

The Government's Assistance to Lower-Income Families' Education

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Abstract. Since there are inequalities in education level, and those inequalities form a huge gap between different family classes, such as students in the lower-income family can't own equal education resources as higher-income family students, and the graduation rate remains to be standstill since the number of people educated is mostly higher-income students, but lower-income family students need education as well. The government began to pay attention to the lower-class families' education level and wanted to balance the inequalities. Undoubtedly, the government took several actions by introducing new policies or constructing new institutions and programs such as the NCLA program assisting lower-income family students. In this paper, there will be analyzation of the policy or strategy used to assist lower-income family children and what advantages or disadvantages those strategies have, and finally, compare the policies used for lower-income families with higher-income families. Although there are difficulties or useless strategies while assisting the lower-income class, the government never gives up, this paper will also discuss how government plays its role in executing the assisting strategies. Besides educational strategies, there are other solutions that would be included as well, such as health or housing assistance. So the government made significant efforts to support lower-income households, and this support greatly advanced the growth of the entire nation.

Keywords: Charter schools, assisting agencies, advantages, disadvantages.

1. Introduction

The government moves its target to lower-income family students instead of only paying attention to high-income family students, because there is a huge gap between higher-and-lower-income family students, and to reduce this difference for the development of society, the government begins to take some actions. First of all, family income level affects the education level a lot. The difference in family income level will bring a lot of inequalities. So, since family income level is a factor of educational inequalities, it can be told from history that family income level is one of the most important factors that contribute to inequalities in education, and lower-income families' students will have a lot of difficulties such as limited chances accessing to authoritative schools. So, this will easily lead to a cycle of poverty. In most countries, rich families' children often have better schools to attend, and they will receive privileges such as high-quality facilities or small-sized schools, and usually rich families' children will attend the best private school. Christina Higgins's article "Dismantling Stratification: Equal Education for All" indicates schools in wealthy communities usually have the necessary resources, extracurricular activities, and enrichment activities to prepare their children for success [1]. However, what happens to lower-income families' children? Research shows that lower-income children are even more likely to be regarded for special education. For instance, the article "Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education" indicates that lower-income family students have a higher ratio of being regarded as having disabilities, and they are placed even separately when taking classes, and educational resources usually are allocated worse in this environment because lower-income family students are seemed less likely to succeed in the academic field [2]. From the article "The Achievement Gap Fails to Close", there is little doubt that a student's familial history has a significant impact on their academic achievement, which is closely connected to socioeconomic stratification [3]. According to government research, low-income families are more frequently assigned to significantly distinct classrooms with lower success expectations and inferior educational outcomes, and education inequalities may cause negative effects,

so they begin to pay attention to this problem. When large segments of the population are unable to access quality education and achieve their full potential, it can lead to several negative outcomes, such as reduced economic competitiveness, increased poverty and inequality, and reduced social mobility. These outcomes can have significant and lasting effects on the health and well-being of communities and can ultimately undermine a nation's overall stability and prosperity. This paper will analyze the government's assistance to lower-income families' education.

2. Actions the Government Took

To assist lower stratification families' children, the government takes some actions. This paper will discuss the government's assistance from different angles, such as financial assistance, extra support to schools, or methods to evaluate teachers' academic levels.

2.1. Financial Assistance

To begin with, the Title I program was authorized to provide schools that have a lot of low-income families' students with financial assistance, to meet every student's academic needs. The gap between rich and poor families affects their children's education such as graduation rate. According to a study, the University of Michigan discovered that the difference between wealthy and poor students in terms of completing college, the single most significant predictor of success in the workforce, has grown by around 50% since the late 1980s [4]. Also, higher-income parents spend much more money on their children than lower-income parents. In college, this gap still exists and keeps increasing. In the article, the research shows that this phenomenon of the gap is increasing in universities as well. Two student generations were examined in the Susan M. Dynarski and Martha J. Bailey study at the University of Michigan: those born between 1961 and 1964 and those born between 1979 and 1982. By 1989, about a third of the first generation of affluent students had finished college; by 2007, that number had increased to more than half. Comparatively, only 9% of low-income students from the second generation completed college by 2007, which was only slightly higher than the 5% rate for the first generation in 1989 [4].

