

Education voucher research paper

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



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Education Voucher

Abstract

“ Vouchers are the worst and most dangerous thing to have been introduced in education during my life as an adult,” said Jonathan Kozol a retired teacher and a reform thinker. Education voucher has continued receiving massive opposition from teachers in public institutions for reasons that it will reduce the quality of education and minimize funding. This research article will explore on education voucher, commonly known as school voucher. The focus will mainly be on its history, proponents and opponents and implementation of the same in different nations.

Introduction

Education voucher refers to a certificate that gives mandate to parents or guardians to apply for tuition in a private institution as opposed to a government school where their children are assigned. In an education system where vouchers are not used, parents whose children are in private

institutions continue paying tax for public institutions thus funding both public and private institutions. The idea of introducing vouchers was mainly to give individuals an opportunity to decide on which education they prefer to avoid being taxed on both. However, this arrangement has continued being controversial with opponents of the same deducing that the education in public schools will be undermined and maximize burden on the education system in public schools, especially funding. Although education voucher is opposed by many, some countries have embraced the program to the fullest.

Discussion

The programs of school voucher in America started back in 1869 in towns of Maine and Vermont. The reason why these two towns were eligible for this program was because neither of them had elementary or high schools and learners were given an opportunity to access education in other places or in private institutions. In 1917, the Dutch government embraced the idea of education voucher and this has continued even today with over 70% of learners attending private schools but funded by government schools (Peterson & Campbell, 2001). One notable advantage that comes with education voucher is that they bring competition that help to improve public institutions besides being cost effective. However, education voucher has been identified as a possible cause of racial discrimination.

The major controversy surrounding education voucher is that they put government education in a cut throat competition with private sector and it also minimizes the amount of funds allocated government schools. The proponents of this arrangement hold that voucher education influences free

competition among all types of institutions and this is a way of providing incentives for improvement (Steuerle, 2000). In the same vein, it is argued that education quality will eventually improve just like in higher education where public universities compete against privately owned campuses. In a study that was carried out in Manhattan, it was revealed that schools that were being threatened by voucher programs had significant improvements than those schools that were not facing a similar predicament (Patrinos et al., 2009). In a separate research by Hoxby, he revealed that, through the use of vouchers, both public and private schools were making remarkable improvements.

As proponents continue throwing their weight behind education voucher, perpetrators against the same continue registering how destructive these programs can get. From teacher unions to government school teachers, the argument has been the same; education voucher erodes standard of education and minimize funding and that the whole idea is against the constitution (Kincheloe, 2006). The opponents argue that, if the limited funds assigned to public institutions are anything to go by, then the voucher program will end up weakening government schools while on the other hand the funds provided may not be enough to finance education in private schools. In a research that was carried out in Arizona, it was revealed that over 75% of the total funds that was allocated to the voucher program went to learners in private institutions.

Opponents of education voucher continue to argue that the voucher program is not accountable to the taxpayer. Despite the fact that vouchers are used

in religious and private institutions, the tax payers are denied the opportunity of voting for issues regarding budget and they are not given a chance to elect the committee of their choice (Wise et al., 2002). In the same vein, speculations have been raised that allowing government to fund private schools is increasing the government opportunists of meddling with education in private schools.

The implementation of education voucher has been in the offing in many countries. For instance in Chile, the voucher programs have been running and the government pays private schools depending on the number of learners who have attended. Currently, 89% of learners are under these programs (Dwyer, 2002). In many European nations, both secondary and primary education is subsidized. Schools in Ireland are allocated funds to cater for the salaries of teachers and the funds are allocated to all schools whether learners are required to pay fees or not. The Swedish government embraced education voucher in 1994 both at secondary and primary level. While the Dutch government deemed it wise to fund all school equally as required by the constitution, in Hong Kong, education voucher is only applicable to children below six years.

From the time when he was a senator, Obama has never been a proponent of education voucher. In his career as a politician, the sitting president of America has always been against vouchers saying that they siphon off finances from government schools. Observers at one time observed that, it is not in Obama's agenda to incorporate voucher in the education system. In an interview when he was a senator, Obama was categorical that voucher

system was not the best for children. However, after taking presidency, Obama has since changed his perception about the voucher system. In 2009, Obama supported the idea of funding Columbia district voucher system until when the students would graduate. The voucher program in Columbia supports over 1500 students from humble families.

Conclusion

Although a good number of European nations have embraced education voucher, the same has elicited sharp opposition from the opponents of the same. Proponents of education voucher argue that the program has brought a healthy competition between private institutions and government schools. The opponents on the other hand believe that the program undermines public education besides eroding its quality. The education voucher is also said to be against the constitution and as debate continues for and against this idea, it remains to be seen who will carry the day (Howell et al., 2006).

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