9 How schools can raise property values

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Introduction: a tale of two Lincolns

Modern children spend most of their time in school and are involved in organized extra-curricular activities. Contemporary society, especially the US, emphasizes childhood as a “race” where winners and losers are predicted at early ages.

In a study of two Elementary schools in Compton and Cupertino, California, the value of high-ranked schools is attested. The Compton school, with a racial mix of African-American (45%) and Hispanic (55%), where all students are labeled “socioeconomically disadvantaged,” had a low composite score of 583. Cupertino, where houses run for a million dollars on average, is predominantly Asian (72%) and white (25%) and had a high composite score of 920. It is obvious that obtaining a Cupertino address is sought after and that “good” schools raises property values. The comparison reveals how US schools are deeply segregated by income level.

Universal schooling emphasizes the divide between the poor and the wealthy. Access to public schooling has increased, yet an educated workforce has not. Village societies hesitate to sacrifice their child’s work for schooling that does not seem to produce benefits.

The rise of schooling

Schooling most likely began among scribes in ancient Sumer with knowledge being passed down from father to son. Greece created the “humanities.“ Educated boys were thought to be socialized into the ideal adult role. Elite Roman society expanded the Greek pedagogue’s duties to school preparation that is associated with parents and pre-schools today. Aspirant Roman citizens viewed schooling as a means for social mobility and started to send their boys to school.

Schools fell with Rome, but were re-introduced with the Renaissance and Reformation. School and teacher productivity increased with the invention of the printing press and allowed more to be educated. Evidence that not all children benefited formal education became apparent in the US at the turn of the century when compulsory schooling spread.

Asian education has existed since Confucius which created the earliest meritocracy. Education focused on staffing civil service through open competition for success in grueling examinations. Formal education has spread across the world with the spread of Asian and Western civilizations.

Bush schools

“Bush schools” focus on indoctrination, not education such as religious instruction or cultural values. Hence there were no formal, educational institutions in the village to serve as models for an indigenous version of public schooling. Instead, schools based entirely on foreign (Western, Chinese) models were introduced and have not been very successful.

A divide between everyday knowledge and academic knowledge was apparent. However, villagers often resist and resent the incorporation of local cultural material into academic lessons.

Village schools

Western and Asian-style schools now exist in all areas of the world. However, a lack of resources and insufficient teacher training provide for a poor education. Village schools often look like “bush schools.” Instruction is often in a language incomprehensible to the children, a lack of resources perpetuates the lack of success of the school, and parents are often uneducated and cannot help their children learn what is taught in school.

Children do not generally use at home what they are taught in school. On the other hand, when universal schooling is redefined to promote rural development, villagers resent the vocational curriculum because they view education as a means for upward-mobility. Schooling is NOT seen as the means to directly improve village life but, rather as the avenue towards higher education, urban wage employment and the remittance of wages back to the village. But this outcome is exceedingly rare.

Village children are often physically punished in school. As a result, parents distrust the schools, and it often takes years for students to complete one year. Poor teacher training and instruction in a foreign language may also increase the number of years a child attends school.

Schooling prevents the child from learning to adapt to the village environmrnt and does not often adequately prepare a child for life in town. However, children frequently view school as an

alternative to village labor, and a means for economic success, although rarely realized.

Modern society depends on parents-as-teachers for educational success. Governments must provide alternative education services, such as pre-school, to compensate for parents' inability or unwillingness to act as a teacher.

Schooling and children's work

Parents are reluctant to send their children to school and lose a worker. However, when the modern world is introduced, they often see schooling as a "road to riches." Parents believe their child will not live in the village, and are therefore unconcerned with their lack of cultural knowledge.

In contrast, for those who have been exposed to schooling for a longer period of time, they rarely see the results they had hoped for. With high opportunity costs, sacrificing a worker, and low returns from schooling, enrollment drops.

When parents' expectations of government schools are not met, they may opt to send their children to private schools. The rise in popularity of private schools has increased the gap between the wealthy and poor. When resources are aimed at private schools, the elite who attend, are more likely to succeed.

Parents as teachers

Village parents do not often engage in direct instruction or teaching. Learning is expected through observation. Consequently, village parents struggle to act as teachers by using direct instruction.

Western parents, like teachers, offer children praise which may increase a child's interest in learning.

School's focus on individualism, in contrast to village focus on collectivism, creates conflict. Cultural routines serve to raise productive community members. However, a lack of school routines creates conflict with the parents-as-teachers model.

An educated woman

Historically, education served only boys. Schooling that was directed towards girls prepared them for society and insured their virtue. In modern times, girls still pursue further education to "make themselves a more attractive mate and more competent mother."

In villages, schoolgirls are often treated with disdain and discouraged from continuing on in their education. However, children whose mothers have attended at least some school, are more successful students.