2.2. Giving Additional Sources of Support to Schools

To close the gap between lower-income families' children and richer families' children, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was published to give additional sources of supports support to schools that incorporate lots of lower-income families' students. NCLB also pushed the progress of improving education to avoid the achievement gaps between students who have different backgrounds. There is another innovation to assist lower-level education students: Charter Schools. Charter schools are public schools but operate autonomously, and charter schools are set for narrowing the gap between students and improving average learning skills. In the DeAngelis, Corey, and DeGrow, Ben's article "Doing More with Less: The Charter School Advantage in Michigan. A Mackinac Center Report", statistics show that charter schools are cost-effective and it can increase students' expected lifetime earnings by several important findings: Due in part to funding differences between the two, the average public charter school studied is 32% more cost-effective than the average traditional public school in the same city. Additionally, when comparing the return on investment for taxpayers based on expected lifetime earnings for each student, the average charter school generates about \$2.63 more than the average traditional public school [5]. Also, KIPP contributes as well. KIPP is known as The Knowledge is Power Program, and it's a network of all universities for lower-income families in the United States. In Kevin Mahnken's article, he emphasized an action done by KIPP to call on Congress to make cheaper tuition and did more in career suggesting for students, so there are a lot of usable sources to support lower-income family students [6].

2.3. The Evaluation of Teachers' Efficiency

Besides these strategies, the evaluation of teachers' efficiency is also important for the government to exclude worse teachers. For example, the government used Value-Added Models to test teachers' levels. It measures in several ways, such as using a statistical approach to test teachers' impact through student learning. The VAM can explain school and classroom characteristics as well, so it's a widely used measurement for teacher evaluation.

3. Evaluation of the Strategies

3.1. Advantages

So, all the strategies mentioned above are beneficial for narrowing the gap between low and high-income families' students, and advantages of these policies include that they can help to level the playing field for lower-income students, provide them with the resources and support they need to succeed, and give them a better chance of breaking the cycle of poverty. For instance, the NCLB program successfully improves test scores, that is because sometime lower-income family students have the ability to study, but they don't have an appropriate chance, and the NCLB program gives them assistance to study, so the test scores increased. Also, NCLB improves teachers' quality by supervising the quality of teachers. There are other advantages as well, such as charter schools having more comprehensive services for lower-income family students by providing their parents with more school choices, so that parents don't have to pay too much for their kids' education.

3.2. Disadvantages

But not all strategies are always beneficial and effective, there are some disadvantages of these strategies, such as some of them will have low efficiency or high cost, and there are not so generalized strategies that cannot be applied to every lower-income family as well.

First, some free or less expensive schools don't have equal educational levels compared with. Since expensive private schools have higher-income family students, the school receives more money than free or less expensive schools, so they may have better educational facilities or teachers. Instead, those free or less expensive schools don't have economic sources, they don't earn money from students' families, and they almost all depend on governmental assistance, so it's normal for them to have inequalities. The education level of a school depends on teachers' competence or efficiency, schools' teaching facilities, the curriculum's diversity of schools, and so on. What's more, the after-school programs may be difficult for lower-income families due to the geographical location, available sources, or cost issues. For example, there are lots of students who want to take after-school programs, but some students live far away from school, and taking after-school programs will cause them to miss the bus back home. Moreover, after-school program is not free, and it's stressful enough for students to afford the tuition, so extra programs may not be possible for them to take though they want to. Additionally, programs may have limited capacity and may not be able to accommodate all families who are interested in enrolling their children. This lack of access to after-school programs and preschool programs can have negative consequences for children, particularly for those from low-income families, as it can limit their opportunities for learning, growth, and socialization. Also, not all students can experience the benefits brought by these strategies. For instance, if charter schools hire enough students, they will begin to pick students through the lottery, so it's unfair to lower-income families to some extent. In that case, not all students have a chance to experience the government's beneficial strategies. In Chris Dew's article discussing charter schools' advantages and disadvantages, it describes several disadvantages such as messy processes in admission since a huge number of applicants, significant differences in schools' quality, and this article also includes cases that people who run charter schools may do a fraudulent thing with school funds [7].

4. Suggestions

Although there are still difficulties and inequalities between lower and high-income families' education levels, the government has never given up assisting lower-income families' students. One of the reasons why the government is so insistent is America needs more graduate students from the college. Research can prove this in the article "Higher Education in California: Increasing Equity and Diversity" by PPIC Higher Education Center, and the research about the future population of college-age, indicates that most people will come from lower stratification, such as Africa Americans or Latinos. They became the future population of college-age because higher-income level students receive enough education, and since the country needs more persons with ability, lower-income students' education seems more important [8]. This proves that people who can attend college are not monopolized by higher-income families' students, and PPIC also analyzes the reason for this transition. According to the PPIC study, this demographic change may have a significant impact on the state's future skills shortage in the labor force. California has to raise the proportion of underrepresented students who get college degrees in order to avoid or at least narrow this imbalance [8]. So, assisting lower-income families' students is a necessary choice for the development of America.

Education needs the government to play a role since education is beneficial for the future of a country, and with the help of the government, education will have fewer obstacles and also help develop society. Also, governments indeed take some actions to reduce the inequalities in education and the disadvantages of strategies used for assistance. In the article "The Role of Government in Education: Ensuring Equity and Access for All" written by Kyle Curtis, it describes many actions taken by the government. First of all, for after-school programs, if students live far from their schools, the author indicates that the government should build schools in every neighborhood, even build kindergarten to help students from childhood, because high coverage of schools can eliminate students' worries about whether they can arrive at home in time, and this is also beneficial for reducing the cost of transportation. To build schools, the government is supposed to cooperate with the community to ensure which districts need schools most, because usually the government cannot see all problems comprehensively, and communicating with communities helps the government understand the situation. The government also makes free and inclusive education to assist lower-income family students. Free education can reduce social disparities and inclusive education can provide comprehensive and quality education to all students are disabilities. Besides building schools or formulating education, the government can also provide financial assistance. For those families who cannot afford the tuition, the government can assist them with financial aid, and offer educational loans as well with low-interest rates. In this case, the role of the government is important and absolutely necessary, because the government is authoritative, and has the ability to construct or build things that normal institutions cannot achieve [9].

To be honest, education is an important key to the whole development of a country, because education connects closely to economic and social systems, and if the education level deviates, the country's development will be slowed a lot. In the United States, there are a lot of Latinos or African Americans, so it's a challenge to increase this group of people's college enrollment rate, and the government has worked on controlling inequalities of education level until today.

As a matter of fact, it's a lot of work to do, but besides those strategies, there is another side to assisting lower-income education. The government can assist them with poverty, healthcare, housing issues, or less tax to reduce low-income families' financial pressure. Examples of these assistances can be found in the article "Various Supports for Low-Income Families Reduce Poverty and Have Long-Term Positive Effects on Families and Children" written by Arloc Sherman, Danilo Trisi, and Sharon Parrott. Medical care was provided in 2010. Similarly, 66 million People had access to Medicaid in 2010 for inexpensive health care. Children are much less likely than adults to lack insurance because of Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) [10]. What's more, lower-income families' tax load decreases as well in the article, A four-member family with a full-time minimum-wage employee has raised from 61 percent to 87 percent of the federal poverty

level thanks to the EITC and CTC, which both offset payroll taxes [10]. In this article, the author also describes that many issues, including repeated moves, school changes, and homelessness, that can hinder children's academic progress are eliminated by housing aid. This housing assistance reduces the dropout rate of lower-income families' students in college. Assistance in daily life such as housing, tax, or medical issues can have the same impact as assistance in education policies mentioned above. Also, some economists at different universities, examined school data from a significant metropolitan school district for grades 3 through 8, as well as the matching U.S. tax returns for the households in the district. Studies on moms and kids were done to support this theory. After studying data on mothers and their children for nearly two decades, the researchers concluded that the additional income from the EITC significantly improved students' scores on the General Math and Reading tests [10].

5. Conclusion

This study focuses on inequalities in education by analyzing what strategies the government took first, such as the Title I program, NCLB, and VAM models, and they are respectively financial assistance, supports to school, and teaching efficiency evaluating strategies. The study also analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of these strategies and provides examples of them. At last, there are some suggestions for deficiencies. To sum up, the government did a lot on assisting lower-income families, and this assistance make huge progress for the whole country's development. Although there are deficiencies, the government is trying to control the bias to the minimum and increase the lower-income families' level in different ways including living conditional assistance besides educational help. But there is still a lot of work to do, and the government and policymakers are supposed to introduce new changes as time passed and assess the efficiency of the strategies to ensure that not only higher-income families' students are able to have a good education environment, but also lower-income families' students receive fewer inequalities in education and finally reach equality comparing to higher-income family students. This will help develop a more inclusive and equal society, and beneficial for the long-term development of the whole country, since the United States is reaching for a balanced country.

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