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Historical Influences and the Continuing Pursuit of Knowledge Equality

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Abstract
This paper explores the historical contexts of the educational system in how they have come to influence and shape the modern system. By outlining ancient civilizations and colonial ways of life, the foundations of the current educational system become clear. Students today struggle because of the past, and grapple with many of the same issues, such as underfunding and segregation of schools. This paper examines the problems of underfunding and segregation as well as the obstacles children face because of them. All children, because they are human, deserve a quality education without those obstacles. Injecting true equality and a concept of human dignity into the modern educational system will address these issues and allow children to succeed. Lack of resources, overcrowding, and substitute teachers prohibit students from learning and cause high drop out rates, leading to incarceration and dependence on welfare (Kozol, 1992; “City Year”). With a firm knowledge of how the past shaped the system, this paper looks to expose chronic issues within education and suggest a different approach to children and schooling to allow all to learn and achieve.
Every child in America spends a rather significant number of years of their life in school, learning what politicians and directors of education boards have deemed important to teach the next generation of citizens. For millennia, schools have functioned in concert with the family, as humans are social creatures and interact in units (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While families are foundational to the education of a child, many found that schools were equally, if not more important, in teaching students. Yet, as America has grown and evolved, so has the school system, sometimes leaving some children behind. Students who perform academically, remain in school, learn, and achieve. These students have less of a chance of being arrested as a juvenile (Yun, Cheong, & Walsh, 2014). Further, those students who graduate high school are three times less likely to be unemployed and on average earn one million dollars more over their working career than students who drop out (“City Year”). Yet many students drop out of school prior to High School, and most of those children come from schools that are racially segregated (Kozol, 2005). All children deserve an education that will allow them access to resources available currently only to students who are somehow deemed more fortunate. Those who are granted access to these resources may be educated enough to stay out of prison, graduate high school, and hold a working class job. Government spending must be spread equitably across all school districts to achieve success in lowering dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. All students have potential and it is not only just but actually intelligent to educate every child well and have them graduate.

From very early in human existence, young children were encouraged to learn from others in their family or social unit (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). People are social beings and interact continuously. As humans in 5000 B.C. began to interact, trade, and conquer, they formed a civilization known as Sumer. This culture accumulated wealth quickly due to agricultural
inventions and drove the development of a system of writing to organize the empire (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). By 3500 B.C. the Sumerians had around two thousand pictographs that constituted their written language, which evolved five centuries later into their wedge shaped cuneiform. This language was used to keep records of trade, develop laws, and encourage communications in other areas (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As this civilization began to expand, their need to teach people how to read and write became crucial. This was driven, in part, by the desire to pass on the collective knowledge of the civilization to following generations. Apprenticeship was inefficient and did not train a large number of people in the same way, thus the concept of the school came about (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). In 3500 B.C., this social institution brought together large numbers of children and taught them how to read and write efficiently and with reverence (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This language was seen as a gift from a god and learning it a sacramental act; therefore this process was approached with utmost reverence (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The regard early civilizations had for the learning process set foundations of respect for scholars and institutions of education over time.

Because most educational opportunities in Sumer and other early civilizations were closely linked with religion, many early schools were located in temples and teachers were priests (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). For example, in Egypt, many schools were of religious affiliation and taught boys of elite status reading, writing, astronomy, law, medicine, and arithmetic (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Though these schools and the schools of the Sumerians regarded education highly, there remained a vast majority of their populations that were illiterate. Both civilizations focused primarily on educating the small class of elite and wealthy citizens, and both made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for people to move among classes. Sumer and Egypt began to decline, and their education systems mimicked their societies’ declines at
large: the heads of government began to only administer to themselves and not to their tasks and means became confused with ends (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Educational systems, when ends are not explicit and tasks are neglected, fail the student and society. The disintegration of these systems set the stage for the current systems and their own struggles with undefined goals and cast aside tasks.

Other societies had an impression on modern systems as well. In early China, the same importance and reverence was placed on schooling and it was developed in a similar way, from a growth in agriculture and trade that led to expansion of the society (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Unlike Sumer and Egypt, the Chinese system of schooling involved examinations, tests given to students about important material and culture, which allowed for a significant amount of class mobility (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The elite students sometimes had to allow for boys of lower classes to join due to their examination results (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This allowed for new, fresh minds to inject themselves into the upper class, causing revitalization (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). After a few centuries, the examination system began to crumble as corruption, favoritism, and patronage entered (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Chinese provide an excellent example of a system that worked extremely well to renew positions of power by allowing social mobility to inject lower classes into the upper ones. However, this system eventually failed, falling victim to favoritism and corruption. A main function of education is to renew social intuitions by allowing new minds in, but if those systems are corrupt or nonexistent, those institutions and those students do not benefit (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Children are the next generation of lawmakers, business leaders, and educators and can help evolve both society and the educational system through an infusion of new ideas into a tired and exhausted system in
need of fresh thinking. Educating them properly was and is crucial for societies throughout history.