Schooling has greatly affected the increase of women's status in the West. Around the world, women prove to be successful students and may even be favored in the "information society."

Bedtime stories as cultural capital

Reading bedtime stories seems to increase a child's interest in reading. Where literacy instruction in the home is rare, often among low-income families, it is more difficult to succeed in school. Middle-class parents often engage their children in bedtime stories and other school readiness routines that prepare their child for success in school.

Attempts have been made to transfer these routines. However, many obstacles hinder the attempts to spread these practices. Many parents do not see themselves as teachers and do not deem it necessary. Parents who did not succeed in school are reluctant or disinterested in teaching their children.

Pre-school programs have been created to compensate for a lack of parent teaching. Although some prove to be highly successful, many serving poverty-class children are inadequate. Teachers are often from the same community as the children, and use the same parental teaching methods that prove to be ineffective.

“Dry cleaner” parents and “helicopter” parents

Many parents are not involved in their child’s schooling. This may be because parents may have been unsuccessful in their own schooling, or consider teachers responsible for their child’s school success. These parents who expect their children to be successful without their help are referred to as “dry cleaner” parents.

“Helicopter” parents, on the other hand, are so involved in their child’s activities that they often let them dictate their schedule. They give praise and are determined their child will contribute to society, contrary to working-class parents, who practice dominance over their children.

Among helicopter parents, fathers are more likely to be involved. Parents may be more concerned about “downward social mobility” and remain highly involved in their child’s education, especially when they are at the bottom of their class.

Parents often let their children’s education dictate their lifestyle. Many middle-class families select their homes based on the quality of education available, also insuring a supportive peer group for their children. These tactics are evident in immigrant families in the US, however, they may invest less in girls’ or “learning disabled” children’s education than Mainstream American parents.

Against all odds

Indian immigrants have proven to be highly successful in Western schooling. Punjabis in California have experienced upward mobility because of their hard work and determination. Although Punjabi students face social discrimination and cultural clashes in school, their parent's rigid expectations have insured school success.

Punjabi parents dictate much of their children's lives. Punjabi students cannot work, date, or participate in extra-curricular activities. Punjabi children are expected to assimilate into the school system while maintaining their cultural values and traditions, unlike other minority groups in the same schools.

Other immigrants with high aspirations have proven to be academically successful as well. Immigrant parents in the US impose strict rules and expectations to avoid "living in limbo."

Examination hell

The success of Asian immigrants in US schools may be rooted in the Confucian legacy of examinations, or “examination hell.”

Mothers are expected to devote their time to insuring their children’s academic success. Mothers select toys to stimulate learning and invest in extra-curricular activities. She interacts with her child’s teacher and school, along with other parents to insure awareness of academic opportunities.

Japanese mothers are indoctrinated into the role of helicopter parent. Mothers are expected to adhere to school suggestions and requirements, as well as prepare their child for school with structured teaching at home.

Nerds, Jocks, Fluff Chicks, Breakers and Homeboys

Unlike East Asia, strong academic curriculum has not been the focus of education in the US. School is often perceived as a means for strengthening character, not primarily obtaining knowledge. The demand for conformity with cliques may create a diversion from academics.

Mainstream American parents invest time and money in extra-curricular activities and material culture that serve to improve their child's social standing. Research has shown that athletic ability is directly correlated with popularity.

Minority students see "good" students with "acting white." Minority students who excel at academics are often condemned for deviating from group norms. Peer pressure often deters individuals from doing well in school, even among Asian students whose parents did not instill academic values at an early age.

Navajo students, who did not succeed athletically or academically, formed a clique based on break-dancing to express their distinctiveness. Groups that do not fit into common cliques may form their own to express success in alternative ways.

Not all minority students fall prey to the "not acting white" mentality. Those who succeed in school generally have strict parental supervision and friends in similar situations.

Moving towards a meritocracy

Two avenues through education exist in the USA, and the disparity between the two is ever increasing. “Lombard Street” avenue is favored by those who view schooling as a means for upward mobility. In contrast, those who do not perceive schooling as essential or beneficial favor “Easy Street.”

Government’s response to Easy Street has been the installation of competency tests, moving the USA towards an Asian-style meritocracy. Funds will be directed to those who will benefit the most, not the neediest, creating a triage effect. Only children whose parents are involved will benefit from these policies, intensifying the lack of success in schools where children do not receive passing grades.

The other side of the coin

Head Start was created to provide poor children the opportunity to be adequately prepared for schooling. However, public pre-schools are often of low-quality and have not provided positive results.

Social and economic disparity increases with poor school programs. Although money seems to inhibit providing high-quality pre-schools, which have proven to break the poverty cycle, other countries have provided early and effective universal programs with modest budgets.

Prisons are filled with undereducated adults, which may be attributed to the lack of early, effective school programs. When the government decreases efforts to use schooling to reduce economic disparity, they may be contributing to the increase of those in prison.