Inequality in the Los Angeles Unified School: Ethics and Public Responsibility

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Author’s contribution
The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

ABSTRACT
This research paper defines the problems facing Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The district does not address the concerns of lower-class students, and as a result their education system is inadequate. It is urgent for people to recognize the assistance that the district and each of its schools can provide in order to abet the process of educating children from lower-class neighborhoods. This paper explains the situation existing in LAUSD, examines different alternatives to improve education for lower-class students, and suggests a course of action.

Keywords: Lower-class; upper–class; Los Angeles unified school district; unfair.

1. INTRODUCTION AND SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM
Los Angeles County is one of the most populous counties in the United States. According to Chu [1], Los Angeles is the biggest and second-largest school district in the United States, organizing 700,000 students and including more than 24 cities. The Los Angeles Unified School District is surrounded with upper-and lower-class neighborhoods in which the district provides education and learning skills to students. The students attending Los Angeles Unified School District is comprised of 73% Hispanic, 11% African, and 9% white students. According to Rossi’s [2] survey, 60% of student skills are...
insufficient and 30% of the staff is needed to improve their schools serving lower-class students in the demographic region. In addition, lower-class schools face low educational performance, poor service, and inadequate administration. These high percentages result in dissatisfaction and poor qualifications among students, including the skills and other factors influenced by their educational systems.

Policy makers bear responsibility for the issues that students of lower-class neighborhoods face [2]. The inefficient rules implemented by policymakers had a significant impact on lower-class students in terms of the quality of the educational system, and put students at risk. Since they are not successful, then they do not achieve academically, and the schools become negative, which then reinforces low self-esteem and decreases their ability to learn.

Consequently, the purpose of this research is to identify the problems that afflict the Los Angeles Unified School District and to discuss how inequality impacts lower-class neighborhoods by identifying the stakeholders involved and the problems that exist in the district, suggesting various possible alternatives that could help alleviate these concerns, making a decision that will satisfy them, implementing necessary recommendations, explaining foundational theories, and deciding upon a course of action.

These important issues help readers to identify the problems within the Los Angeles Unified School District and engage in critical thinking and understanding the problems in the school district so as to understand the factors and alternative decisions that could possibly help educate the public about current shortcomings within the LAUSD. First, however, the authors will present a concise review of the literature on the LAUSD.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the education systems are established to properly educate K-12 students, arming them with the skills they need to succeed in life. However, In Los Angeles County, upper-class students have wonderful schools and services with superior quality, instructors, and principals. Contrarily, poorer neighborhoods and lower-class students do not enjoy the same benefits, instead receiving inadequate schools and services with the less qualified instructors and principals [2].

The Los Angeles Unified Public School District is an extensive one that covers a wide range of different income groups, communities, and kinds of neighborhoods, which include a diverse number of different ethnic groups. This is a problem that cannot be solved, so the alternatives to reduce its harm and negative impacts on the victims, the lower class children of the school district, have to be considered from an organizational model perspective with an emphasis on evaluating along the dimensions provided by the interdisciplinary framework of decision making.

These poor neighborhood schools cannot finance their increasing needs to improve and maintain their facilities and hire better teachers because testing scores prevent any additional funding that the higher performing suburban schools consistently receive in ample amounts on an annual basis. The money flow from the government infuses the high performing schools in LAUSD while bypassing the neediest schools in the inner city neighborhoods of Los Angeles. The federal, state, and local governments essentially reward successful, high performing schools with additional funding and expanded special grants and opportunities that the underperforming inner city schools in Los Angeles never receive because of their failure to provide the necessary qualifying performance scores from their student body.

The student body has entered a paradoxical dilemma since they are unable to ever become high performers on the qualifying tests for the extra money from the government because of the lack of quality teachers and proper learning materials.

The guiding decision-makers at the school, county, and state level display bias and concentrate on the educational systems where the upper class students live, abandoning students in poor neighborhoods. This happens when individuals make decisions in LAUSD without further improving the system. County, state, and public officials and their agencies are unquestionably involved and working to make the education program and system operate in this capacity, and they bear responsibility for the decisions and rules in the education system. They rely on school district supervisors for advice. These officials shape the educational system and offer statistics to increase the amount of money they receive based on progress.