One of the most influential societies in schooling derived their educational system from the Sumerians and Egyptians. The Greeks’ educational system, which was then adopted by the Romans, was passed through to the Western World (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Greeks, consisting of the Spartans and the Athenians, had great influence on education. The Spartans, a society constantly at war, were preoccupied with educating their youth in strength and valor consistent with service in the military (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Their educational system was an extension of their government, a military that served the state absolutely and wholeheartedly (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). At the age of seven, boys were taken and grouped into “herds” and taught not literacy, but stoicism, violence, and allegiance to the state (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They were beaten and gave beatings, and at age seventeen were released into their own military unit that competed in sports and physical contests (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). After three years in these units, the students entered the regular army and were expected to serve the state until they turned sixty (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They were kept away from their families as the state was the most important aspect in a Spartan’s life, not family loyalty,

“When sons went off to war, Spartan mothers were expected to hand them their heavy shields, which they would have to drop in order to run away [from battle], and tell them to return bearing their shields or lying dead upon them.” (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990)

The women were educated similarly to hold the state in the highest regard and to strengthen their bodies for childbearing (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Sparta achieved their goal of complete loyalty to the state through their education system that extended far beyond childhood. Their entire society was rooted in developing children and maintaining adults that were ready to die or kill for the state with no remorse in violent wars. Their system, an extension of their military
government, was excellent at cultivating men and women oriented toward war, combat, and victory.

While Sparta was a leading power because of their ability to educate and maintain strong, victorious armies, Athens challenged Sparta for their ranking around 500 B.C. (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As Athens developed, their class system did as well. Wealthy landowners were revered and anyone who performed labor was looked down upon (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Although this system was rather rigid, the development of an alphabet that was simpler than that of the Sumerians and Egyptians allowed for most of the Athenians to become literate without much trouble (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This allowed for a more democratic system of government to emerge as well as for the ignorance of the masses to be combated (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). In keeping with the class system, boys of noble birth were assigned a pedagogue, usually a slave, which was that child’s first teacher and later assistant for homework (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The child either was given a private tutor or sent to school where he learned to read, write, and swim from teachers who were individuals that charged fees and held classes in their homes or in corners of marketplaces (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As the school system evolved, teaching became specialized. There were teachers for reading and writing, teachers for music, and teachers for gymnastics (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Further, society continued to develop and teaching followed. Private teachers began to travel around selling higher education and became known as Sophists (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They were very exclusive and charged high fees, basically excluding anyone but the very wealthy (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). In the higher education sphere, Athens produced three of the most influential teachers known: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Socrates was known for his unique teaching method, known today as the Socratic Method, where he would question his pupils on
their most basic beliefs (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Plato, a student of Socrates, was greatly influenced by his teacher. His writings display the Socratic Method and an analysis of many problems facing the common Greek (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Around 387 B.C. he founded a school, the Academy, and began teaching the young Athenians the ways of Socrates, and became known as one of the most influential teachers in history (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Plato taught Aristotle, another one of the most revered and influential teachers and philosophers in educational history. He wrote hundreds of volumes that contribute to the educational advancement of today, and his most prominent contribution was the development of the science of logic (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). He tutored Alexander the Great and, with monetary contributions from Alexander, founded the Lyceum, a school that focused on the natural sciences and was successful for almost 900 years (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990).

Though Greece was a powerhouse of learning and military might, it eventually fell to the Romans. Sparta all but dissolved, yet Athens remained an epicenter of schooling and higher thought that persisted through Roman rule (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Romans adopted the Athenian method of education because they saw it as more sophisticated and valuable (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). When a child of nobility was born in Rome, they were given to a wet nurse, who was responsible not only for taking care of their basic needs, but for educating them as a mother would, until puberty (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). A pedagogue worked alongside the wet nurse, teaching literacy and physical well-being (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Roman children were raised by a wet nurse and a pedagogue, learning from them and developing familial bonds with them (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Depending on the wealth of a family, a tutor might have been employed to further educate the children, and, as in Greek society, the class system was deeply embedded in the education system and the quality of the tutor
established the status of the family (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Most families couldn’t afford a private tutor and so settled for schooling, usually taught on a street corner or in a teacher’s home, where both Roman boys and girls were taught reading, writing, and counting, for a fee (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Girls and peasant boys dropped out at twelve years old, while elite boys continued until sixteen with Latin Grammar Schools, and then further in Schools of Rhetoric (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These Schools of Rhetoric were to teach vocations and higher education to the men who were privileged and wealthy enough to attend (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While the Romans had an educational system that mimicked the remarkable and successful Athenian structure, they never created or sustained schools (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They didn’t make literacy a primary concern, formal schooling was not required, and there were no official school buildings, leaving the system up to simple, free-market transactions (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Payment wasn’t regulated, teachers weren’t trained, and this led to a huge gap in educational opportunity; many children couldn’t afford education (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Roman education was very private and exclusive, and inequality in opportunity thrived (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While public education today does not require tuition, many students feel the effect of the lack of funding that ultimately inhibits their educational opportunities. Similar to the Roman education system, systems today have under-qualified teachers and little to no money to give students educational opportunities to compete with the elite that, because of their status and wealth, have access to resources and courses that give them an advantage in society (Kozol, 1992).

