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End of Course Reflection: What Should Education Look Like?

The American education system is one of the sole reasons why my family and I have moved from South Korea to the United States. After learning about the history of American schooling and the current state of education in the United States, here is what I believe education should look like in the future.

Education should be a public good, but not a pure public good. David F. Labaree states two goals of education as a public good: democratic equality and social efficiency (42). I believe that the future of education should focus on these two goals. In addition, the social mobility model of education as a private goal should be eliminated.

To align the future of education with the democratic equality goal, we must instill common values and a sense of social responsibility in students from a young age until the end of their education i.e. high school or college. This can be achieved by incorporating civic education into the curriculum at all levels of schooling. For example, we should change the purpose of school field trips from visiting historical sites to local community centers and service projects. Although this may not work for younger students, it can be easily implemented in middle and high schools. In addition, we can encourage civic engagement by requiring students to actively care for their classroom and classmates by setting time aside for the school to clean up and organize the school. Furthermore, students should be taught to serve lunch to their classmates and teachers and clean up after lunch.

Although this idea borrows from East Asian schools such as the Japanese school system, which have implemented the responsibility of the students to care for the school through required activities such as cleaning, this relates to Dewey's idea of education as a curriculum reformer who believed that students should be "trained...into membership, saturated with the spirit of service,

and provided with the instruments of effective self-direction,” through hands-on, experiential learning (Fraser 2007). Although these changes may seem foreign to the American education system, we can reframe it using Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy and move education towards a more democratic and socially responsible institution with these changes.

To fund the model of education, I believe that all schools should be funded equally. This does not mean that all schools should receive the same amount of money, but rather that all schools should be funded based on the resources the students need. This would call for the local and state tax dollars to be the primary source of funding and any excess funds raised by the local county should be redistributed to other schools within the state or region.

Furthermore, there should be a shift to incentivize schools to spend more public funding on the students and teachers rather than administrative costs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of public school teachers has increased by 8.7% from 2000 to 2019, and the number of public school administrators has increased by 98% during the same period. This could be an indication that schools are spending more money on administrative costs rather than on the students and teachers. To combat this, there should be a reform on teacher salaries and a reduction of administrative salaries. Moreover, the growth of a teacher’s salary should be tied to the growth of the student’s performance and education which would incentivize teachers to readily engage with their students and provide a better education. From the taxpayer’s perspective, this would highlight the social efficiency goal of education because there is a direct connection between the money spent on education and the quality of education.

When education becomes meritocratic and stresses a graded hierarchy to propagate social mobility, it becomes privatized and creates a divide between the privileged and marginalized. It widens the gap between people who can afford “better education” through private schools, tutoring services, etc. So we should eliminate the graded hierarchy and implement a pass or fail system. This takes away the need for students to compete with each other and invite a more collaborative environment in the classroom. In addition, we can readily implement LREs (Least Restrictive Environment) to integrate students with disabilities into the general education

classroom (Bicard 324). This will emphasize a classroom with equal treatment and access to students of all abilities and backgrounds. Although not every student can be integrated into the classroom, schools must provide the necessary resources and support for students with disabilities who can't be integrated into the general education classroom rather than putting the full responsibility of education on the parents. Finally, this would necessitate private schools to be abolished because private schools separate students based on their socio-economic status which contradicts the goals of implementing a least restrictive environment with a diverse and inclusive student body.

Education should be a public good that truly provides meaningful education and social growth for all students. As America seems to be moving towards a more divided society from the radical socio-political climate to the wealth gap across the country, it is imperative that we first tackle educational debt and strive for a more democratic and socially aware education system because it is the education of the next generation that will shape the future.

Works Cited

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