that "some young Americans - most of them white and affluent - are getting a world-class education" while those who "attend schools in high poverty neighborhoods are getting an education that more closely approximates schools in developing nations."

With this apparently the situation, the problem of ensuring that every child in the United States receives a quality education is quite a substantial one. This basic hurdle has not even been overcome.

The steps recommended by the government report to remedy this included having states specifically identify and report on the teaching staff, programs, and services they deem necessary for a quality education; and adopting and implementing a school finance system to provide "equitable and sufficient funding" for all students essentially to meet learning standards.

Part of the problem with these proposed solutions, though, is that they assume states and ultimately also schools can figure out what it is they need or what it is they need to do to provide a quality education. The assumption, based on this report and no doubt many others, is that money - preferably money poured into schools - is enough to solve educational issues. That is, reassignment of resources to support schools in poorer areas will be sufficient, along with some reporting on considered needs, to balance the public education system.

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