The Roman’s continued with this ailing system of education until they began to fall. In the late fifth century A.D., they fused with Germanic and Barbarian societies and had trade, urbanization, and social order decay (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As Rome fell, it became
influenced by the spread of Christianity, which greatly impacted education in the long run (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). At first though, there were no Christian schools, just Christians who taught and learned in schools (Power, 1962). The early Church could not be concerned with running institutions for learning for a variety of reasons, such as not wanting them, not seeing them as important, or not having the time or energy to run them, but as Christianity began to take root and develop in Rome, it slowly spread in the educational sphere (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990; Power, 1962). Primarily, Christian education was left to the parents, which worked well with the current Roman attitude of education, maintaining as much privacy as possible (Power, 1962). Education still remained as it had before the fall, literacy and counting taught by teachers who questioned their pupils in unofficial buildings; but Christian education began to be taught for preparation of sacraments, and as those classes began to be streamlined and utilized more frequently, Christian instruction became more commonplace (Power, 1962).

While instruction on Christian belief and preparation for sacraments was important, during this period, classic Roman education and Christian instruction were exclusive and were dissolving any sort of system of schooling altogether (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As stated before, while most classic schools, founded from Athens and left over from Rome before its fall, focused on literary mastery and questioning of beliefs, Christians feared this would lead to paganism. But, this classical education, reading and writing, literature and grammar, was important to Christians as well as pagans. Christians discovered that, if their children were to continue with their education and study literature, why study the pagan myths when they could study Christian stories (Power, 1962). Thus, “the determination of the Christian, as… was illuminated for him by the Church, was to superimpose religious truths on humanistic education” (Power, 1962). As time progressed, Christians developed different ways of educating their youth,
marrying their beliefs with the Greek system of learning. They founded monastery schools in the sixth century that encouraged work, piety, and discipline (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These now valuable institutions served as large centers of Christian education, consisting of schools, libraries, and scriptoriums that produced manuscripts that maintained Christian scholarship (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These monastery schools did much to combat illiteracy among the general population as well as among the bureaucrats, who were increasingly comprised of Church officials due to Rome’s collapse and the injection of Christianity in that vacuum (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Eventually, parents could pay a fee for this coveted monastic education, so only wealthy children received this education and they did not have to become a religious (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While girls and boys could receive this education, only those who could afford it were given the opportunity (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Further, boys who displayed exceptional brightness were sent to a bishop in what was later called a Cathedral School (Power, 1962). They served as an apprentice to the bishop and learned many things typically taught in higher education, and when the bishop felt ready, he ordained them (Power, 1962). These Christian institutions were fountains of learning and education, and worked hard to impart knowledge on many children, yet as with the other prior civilizations, wealth and status injected themselves into the system and created an unequal field for students to learn, leaving many illiterate and uneducated, while the privileged few flourished with an amazing education.

Over the next few hundred years, education from monastery centers fell into a rigidity that robbed students of individuality and prevented flexibility (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Then, in the 1300s, the Renaissance flooded the educational system with new innovations that sparked growth and development (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The invention of printing made the dissemination of ideas easier and more efficient, allowing more people access to
communications, people were focused on individual expression and studying the classics, which became known as humanism, and the Church accepted these new passions and began to incorporate humanism into their teachings as well (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Protestant Reformation proved to be a strong opponent to the Christian church, using urbanization, industrialization, and new wealthy classes to bolster their movement. They squashed the monasteries and Cathedral Schools while creating secular schools that educated almost everyone: town schools for the general student, and Latin Grammar Schools, focused on humanistic studies, Latin grammar, and literature, for the students who displayed exceptional capabilities (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Most of these new schools born of the Reformation were free and open to boys and girls, though girls received a slightly lower level education (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As history continued to progress, so did the education system, with its focus moving away from the private and more toward the public (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Further, as Europe expanded west, across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, there were suddenly many new colonies with children to teach. New systems had to be established to provide education to all of those American children.

The American colonists had no direct connections with Europe, so they were able to make some of their own choices regarding educational systems, yet European influence was strong. A main pillar in early American education was the transmission of faith to children (Power, 1962). Yet, because of the differences in location and beliefs, many colonial settlements took on their own idiosyncrasies in their educational styles (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Puritans in New England held fast to their deeply engrained religious beliefs, established secondary schools, and eventually founded Harvard College in 1636 (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Puritans were committed to reasoning and literacy as a means to understanding
salvation and knowing God’s word (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). But, because of their belief that children were born in sin, their laws did not require students to attend school, only that there be a place for students who wished to attend and that these places be funded by others, not the government (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). When these schools were established, in 1647, they had to charge tuition, but by 1750, all schooling had become free for any child by making it tax-supported (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While Puritan schools were established with a general consensus unknown in the founding of modern public schools, the establishment of institutions of learning that are free for any child because they are funded by others, by tax payers, mimics modern systems (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Public schools established years later aimed to control and unify many different viewpoints, while the Puritans were all of one like mind, yet the simple system was still the same. While the strict Puritans believed in following the rules outlined by their beliefs as one unit and wholeheartedly, middle colonies, such as Pennsylvania, were influenced by the Quakers, who preached tolerance above all and believed in universal salvation (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Because of the colony’s religious freedom, many education institutions were backed by a wide variety of religious organizations (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Because of this, there was no consensus in this area. All schools taught different things and were stretched for resources that were too scarce to supply all the different denominations (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). There was no feasibility in making a common educational system in this area due to the influence of religion and different backings (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990).

