Education in El Salvador

**Position paper: To Change the Mandatory Age for Education in El Salvador.**

In El Salvador, currently free education is available until grade 9. El Salvador is a very poor country. Food is limited and is derived primarily from their natural resources. Many people are very poor and cannot afford basic necessities such as electricity and heat, so they live outside of the cities where the cost of living is lower. They also cannot afford to pay for their children’s education, so most children end in grade 9 not having the proper skills to get a job and make money for their family. This renews the poverty cycle. Only 33% of children that are old enough to attend high school are able to enroll in further education, and 6% of children never go to school. In Canada, 82-84% of adolescents ages 15-19 years old attend school (3, 6). This shows that the age that children go to school for free should be raised to at least 16. Compared to Canada, El Salvador finishes free education at 14 years old, and in Canada you get the chance to finish your high school education (16 years old). Many minimum wage jobs require a high school diploma and a 9th grade education means you did not graduate high school. This gives you very little education.

Salvadorans should have access to free education, because they would be able to do a lot more if they were better educated. Private school education is a privilege, but everyone should have the right to a proper education. Education opens up many things for you in your life that you cannot have without it. Having a proper education increases the chances of breaking out of poverty and bad living conditions. It lets you fulfill your passion and it gives you certain freedoms that you cannot obtain without at least finishing high school.

Free public education should be available from pre-K to grade 12 in El Salvador. Not only do you finish your high school education, you also start to choose what you would like to do as a career. Many countries don’t have a free education system for children under 18, but it would show other countries that if El Salvador could do it, then they could do it.

Having free education until grade 12 would be very expensive for the government to fund but looking at the future, they would see a higher percentage in employment and people attending college. The unemployment rate is currently almost 7% (7). Compared to other countries, it is very high. With a better educated population, these statistics would drop enormously. There would be less crimes, fights, teenage pregnancies and divorces. According to Do Something.org “A high school dropout will earn $200,000 less than a high school graduate over his lifetime. And almost a million dollars less than a college graduate”. “In the U.S., high school dropouts commit about 75% of crimes”. In 1972, the dropout rate for Hispanics was 34% (8). By furthering your education, you have a brighter future, and are likely to be more successful and make more of a contribution to society. There are many people that have become very successful without college degrees such as Robert de Niro and Billy Joel , but it is very difficult to be like these people (1).

To conclude, education is very important no matter where you live. Free public education should be available to everyone through grade 12. Not everyone can be a multi-millionaire without a college degree like Billy Joel. Such a policy would only benefit El Salvador despite the initial costs. It would aid the population by giving them better paying jobs and taking them out of poverty. The statistics for dropouts would decrease and the statistics for healthier lifestyles and better living conditions would increase. El Salvador would be a much better place for its citizens.

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