

Article Review #1

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Submitted to:
Dr. Jan Robertson
EDER 619.06 – Leadership in Learning
May 23, 2003

Article

Goddard, T. (2000). *The Flight of the Middle Class from Public Schools*. Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 18. Retrieved May 22, 2003 from <http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/goddard.html>

Preface

West Vancouver School District is in a challenging situation. The subject of public and private schools perked my interest because within our school district, there are two major private schools, namely Collingwood and Mulgrave that compete for our students. Although this study is based entirely in Alberta, the article still has much relevance to what is happening in British Columbia.

Article Description

Goddard (2000) prepared this paper for the University Council for Educational Administration conference. He noted that the education system has been faced with the problem of trying to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse public (Goddard, 2000). The media has picked up on this and has inundated the public with messages that has made the private school system rise in popularity.

The Canadian education system is not centrally regulated. The 1867 British North American Act mandated that each province be responsible in how their education system is set up. However, there are times when economic incentives have been used to promote certain educational incentives (Goddard, 2000). French as a Second Language and French Immersion are two such program that have garnered funds through these initiatives (Tompkins, 1986 in Goddard, 2000). Goddard (2000) noted that there are five versions of private schools in Alberta alone. Other provinces such as BC, Saskatchewan, and Ontario have also established public and dissentient separate schools that draw money from the public purse (Levin & Young, 1998 in Goddard, 2000). As a result,

religious schools are funded to the same formula as public schools. In Calgary, there is the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District whereas in St. Albert, there is the St. Albert Protestant Separate School District. In British Columbia, the public school is non-denominational. Those parents who want their children to have religion as part of their education must seek private schools (Goddard, 2000).

There are five types of private schools in Alberta. The first are religious schools, which operate under the tenets of a certain faith. Parents pay schools fees and are obligated to pay school taxes to maintain the public system as well (Goddard, 2000). The second type is First Nations schools. These schools are excluded from the public system through various treaties signed. Nevertheless, the federal government governs these schools by means of the Indian Act. Parents do not pay fees or taxes to support these schools (Goddard, 2000). The third type of schools is independent private schools. Parents who send their children to these schools must pay an annual tuition. In Alberta, there are the registered and accredited independent schools. The registered independent schools do not offered the Alberta program of study or employ certified teachers. As such, the students do not receive credit towards an Alberta graduation diploma (Alberta Learning, 2000 in Goddard, 2000). Conversely, the accredited independent schools do the opposite. The fourth type of schools is charter schools. These schools have been established to meet the needs of specific populations. The final type of school is home schooling. Parents who are unwilling or unable to send their children to the public or private system teach their children at home.

Goddard (2000) in his research suggests that the flight of the middle class to the private system is a non-issue. He insists that they only attract a small percentage of the

population. This growth in the private school system is more of a growth in population than any huge exodus (Goddard, 2000). Goddard maintains that as the number of student in the public system declines, there is an immediate perception in the media that parents are abandoning the public system (Goddard, 2000). The percentage of students enrolled in the private system in Canada has been constant at the five percent level (Levin & Young, 1998 in Goddard, 2000). The concerns with parents losing faith in the public system and enrolling their children in the private system are over exaggerated. In fact, there are more parents enrolling their children in private tutoring centres than private schools (Fine, 2000 in Goddard, 2000). There are approximately 10% of students taking an hour or more per week of additional lessons or tutoring for science (Goddard, 2000). The public school system is still intact. Funding though seems to be the major concern. There is still a range of options within the regular educational system such as French Immersion, Advanced Placement, and the International Baccalaureate which are in place to meet the needs of the community.

Reaction

Private schools have always been held in high esteem. With their student / teacher ratio, high academic standards, wide range of extra-curricular activities, and dedicated teacher, it is no wonder many parents have opted for this type of education for their children. As Goddard (2000) proclaims, the problem is that public schools need the proper funding. Imagine, if classrooms were capped at twenty, learning resources abundant, coaches paid, teaching salaries high, would you not have teachers who would be more dedicated to their profession in turn produce higher achieving students? The fallacy of standardized assessment and other media hype that regularly report that private education is better than the public system is merely propaganda. If you compare oranges

to oranges, it would provide insightful information. However, when you compare oranges to watermelon, it would only provide information that is flawed. Levin (2001, p14) reports that large-scale changes are not longer accompanied by substantially increased financial commitment to the schools by the government. However, there has always been strong support for the public system as it is seen as an investment for the future. Even at the price of higher taxes, there remains a stable support for increased education funding (Livingstone & Hart, 1998 in Levin, 2001). What is happening in the British Columbia education system today is that schools are trying to please everyone. With cross boundary enrolment in full gear, many school districts are aiming to entice as many students as possible to stay alive within a budget that is stretched thin already. Many school districts have reported a decreased enrolment due to attrition in the population. As this type of market approach gains in popularity, school districts will find that they can no longer keep up with the choices. There will have to be a give of some sort. Will some schools be good at certain things? This will most likely give way to more “specialized schools”.

This article was useful in that it provided insight to this current and ongoing educational issue. Its strength lies in how it was worded. The five-page document conveyed the necessary information for an understanding of the issue. However, a comparison of the different regions of Canada, especially British Columbia, would have provided more valuable information to this issue.

Journal Description

This article was retrieved from the Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy (CJEAP) located at the University of Manitoba. As such the editorial board has a Canadian slant, as many are leaders from Canadian universities. It

is a peer-reviewed journal that has certain criteria for publication. The publication should start with a short abstract and be no longer than 5000 words even though there is a discrepancy that has it at 3500. It should also The CJEAP is an electronic journal that has been online since 1995 with one to two issues published yearly until the present time. The common theme in this online publication is issues related to leadership. Because it asks for paper that are succinct yet informative, it is very readable. However, the paper does not seem to have much editor input or revision besides the short editorial note before the paper is accessed.

References

Levin, B. (2001). *Reforming Education: From Origins to Outcomes*. London: Routledge Falmer.