In a very different vein than the other two segments of colonial America, the South mimicked English schooling practices the most, favoring the education of only the elite (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Because of the evolution of the South as a farming colony, a two-
class system emerged, consisting of wealthy plantation owners and laboring lower classes. The white elite encouraged English schooling methods, having their children taught by private tutors and kept in upper-crust circles (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As a result, most children who were born and grew up in the South could not read or write, and most efforts to start schooling failed (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Black southerners were rarely given any education other than a re-integration into a culture and belief that they are inferior to whites (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They were “educated” that their status is not equal to that of their white counterparts purely because of the color of their skin, and that “education”, along with the weak educational systems that existed at the time, set the South up for years for failure and struggle in the face of equitable and quality education (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Racial inequality and poorly organized systems continue to plague not only the South, but also all of America, and have roots in colonial education.

While structural organization of the colonial schooling systems drove the continued development of education systems and greatly influenced the modern system, the evolution of thought also pushed schooling to continue to progress in colonial America. The Age of Reason brought with it skepticism and the belief that thinkers of today could change their condition and position in this world right now, which was radically different from the previous Age of Faith thinkers, who believed they could bring about change in the next life (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This pushed its way into education gradually, suggesting that children learn from experience and they could learn how to affect change in their lives (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The Age of Reason, or Rationalism, had strong roots in logic and the scientific method and many thinkers of the day opposed this harsh and technical approach to teaching (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). In response to Rationalism, Romanticism took hold, suggesting that children were born
good and were corrupted by society, claiming that they should be educated as far away from society as possible (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This method focused primarily on emotion and Romanticists’ personal beliefs of right and wrong and of human nature (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990).

All of these thinking developments and structural influences began to shape how America viewed education. When the Constitution Convention met, they excluded schooling as a fundamental right to all Americans and did not consider it a function of the Federal Government, especially because apprenticeship, a viable option for many American children, was such a strong system (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Yet, many leaders believed that free public schooling to all children was crucial to self-government (revitalizing a system with fresh minds) (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Many Americans struggled to make this vision a reality, gaining ground only in New England where the foundations were already laid (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Elsewhere, many parents were still employing private tutors or sending their children back to Europe for schooling, so the public education system outside New England was synonymous with poverty (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Many public schools today, where parents are unable to afford private education or funds to augment their student’s learning, still suffer the same stigma of poverty that public schools in post-revolutionary America did. Along with the struggle of funding, religious barriers became a major issue in the founding of public schools. Because most schooling was rooted in religion in colonial America, creating a public system backed by a religious organization would seem natural. But the whole nation did not practice the same religion and the Constitution forbade a single state religion, posing a problem for public schooling as to how it was to run and which religion was to be affiliated (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Over the next 150 years, the nation and the education system would cleave a
large gap between church and public schooling to rectify this issue (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Further, the customs of the people didn't promote nationwide schooling for the masses. Farmers and artisans found schooling unnecessary for their children simply because of their worldview: education had very little value on the farm or in the market, where these people had been performing successfully for years without literacy (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Much of what those children needed to know for their intended profession could be taught and learned from apprenticeship or simple cultural exchanges. Education battled through many obstacles to become what the system is today. The widespread necessity of public education took time to be realized, but it eventually became rooted in the American way of life.

During this period of solidifying education in America, there were many transitions and transformations that the United States schooling system went through. During the 1830s and 40s, a shift characterized by more public schooling than private happened through the states allowing more public schools to be created, and later the encouragement of the creation of these schools by the states (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As the schools grew and the states became more involved, they would eventually require the designation of various school districts and set up minimums for tax rates and curriculum (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These designations and minimums, while keeping students accounted for, sometimes proved to be more detrimental than helpful later in the development of the American education system. As America was sorting out the logistics of a national public schooling system, the population and demographics began to change in the country and inevitably affected the schools and how they were organized and run. In the early to mid 1800s, immigration, urbanization, and industrialization all took a front seat in shaping America, and many citizens and lawmakers strived to create schools that would foster, “… the common bonds necessary to support new and vital conceptions of democracy that were
emerging in America” (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These schools were targeted for all people, not just the common person, and got started in New England as that area was predisposed to accepting this model from their roots of Puritanical education. As their religious beliefs allowed them to openly accept a common education for their children, society was becoming increasingly diverse, and New England needed some support in making these common schools happen.

Horace Mann entered the education realm and is known today as the “Father of Common Education” (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). He knew that many schools were unfit for students, and even worse, the public generally believed that common schools provided students with an inferior education (Power, 1962). Armed with this knowledge and his excellent power of persuasion, he set out for change. He was able to get hundreds of new schools built in Massachusetts. He was also able to get the school term extended, the teachers paid more and trained at a “normal school” he created, and infused the widespread use of the best European teaching methodology (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). All of these changes were to combat the poor conditions and beliefs that surrounded common schools at that time.

