

Lorenzo Salgado

ES - 60 - HW5

Prof. Doug Matson

Due: 4/28/2020

### **Educational Outcomes in the Aftermath of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

This essay will explore the various systematic faults and shortcomings in education in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic which exposed and exacerbated the ongoing educational crisis. The focus of this piece will be primary education in the U.S., with a preceding overview of the educational impact across the world and in education in general. The primary driver for the issue of educational loss was the seeming inability to safely gather indoors, with many governments regulating lockdown measures at the forefront of the. This led to problems primarily through unemployment, closed childcare facilities, and schools transitioning to virtual instruction - resulting in the April 2020 peak of ~1.3 billion students out of school across the world [1]. As of March 2021, this figure is estimated to be 680 million students in countries with fully closed schools [2].

Before the COVID-19 outbreak sent the world into a state of disarray and uncertainty, shortcomings in educational outcomes for the global youth have been a prominent concern. These educational shortcomings have been felt at different rates and to different effects between wealthier and developing nations. In a 2019 World Bank report, it was estimated that 53 percent of children in low- and middle-income nations are in a state of “learning poverty” - described as the inability to read and understand a short story by age 10 [3] - a rate that has been estimated to have risen 10% following the COVID outbreak [4]. Economically, this rate of learning poverty is estimated to cost the world about \$10 trillion in earnings, the equivalent of 10% of global GDP [3].

In wealthier nations, the pandemic has further exposed and perpetuated the educational inequalities that are marked along socioeconomic lines - marked by a sharp 29% decrease in US college enrollment rates for students from low-income backgrounds in Fall 2020, almost double the decrease of their wealthier peers [5]. In the U.S., among the generation of primary school students, this education loss - the equivalent to about five lost months of instruction - is estimated to cost the US an estimated \$173 - \$271 billion a year in earnings, roughly 1 percent of national GDP [6]. Despite ranking fifth among OECD nations in spending per pupil at \$12.6k/student, the U.S. does not meet

the UNESCO benchmark of 15% share of total public expenditure on education [7]. And while the U.S.'s average of ~90% high school graduation rate and 17.2 years of education ranks well among OECD nations, clear views of inequity can be seen among different forms of instruction within each state within the U.S., presenting a myriad of factors affecting educational outcomes. These can best be explored when studying the practice of Federalism between the federal and state governments, which grant individual states the ability to dictate educational policy and funding as seen fit [8]. This can result in non-uniform expenditures and differences in the proportion of federal funding and state funding from state taxpayers. These differences in educational spending as a percentage of taxpayer income can range from Alaska's and New York's nation-leading 5.61% and 4.83%, respectively, to Arizona's and Idaho's 2.5% and 3%, respectively [7].

States vary in how they collect and apply taxpayer funding to education. In the case of Texas school district budgets, funding is covered on a district-by-district basis through local property taxes, and the state accounts for the remaining balance. The effects of this can best be exemplified by an example scenario from the Texas Tribune exploring Texas school funding through the property values and tax rates of two San Antonio area school districts[9]. Edgewood ISD has relatively lower-valued property at \$1.2b, thus taxes at the maximum rate, and yet depends on the state for help with its budget. The wealthier Alamo Heights ISD has a much higher property value (\$6.5b), which requires a lower tax rate to meet their budgeting needs and in turn, sends money back to the state. This becomes a problem when considering the substantial increase in city property values an unfounded belief from the state that this growth is sustainable. As originally designed in 1994, this "Robinhood" policy has shifted in terms of who is paying recapture - from oil-rich and suburban areas to now large booming cities. In essence, higher need public school students' property values would be funding suburban and rural low-income schools and facilities. As described, the recapture policy possesses enough faults to become a popular target for tax-cut happy politicians [10]. However, the importance of ensuring an equal playing field for students cannot be understated and any efforts of which should be embraced.

One such measure that could considerably impact these unequal outcomes in the aftereffects of the COVID pandemic is a proper and effective allocation of federal stimulus funds for schools.

