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ENGL 101C

05 October 2020

Privatization - The next step in formal education of young minds.

A couple century old education system is failing to meet the requirements of a modern era. People want choice and innovation and public schools are not providing. Instead, many families have started towards other means of child education in home schooling and the ever increasing count of charter schools across the nation. With all the new student enrollments at charter schools, public schools are getting a run for their money as competition to keep and increase their student body grows. But with the new innovative ideas being used in charter schools, that mesh to the students' needs instead of forcing all students to meet a standard, is providing a more suited education than the traditional standardized testing in public schools. On the same note, current universities are already showing success in privatization and cooperation with business and industry to bolster knowledge in the specified field. Privatization is the next step in a formal education for all students. Most Republicans are already putting in practice the privatization of schools in order to offer more freedom of choice and competition for all those involved..

Henry Clay once said, "Of all human powers operating on the affairs of mankind, none is greater than that of competition." Competition is a natural part of human behaviour and thus is a necessity to do better, and this is not limited to the individual. An example of this was found in a private interview, with the interviewee stating: "I can not tell you how many times competition

pushed me to do better” (Hallam). On the side of schooling, competition sparked by the use and support of charter schools and voucher programs has helped to improve the overall performance of existing public schools (Pearson). Infact, the competition between public, private, charter and other alternatives in schooling of grades K-12 creates an incentive for excellence similar to that found between competing colleges and universities (Pearson). It is the lack of incentive that has led the United States to fall behind other comparable leading countries in fields such as science and technology due to the inadequate education students are receiving (Crelin). However, competition can be seen between students while in sports and other activities such as standardized testing, it does not mean it is healthy competition.

Competition is present to push a person to pursue the best version of themselves possible, standardized testing can do the opposite by diminishing a person's desire to pursue doing better, or vice versa prevents someone who wants to do better by not aiding a student in a beneficial manner. Starting in the 1980’s, when it became clearer that the U.S. primary and secondary students' test scores were lagging behind that of other developed nations, numerous measures were put in place in an effort to improve public education. Some of these measures include mandatory testing and stricter accreditation standards for public schools (Pearson). Later with the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, educators and parents alike strictly criticized its emphasis on standardized testing, as it prompted teachers to focus overwhelmingly on the test results rather than a well rounded curricula. Coincidentally this did not take the individual educational needs of students into account (Crelin). To alleviate this, parents turned to charter schools and homeschooling, with some having high success. One example of this is of a mother who teaches her two children. Her daughter at age of thirteen excelled in her studies in math due to her

curious nature and began learning math from a junior level college online without any barriers and the encouragement to do so (Alternative Education). Charter schools are similar to homeschools in that they use innovative methods to meet the needs of each student by reorganizing teaching methods, efficient management of class structures and resources, or by targeting specific areas of academic achievement (Pearson). Truly, if a community group or private school can do a better job of educating students than a school district can, under this line of thinking, then it should get a chance to do so (Olson). Schools need to start using new methods of teaching and assessing students, or otherwise find more practical means of assessing student knowledge. Universities also struggle with this phenomena, with many institutions of higher learning, finding the appropriate balance between classroom study and practical experience is a persistent challenge. They must decide how much and what type of practical experience will most benefit prospective doctors, lawyers, teachers, or engineers (Vontz).

Following many of the examples set by private colleges and universities can lead to a desirable outcome for the public education system. One change should be similar to how universities often collaborate with one another, as well as private industry and the government to improve an aspect of, or the approach to, a particular problem. To add to this, federal and state governments issue competitive grants, university faculty publish and disseminate their findings and are evaluated on their research production, and private businesses invest in university research and provide real-world sites for university researchers and students to test new ideas (Vontz). Interviewing a past highschool student about his experience with public education, he states: "I felt that if there were more options I could have pursued what I wanted. Luckily there was some amount of [music] classes and an amazing teacher to boot. But the lack of personnel to

teach with an influx of students left only the main [music] classes available and things like music theory and world music were tossed” (Hallam). By making public schools similar to colleges and universities, schools can have access to professionals in their fields as well as the work environment if available. Coincidentally this will fix a problem of overcrowding in developing and or higher density areas, allowing for better management of resources. (Pearson). With highschools working more similarly to universities, more people will have access to more meaningful high end education that will translate to post school life careers. However, the thought of heavy university costs comes to mind, something that many parents do not want to be burdened with at a K-12 level.

The question of money and funding for schools comes forward when talking about schools outside the public system. One answer to this question was given by Thomas Paine who proposed providing money to individuals so that they could pay for their own education (Anderson). By using these vouchers given out by the federal government, students could choose the school they wish to attend and have reduced or no payment. However a new problem arises with the large count of private schools being religious, with around 95% of these private schools having religious affiliation, many believe the vouchers to be unconstitutional and instead point to the Blaine Amendment, a failed amendment adopted by state governments that states “No State shall make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; and no money raised by taxation in any state for the support of public schools, or derived from any public fund therefore, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of any religious sect” (Anderson). But even with the vouchers, which give families around \$1500 to \$2000 a year in tuition money, they do not cover the entire cost of tuition at

most private schools as the tuition is easily double the amount and often much larger than what is given (Anderson). Despite this parents wish to send their children to a private school for a better education, but a study on students who use vouchers in private schools, confirming achievement gains for only tiny subgroups of the better-prepared scholarship students and no impact at all for other participating students, including those whose test scores were in the lower ranges at the time of their entry into the private schools. So despite this, most students will stay in the public schooling system out of necessity, and truly where a difference needs to be made (Anderson). Everyone deserves equal access to education, without prejudice or discrimination, yet the path to get there is not clear for all people. Even so changes need to be made in the right places for the right people for a positive outcome, something that will take time to implement in this old education system.

Like other American institutions, higher education will continue to evolve, with some holding fast to tradition, while others blaze a new path into the future. Several basic functions of higher education are undergoing slow but steady reform. The ways in which content is delivered and assessed, knowledge is created and disseminated, students collaborate and learn, and institutions distribute scarce resources are undergoing modest but consistent reform. Higher education institutions, however, will continue to play important roles in the economic, social, and political development of American society and contribute key elements to its system of governance (Vontz). With universities already undergoing or have undergone the needed change, so does the public education system. Charter schools provide a good middle ground for the time being, providing flexible alternatives for parents and students alike with adaptive learning to accommodate all students. The competition between the charter and public schools helps to push

for a better public educational environment in order to keep the public system comparable or better than the charter system. By making the public education system focus more on accessibility for the individual student over a test score average, and the curricula on said test, students may find it more enjoyable to learn, and foster a love of knowledge in the future. In his farewell address on September 19, 1796, George Washington advised: “Promote ... as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened” (Vantz). Every american is required as a citizen of this nation to be properly educated to create proper opinions on current events and make logical choices with proper evidence or support.

Education needs to change, America is falling behind on a global scale. Teachers are more focused on test material then the wellbeing of the individual student, and more teachers are needed to increase the diversity of material for students to learn. Healthy competition between both students and schools can help foster a desire to improve and to learn, and overall improve the bottom line average scores as a byproduct. Test scores should not be the focus, it should be what builds the score that matters, anyone can cram information if desperate enough, but retaining that information is completely different. As for the cost, that is something that will be a topic of controversy for sometime. But with any change it will take time and collaborative effort on all sides, compromise, and trial. How education will look a decade from now may look drastically different than now, and definitely a decade in the past. But will these changes ultimately make learning better for everyone, or a select few?

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