As these schools were becoming more commonplace and educating more students, many became wary of how they were teaching their children. Mann was a strong proponent of individualized instruction and he created many of the first schools, yet many had agreed to common schooling because it was going to reinforce democratic ideals by educating students together, so there were some tensions that existed in foundational teaching methods of early common public schools (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Slowly, many began to favor these schools as something that was necessary to democracy and the American way of life by many spreading slogans such as, “…the best police for our cities, the lowest insurance for our houses, the finest security for our banks, the most effective means of preventing pauperism” (Clabaugh & Rozycki,
This slogan rings true even today. If students remain in school and graduate at grade level and on time, they have a significantly less chance of becoming a criminal or dependent on welfare (“City Year”). The people in the 1800s, while it took a little convincing, began to see the value and power of education. So by the Civil War, the North was populated with thousands of free public elementary schools and only the South continued to maintain a private schooling model, which was a harbinger of the many problems the modern schooling system has today (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990).

As these schools were becoming more popular due to efforts in spreading the value of education, immigrants posed an issue for many Americans, as immigrants were different and difficult to absorb into the current school system. The biggest dissention was the Protestants versus the immigrant Catholics, who urged the Protestants to pull religion out of public schools and leave religious instruction for the family and Church so that their children could attend common schools (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). When the Protestant Americans refused, the immigrant Catholics had no choice but to create their own schools, under the authority of the dioceses (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). A couple of more groups of people were either excluded from common schools or opted out of the system, setting up the foundations of inequality present today in modern public schooling. African Americans were segregated or excluded from common schools and did not have the means to organize their own system, so they generally went uneducated (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The wealthy, while they had the opportunity to send their children to public schools, chose not to and continued to send them to private tutors or to private schools as they had for years previous (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). The creation of the common school system was to provide education for all people, and many were excluded or opting out, and those who were opting out, the most influential of Americans, did not care about
the quality of education or operation of those systems. The goal was not being realized and was
setting up a situation of segregation and entitlement that pervades the modern system and causes
unequal educational opportunities for students today.

Another critical issue that plagued the early common school system was the fact that
many parents didn’t feel it necessary to send their students to school at all. Because their
worldview consisted previously of apprenticeship and marketplace, these people needed their
children at home for income and support. As the public education system became more rooted in
society, however, authorities felt it necessary for children to attend school. Mann suggested
compulsory attendance, and in 1852, Massachusetts adopted this policy (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990).
It required students ages eight to fourteen to attend school twelve weeks of the year, and
by 1918, every state had some sort of compulsory attendance law requiring students’ attendance
(Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). These laws originally caused class sizes to swell and left teachers
burdened with large classes crammed into rooms designed for much smaller ones (Clabaugh &
Rozycki, 1990). But as the states gained control over these laws, the ages of entrance were
manipulated, penalties were enforced, and the school year grew longer (Clabaugh & Rozycki,
1990). These laws became the norm for students of America, and while most students were now
attending public schools, some were in Catholic schools, and others were in private schools.
African-Americans were segregated, and some were given exemptions because of disabilities
(Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While these compulsory attendance laws were designed to have all
students attend public schooling, there were exceptions, and it led to an unequal modern system
that many students are struggling with today.

As time progressed, America was becoming more industrial and urban, with a whole new
wave of immigrants flooding the country and education system. Because many now had faith in
the system and that it would promote democracy, they hoped that it could aid in the assimilation and control of this large influx of students that needed to attend school (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). But instead of absorbing these students, the schools became overwhelmed due to the fact that the children required more resources than they had or that citizens were willing to allot, and many teachers were left with large tasks they were unable to accomplish in school buildings that were overcrowded, unsanitary, and poorly ventilated (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). As the administrations of the schools failed, so did the students. Many students began to drop out because their education did not match what they were learning at home or on the streets, yet schools didn’t seem to be concerned with these failures and continued to power ahead with larger and larger systems, a problem that has persisted into the modern era (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). With larger systems came different ways of teaching. Until this point, the teachings in schools were following historical lines carved out by the Puritans and the Protestants, deeply rooted in passing on religious beliefs. With the injection of immigrants and the surge of many new public schools being built, the way Americans looked at children and how to educate them came under debate. As schools struggled with overcrowding, staffing issues, unsanitary environments, and the like, the method of teaching was one of rote memorization and inculcation of facts (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Echoing Rationalist and Romantic debates, this memorization and inculcation gave way to a humanistic approach. John Dewey became a forerunner in a practice called Progressive Education, where the dignity of the individual, or the whole child, is taken into account when educating (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). He maintained that students should learn by doing, and that schools should be cooperative places of growing and living, not submission and obedience (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While this was something that many schools looked to adopt, many factors such as labor laws and lack of
resources inhibited this system from taking root (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). This issue bred social efficacy, an idea that gave rise to achievement tests to measure students’ movement through the system and tracking (grouping students based on skill level), two practices that ultimately led to division within schools and districts that are present today and that pose significant problems for students as well as their educators.

Schools continued to go through various reforms spurred by immigrants, thinkers and culture. As schools became more and more streamlined, many citizens pushed for higher education to be made available for free through taxation. High School, Junior High School in the early 1900s, Middle School in the 1960s, and Community and Junior Colleges in the 1950s-80s all began to crop up as more people yearned for education (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). Further, many laws were passed that attempted to extend education to various groups in America. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka that schools in the South become unsegregated, because segregation based on race is unconstitutional (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). They again ruled in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education in 1971 that busing was an acceptable way to integrate schools and that any new building projects could not be used to continue segregation (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 1990). While these court rulings aimed to target racial segregation, in response, many white families fled to the suburbs and schooled their children there, effectively perpetuating segregation in schooling into today (Kozol, 2005). These two large developments, higher education and an attempt at integration, changed the face of modern schooling.