Texas is one of two states that has yet to release any of the federally allocated \$17.9 billion for state school districts [11]. Recognizing how at-risk students could be impacted through no fault of their own, many proactive efforts to provide continued access to meals through food drives, technology through laptop loaning programs, and conducive social environments have been undertaken [12]. These programs designed by local officials (city, county-level) could be more effective through substantial and timely funding by both state and federal governments alike.

The United Nations, in their proposed goals for global sustainable development, outline goals for equitable and sustainable educational development [12] and UNESCO benchmarks relevant UIS country data [13] to index each nation's performance. A product of sustainable development of education should be the ever-lasting resilience of educational systems [14]. Recommendations that cover areas that address prevention, preparedness, and response to future health emergencies to ensure no student in the world is systematically neglected of education [15].

The educational successes, shortcomings, and failures in the face of the global pandemic have exposed a field where technology and sustainable methods can be applied to reduce inequalities. While universal access is still lacking, local government policies have worked to close this gap through outreach and technological distribution programs. The role of effective, inspiring teachers might provide a shift in generalized attitudes toward the career, potentially attracting higher-quality candidates. And the newfound role of technology within a classroom has the possibility and necessity to be leveraged to fundamentally transform education into a more sustainable practice for the generations after us.

## References

- [1] “Urgent, Effective Action Required to Quell the Impact of COVID-19 on Education Worldwide,” World Bank.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2021/01/22/urgent-effective-action-required-to-quell-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-worldwide> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [2] “World Bank Education COVID-19 School Closures Map,” World Bank.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2020/03/24/world-bank-education-and-covid-19> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [3] “Learning Poverty,” World Bank.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [4] “Pandemic Threatens to Push 72 Million More Children into Learning Poverty—World Bank outlines a New Vision to ensure that every child learns, everywhere,” World Bank.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/02/pandemic-threatens-to-push-72-million-more-children-into-learning-poverty-world-bank-outlines-new-vision-to-ensure-that-every-child-learns-everywhere> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [5] “A silent and unequal education crisis. And the seeds for its solution.”  
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/silent-and-unequal-education-crisis-and-seeds-its-solution> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [6] “Achievement gap and coronavirus | McKinsey.”  
<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [7] “U.S. Public Education Spending Statistics [2021]: per Pupil + Total,” EducationData.  
<https://educationdata.org/public-education-spending-statistics> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [8] “Federal Role in Education,” May 25, 2017. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).
- [9] A. Swaby, “Texas’ school finance system is unpopular and complex. Here’s how it works.,” The Texas Tribune, Feb. 15, 2019.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2019/02/15/texas-school-funding-how-it-works/> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[10] A. Swaby, “Many see ‘Robin Hood’ as a villain. But lawmakers rely on it to pay for schools.,” The Texas Tribune, Jan. 31, 2019.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2019/01/31/texas-robin-hood-recapture-villain-texas-fix-school-finance/> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[11] D. Agnew, “Congressional Democrats condemn Abbott for not releasing billions in federal stimulus dollars intended for Texas public schools,” The Texas Tribune, Apr. 19, 2021.

<https://www.texastribune.org/2021/04/19/texas-democrats-congress-greg-abbott-stimulus-schools/> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[12] “The impact of COVID-19 on student equity and inclusion: Supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings,” OECD.

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion-supporting-vulnerable-students-during-school-closures-and-school-re-openings-d593b5c8/> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[13] “Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals ∴ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.”

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[14] “UIS Statistics.” <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[15] UNESCO, “Leading SDG 4 - Education 2030,” UNESCO, Mar. 09, 2013.

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4> (accessed Apr. 27, 2021).

[16] UNESCO, “Building back resilient: how can education systems prevent, prepare for and respond to health emergencies and pandemics?” UNESCO, Jan. 2020, Accessed: Apr. 27, 2021. Available:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375278>.