This problem within the LAUSD is deeply embedded in the administrative framework. School supervisors in rich areas act in the
interests of their own schools independent of the system as a whole, and as a result, these supervisors recommend policies that will boost their money and funds from the government to upgrade the services, schools, facilities, teachers, principals, and materials. Additionally, school supervisors in poor school district systems also act in the interest of their schools and struggle to improve their funding. Unfortunately, poorer schools fail and have poor performances on national test scores, which lower their influence and skills to persuade the county and state to pay more attention, distribute more funds, and lend more overall assistance to these schools. Also, they are unable to participate in the way that richer schools do in providing motivation for their principals and instructors to work for the school.

Ultimately, supervisors in poor neighborhoods have no power to convince the county and state to improve their funding because of the poor testing scores, so they cannot gain qualified instructors and principals in their school districts because of the threat of the environment. The inequality of the LAUSD system derives from the distinctive differences between poor and rich neighborhoods responsibility.

According to Hill [3], accountability is one of the most important and powerful tool of the administration, board, and district. This is always true, whether the administrative, district, and board of education need it or not.

2. LAUSD ACCOUNTABILITY, LEGITIMACY, REPRESENTATION AND ALTERNATIVE DECISION MAKING

The Los Angeles Unified School District’s accountability provides theories of actions. For example, the power that board has will not be shared in the school and the school is not capable of providing assistance such as improving the LAUSD and services or overcoming the inequality of instructors and principals, except when it receives aid from the board and state, which can limit the success gap and have the faith and power to provide service for poorer performing schools. When the board starts to build up theories of action, it supports and must obviously, clearly, and stably account for any action, and require empowerment and honesty toward the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Just as there are educational standards that State of California must establish and maintain for the district of Los Angeles, there must also be a procedure detailing how schools and staff account for the success or lack of success of students in the classroom. Educational accountability is a matter of ethics. It must be fulfilled in successful ways. Funds for LAUSD must be equal for all schools, because they obtain such finances from taxpayers, and the state has a responsibility to equitably distribute taxpayer dollars in a way that tangibly benefits the public. It should also be a crime to waste taxpayers’ money for poor test scores and promoting children who have not been properly taught or do not fully receive support from the state and county. Therefore, the state should account and bear responsibility for providing the best for the entire district. However, it is not only educational professionals that have this responsibility. Parents also have a vested interest in making sure their children meet educational standards, and that schools are being held responsible if children do not meet those standards. The parents and the school should represent their responsibility and effort in a way that the children will absorb the products of the educational system in an appropriate matter.

The legitimacy of an organization derives from its ability to perform. The legitimacy of the State of California comes from the government’s ability to improve the educational system of the City of Los Angeles. The state must address student wants, and carrying out their needs through school administrators and principals. Los Angeles lower-class school districts face major problems, and by having legitimacy rooted into education system in school district in Los Angeles, there is a sense of proper direction in public agencies that can be lacking when there is no prominent emphasis on reason as a source of legitimacy. Spicer and Terry [4] argue that administrative rules and procedures have to be limited and that they have to involve the use of reasonable discretion by the decision makers who establish rules and procedures. This freeing up of the use of reason in administration situations is seen by these authors as being more possible through administrative rule–making, rather than legislative directives.

The first alternative ethical framework and decision is a fund for each student that should be increased in order to make a significant change in the school and educational standards. This framework is chosen due to the lack of resources and insufficient funding for low-class schools in LAUSD. Inadequate funding results in students’ poor performance. If this proposal goes into
effect, educational agencies at local, state, and federal levels will increase funding for each student. Thus, the educational system would clearly reform, restructured and reshape to become more equitable in regards to money, the quality of instruction, the quality of teachers, and the quality of facilities to follow this standard of increasing funds, the state must pass a major educational reform bill to completely change the priorities of public administrative agencies when running operating LAUSD in lower-class neighborhoods by increasing the amount of money for each student to $2,500. This represents the first alternative.

This alternative decision framework would work successfully. According to CTBA [5], Flat Districts in Illinois faced similar major problems in their schools; low-income students' performance proved poor, and their test scores were low from K-12. Without having enough suppliers, inadequate campuses and facilities, and the least competitive teachers and principals, students were in jeopardy of failing and dropping out. Based on their instructional expenses, each student was funded at $5,000. The quality in terms of education performance was low. When increased by $2,000 for each child, a total $7,000 per student that was suggested by the state instructional expense, the school district underwent a significant change and student performance greatly improved. The school district in Flat was able to reform, restructure, and reshape. With sufficient funding, quality of instruction, teachers, and facilities all improved. These results occurred as a result of the incremental increase of funding by $2,000 for each student.