The Modern education system in America has evolved from this history and is a product of it, taking many lessons from the past, and growing from it. Unfortunately, not everything has changed for the better and the system today remains stuck in some troubling areas, stifling the
opportunities of students today. Stated previously, schooling has historically been reserved for the wealthy, those who could afford private schools or tutors, with the climate of society recently changing somewhat about public schooling and its quality of education. This thread of wealth and funding causing disproportionate opportunities and quality of education has not dissolved with time, it has only burdened the system, its students, and its teachers with troubles. Jonathan Kozol committed ten years of his life to visiting the poorest school districts in America and uncovering their struggles and issues in relation to their funding. While visiting East St. Louis, he found that only $2.40 is spent on food for a child per day (Kozol, 1992). A hungry child cannot learn. Students in South Africa attend school on empty stomachs and have to put medicine in those stomachs, get sick and must be sent home for days at a time (M. Brandt, personal communication, May, 2013). Hunger interrupts the learning process. Back in East St. Louis, because such little funding is given to the district, many teachers have to be laid off. The teachers who remain are “permanent substitutes” that make as little as $10,000 a year and are teaching swelling class sizes because there aren’t enough teachers for the amount of students attending (Kozol, 1992). The teachers who are strong enough to remain earn around $38,000 a year for over 30 years of teaching, whereas if they moved to a suburb of St. Louis, they could make over $47,000. While some do not care about the salary, it is difficult to draw fresh, new teachers into these districts and keep them there with the funds available. Further, the governor will not give money to this district, saying “they must help themselves…there is money in the community” even as nearly a third of the families in the city live on less than $7,500 a year, 75 percent of its population is on some form of welfare, and the Post-Dispatch refers to it as “America’s Soweto” (Kozol, 1992). Without funding, the district cannot provide resources to the students, who suffer greatly because they do not have lab equipment, VCRs, adequate texts, etc.
East St. Louis is not an exception to the rule. In the city of Chicago and the suburbs surrounding it, the same funding divide is causing students to suffer. The inner-city schools of Chicago in 1989 spent around $5,500 per high school pupil compared to a wealthy suburb to the North, which spent about $9,000 per high school student (Kozol, 1992). While overall funding has increased, there still exists a significant gap in spending for the area’s poor students and its wealthy pupils. This exists in part based on a statement made previously. As white people began to migrate out of cities and into suburbs in the South, they took their wealthy, privately educated tendencies with them, thus perpetuating a segregated system, not only of race, but of financial status as well. Funding for schools relies in part on a tax of local property (Kozol, 1992). This tax depends upon the taxable value of homes in a given district, and with the historically white, wealthy, land-owners migrating into their own districts (suburbs), and their homes often worth more than $400,000, there is a larger sum of money drawn from taxes for that student population (Kozol, 1992). Conversely, the thousands of poor students that live in the inner cities are funded by their poor families, and while their families tend to place education high on a list of taxable priorities and tax at higher rates, they end up with far less money and their families with far less tax deductions than those wealthy families in the suburb districts (Kozol, 1992). As demonstrated, poor education is a generational issue. This lack of funding impacts the student in a variety of ways. Classes are overcrowded, sometimes two or three grades to a room, teachers are not engaged or not present at all, students have no resources and cannot get the help they need from faculty and staff (counselors to suggest college are overburdened with 400 plus students), and because of this, Chicago schools see around a 60 percent drop out rate for students prior to High School (Kozol, 1992).
New York and New Jersey mimic these statistics as well. In Long Island, Towns like Great Neck and Manhasset spend $11,265 and $11,370 respectively per student, while Roosevelt and New York City spend $6,340 and $5,590 respectively per student per year (Kozol, 1992). These staggering disparities seem glaring and unavoidable when discussing issues that face students, but when questioned, most regard money as something that does not provide better education (Kozol, 1992). Kozol quotes the Wall Street Journal, which discusses increases in funding for students:

“Money doesn’t buy better education… the evidence can scarcely be clearer… Increasing teachers’ salaries doesn’t mean better schooling… more experienced teachers don’t mean better schooling. Hiring teachers with advanced degrees doesn’t improve schooling… Big budgets don’t boost achievement… It’s parental influence that counts.” (Kozol, 1992)

What the Wall Street Journal fails to mention is that the increases in funding happened in wealthy districts at the same rate as poorer districts, leaving those districts with still less funding and an inability to catch up to wealthier districts (Kozol, 1992). It also claims that parental involvement is attributed to achieving students. It explains the excellent performance of wealthy students by claiming that their parents have the value system to cause them to spend more, and it’s those values that improve schooling, not the amount of money they pay (Kozol, 1992). Yet, many poor families, as stated earlier, tax themselves more to provide their students with as many opportunities as they can. Yet, students receive few resources and dropout frequently.

Authorities who claim that funding has nothing to do with the success rate of students need only to look at the pupils in the poorest districts whose parents are taxed heavily, who have little equipment, few teachers, and rarely graduate.

All these schools that receive significantly less funding have a major factor in common that is rooted in history - segregation. As mentioned previously, public schooling was reserved for the poorer; many white, wealthy, landowners flocked to the suburbs and began their own
systems for their children. While laws do not segregate these schools, they are by fact, _de facto_, segregated. By the year 2001, 87 percent of public school enrollment in Chicago was black or Hispanic and in New York City, roughly 75 percent (Kozol, 2005). Desegregation was affirmed in 1954 with the Supreme Court Case _Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka_. It did not fail, and actually did a lot of good for many students, until standards-based reform and school choice, two of the largest educational reforms in recent history, allowed segregation to reenter the system (Kozol, 2005). Poor schools are full of poor students who are disproportionately black and Hispanic because of the ability the system has to segregate districts. Only 15 percent of primarily white schools have more than half their students qualify for free or reduced price meals, while 86 percent of black and Hispanic segregated schools have students that are just as poor (Kozol, 2005).

This segregation intersects funding and affects opportunities students receive simply because they are of color and attend a segregated school that receives little funding, but it also affects the students as people. Students and administration are aware of the segregation, knowing that the busing law that was passed in 1971 as an effective means of integration holds no weight in their lives. Kozol interviews a principal in a New York school district about racial segregation and its role in his school:

“'I ask him, 'Will white children and black children ever go to school together in New York?' 'I don't see it,' he replies... 'I simply do not see white folks in Riverdale agreeing to cross-bus with kids like these.' I ask him whether race is the decisive factor. Many experts, I observe, believe that wealth is more important in determining these inequalities. 'This...would not happen to white children.'" (Kozol, 1992)

As so bluntly observed by the principal, these conditions that result from a lack of funding are reserved for black and Hispanic children. Though race is the primary factor working in this, white children would never experience that fate, funding is so closely intersected the two can hardly be separated. This close integration is derived from a history of slavery and discrimination
of people of color, followed by a developing education system that followed suit. White children have a significantly lower chance of being underfunded simply because of their status in society. Black and Hispanic students are aware of this and it affects them significantly. Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, an expert on race relations and the development of racial identity, explains that when children are young they need affirmations regarding their color to develop a positive self-image (1997). Yet, segregation, as stated by the court in 1954, “generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone” (Kozol, 2005). Most executives today support “realistic” goals for students coming from these schools, only spending enough money to teach them skills to meet the supposed limited career opportunities these low-income children have (Kozol, 1992). These pupils should be trained only for entry-level positions, as someone has to fill that job (Kozol, 1992). Putting children of color in segregated schools they are aware of and knowingly giving up on providing them with anything more than vocational training does not send out a positive self-image. Rather, it destroys students’ views of themselves as students, people of color, and future citizens. There must be language of empowerment for these students, for all students, as children are next in line to revitalize social institutions by becoming administrators, educators, and business leaders. If there is oppression of a whole section of individuals, many are being silenced when they could be the voices of renewal, just as the Chinese believed was important in education.

As shown, many lawmakers and executives try to provide reasons as to why these students of color are given so much less and why they cannot be provided with so much more. However, when studying one of the most profound philosophers on ethics, Aristotle, it is displayed that just action leads to equitable treatment, and what is happening to these students is
far from equitable. Justice, as defined by Aristotle, is not concerned with a quality that an act possesses, but is a state or condition from which an activity flows (N.E. V, 1, 1129a3). In other words, an action is not just simply because it is, but because it came from a choice based on right reason that was oriented toward the good. To become a just individual, one must be rightly ordered and habituated in virtuous activity and therefore contribute to just social arrangements (N.E. V). While Aristotle claims Justice is primarily individual, it has a social component. The just individual is by himself set apart by his habitual right thinking and reasoning, but his just behavior is communal because his conduct toward his neighbor is just and it assists to order well the good of the whole (Catechism). The well ordering of the good of the whole brings about the concept of social justice, which is the, “continuity of the personal and the social” and cannot exist without a just society, which in turn cannot exist without personal virtue (Demarco, 2008). These two ideas are not mutually exclusive, therefore in dealing with others there must be friendship, the willing of the good of another and sharing in that goodness, and that must stem from individual just actions and virtues. The students of color in America’s most impoverished schools are not receiving the best, and little can be said for people making just choices surrounding their lives. It is not “good” for them to be in overcrowded classrooms with substitute teachers and few resources. They cannot achieve. There is a lack of willing the good for these children, creating an unjust system where some students get more and some students get less, and those who get less suffer greatly for it.

A modern interpretation of this concept falls into Catholic Social Teaching’s three central foundations, which are human dignity, the common good, and preferential treatment of the marginalized (Eick & Ryan, 2014). Many scholars touch upon the concept of human dignity as an inherent quality a person possesses that affords them respect. Aristotle, as mentioned
previously, states that friendship cannot exist outside of rightly ordered communities, because those communities grow from personal virtue. Yet, friendship can still exist because one is a human being. “Insofar as he is a slave, then, there is no friendship with him. But there is friendship with him insofar as he is a human being” (N.E. VIII, 11, 1161b7-8). The Catholic Church echoes this because she believes that humans are the pinnacles of creation. Because of this they deserve respect and reverence and a willingness to enter into friendship purely because of that. As stated in the Vatican II document, Gaudium et Spes (as cited in Brouard, n.d.), everyone must consider, “their neighbor as another self and [take] into account first of all his or her life and the means necessary to living it with dignity” (1965). This is applicable even in educational history, in dealing with enslaved, and eventually freed, black children who were excluded from common schools. Their humanity reserved them the right to be respected enough to be educated as their peers, yet they were not. And these children of color still struggle today. The overwhelming majority of them are located in underfunded, inner-city schools. They are poor themselves and are segregated from white students. They receive sub-standard education either because there are no teachers to teach or executives push for a training curriculum that costs less money. Yet they are human just like the white students and just like the executives and deserve all the opportunities that those people received, because that is what they are due and what is just.

The idea of the common good relates to the individual as well as the whole. To be a just person, and in turn a good friend, one must will the good of another, and further will the good of the whole. Orienting toward the common good is necessary for right actions to come about, and these are only dictated by rightly acting people, who are willing the good of others. The willing of the good of others stems from right friendships rooted in human dignity and social justice. As
mentioned prior, willing the good of the other flows into willing the good of the whole, for justly acting individuals contribute to just communities. If lawmakers or executives are willing the good of only a few students, they must will the good of all students. Just action should not be reserved for only a few, as that is not a just community. To truly create a just community, all individuals must rely on just virtue and action, give everyone their due, will the good of the other, and that will in turn grow into the just whole.

Finally, the third pillar of Catholic Social Teaching is giving preferential treatment to the marginalized. While at first glance this may seem unjust, in the context of social justice, giving everyone their due by willing the good of the other, this is just and fine. People who are marginalized are, by definition, not being given what they are due. The children of East St. Louis or Chicago are marginalized; they do not have adequate resources to learn, teachers to teach them, nor classrooms to sit in. They are human and are not deserving of this, yet this is what they receive. Students in wealthier districts have multiple sports fields on which to play, state of the art labs in which to study, and access to teachers and counselors to help them reach their potential (Kozol, 1992). Giving each district the same amount of money each year seems equitable, yet, as stated before, does not close the gap in funding. It does not allow the impoverished districts to catch up. This is what is means to give preferential treatment to the marginalized. The wealthier districts do not need $10,000, while the poorer districts might need $20,000. Kozol explains this perfectly when referring to students in Chicago and New Trier, a school in an adjacent wealthy district, “Equity, after all, does not mean simply equal funding. Equal funding for unequal needs is not equality. The need is greater in Chicago, and its children, if they are to have approximately equal opportunities, need more than the children who attend New Trier” (Kozol, 1992). Giving the students what they need, what they are due, is essential for
equitable funding and just relations in education. Achieving this gives all students, because they are human, opportunity to succeed in a just community.

There has been a wealth of information regarding the impact schooling has on children. Quality education that graduates students at grade level and on time sets children up for great opportunities. As far back as the early 1800s, people were saying that education was the best solution to myriad issues plaguing their society, and today studies show that academic performance is inversely proportional to juvenile arrest rates (Yun et al., 2014). If students are given all the right tools and resources, such as lab equipment, teachers, proper classrooms, they can learn and achieve. It is seen in wealthier districts. Those students learn and achieve with access to all of those resources. The goal is to keep students in school, because if they drop out, they are eight times more likely to end up in prison, three times more likely to be unemployed and cost American society $1.6 trillion more in social services and taxes over their lifetimes (“City Year”). Of the large quantities of students that drop out each year, 50 percent of them come from only 10 percent of America’s schools; inner-city, underfunded, segregated schools (“City Year”). If funding is focused toward these schools to provide these children with resources, they will have better opportunities to succeed and graduate on time and on track, significantly lowering their chances of entering the Criminal Justice System and putting pressures on the Social Service System. These students are likely to hold jobs, and can then own a home, pay taxes for their children’s schools, and break the cycle of poverty. This not only benefits the children, but benefits society. While there may be stifled geniuses in these schools, simply giving all students a chance at succeeding in American society is fair and right.

From the earliest times, education has struggled to become and remain an important and equitable institution in the lives of all children. While many now realize the significance of
quality education for children, many obstacles lie in the way. Segregation, that has roots in slavery and the organization of early systems of education, and funding, that is derived from the towns in which the schools are located and affect resources, both hinder education in a way that sets children up to become dropouts, prisoners, and welfare dependent. All children deserve the same educational opportunities because of their humanity. The children in underfunded schools are no less human than any other child, and deserve all the same resources and chances. Therefore, they must be given enough to get their circumstances matched with the children who are already succeeding. They may need more, yet that is true equality; they will be equal in their opportunities, resources, teachers, and buildings. This equality will benefit not just these students, but all of America in reducing spending on Social Services and Criminal Justice because those children will not be in those systems. They will be earning money, paying taxes and working to break the cycle of poverty that has plagued the educational system for years. If racially segregated, underfunded students can be given all the same resources that students in wealthier districts have, there is a good chance that there will be graduates, working individuals, and a new generation of empowered youth.
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