The second alternative would be to provide a new organizational strategy and structure for the whole unified school district in Los Angeles to improve inner city, low income area schools through collaborative, cooperative agreements to delegate more funding, learning materials, and quality teachers to poorly performing schools. Mandates have to be issued to schools in middle income and higher income neighborhoods stating that these institutions must share their resources, including books, learning materials, tutors, and teachers, with the poorest schools in the district in a new collaborative framework. By legally making these more successful schools share their learning materials, tutors, and teachers, the poorest schools in Los Angeles will immediately benefit from the influx of the elements needed for a higher quality education and a better overall learning environment. This proposal would seek to make the successful, higher performing schools lend their teachers and tutors to these poorer schools and bring about a collective ethical, socially responsible effort on the part of the high performing schools to improve these worst performing schools in the school district.

This proposal, when put under the scrutiny of the interdisciplinary decision making framework, is more feasible, logical, economical, and philosophically more sound since it aims to improve the quality of the education of the students first and foremost. These students are being harmed every day because they lack the opportunity in their classrooms to have quality instructors committed to bringing the best out in every student. The poorest, worst performing schools in LAUSD are isolated, alienated, and prohibited from any additional grants and funding for any achievements by their student body. These children can immediately psychologically and socially benefit by collaborating and cooperating with the richer, more successful schools in regards to having their teachers and tutors come to help and also have students from these inner city schools attend classes at the suburban schools. The collaboration and cooperation could begin with a teacher exchange and then evolve into a more extensive exchange of activities, classrooms, teachers, and benefits. Schools in poorer areas would be uplifted by this collaboration and cooperation across LAUSD, and they would immediately improve their learning environments. In addition, this proposal is cost effective because of the sharing of responsibilities and tasks across various schools, rather than integrating more instructors and resources.

The biggest barrier would appear in the form of resistance to change. The richer, more successful schools would have to abandon their reluctance to help other schools and become more cooperative. The isolation and individualism of schools in the LAUSD is so entrenched that resistance would possibly become magnified in some areas where people do not want to use any of their teachers and resources for poor, lower income schools in the inner city.

3. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The second alternative is superior to the first alternative because of its advantages of improving the learning environment and
educational quality for students in low income, poorer neighborhoods in Los Angeles. By having a new mandated cooperative and collaborative agreement in place district wide, the more successful, richer schools will be required to share their resources, tutors, and teachers with the poorest inner city schools. This sharing of resources and teachers would immediately improve low income schools in the inner city as well as provide an opportunity for young students to receive a higher quality education in their own classrooms. By having these teachers come into the poor, low income schools, children can have the chance to be challenged and receive high quality instruction from true, motivated teachers who love their profession. Sharing resources would also give lower income schools the badly needed funds to make the structural improvements in facilities and sports fields. Also, sharing learning materials would immediately benefit the students in low income schools by improving the quality of education.

When applying the interdisciplinary model of decision making, this second alternative is superior because of its focus on children, human resources, rather than physical resources, or facilities. Targeting children with this program of newly mandated collaboration and cooperation among all schools in Los Angeles will allow children to immediately benefit from it and receive improvements in the areas where they need it in their schools: learning materials and teachers. This improvement in their learning environment can change lives for these young people, and they will also perceive these new alterations in the public education system as providing them with new opportunities to learn and be challenged to show their true potential.

Education from kindergarten to twelfth grade is fundamental and obligatory. However, students from the lower class receive inequitable treatments within the Los Angeles County Unified School District, when compared to their middle- and upper-class peers. The county, state, and board of education are accountable for providing assistance and services required to lower-class students in LAUSD to adequately reflect the basic needs of the students attending schools in the district.

The concern of the lower class in Los Angeles cannot be disregarded. The county, state and board of education must take serious actions to improve the situation of lower-class students. Better service in terms of equality of the education system, and successful educational environments, should be provided. It is imperative that alternative decision making be implemented, and a course of action such as the ones suggested in this paper should be reinforced in order to improve Los Angeles Unified School District.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES