

I. ORIGINS, ESSENCES, PROS AND CONS OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EQUITY

Origins

The Britannica Concise defines equality as an “ideal uniformity in treatment or status by those in a position to affect either.” Equity is defined as “justice according to fairness, especially as distinguished from mechanical application of rules under common law¹.” (<http://yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia.index.html>). The first courts of equity appeared in England in the 14th century, which provided solutions not available in the courts of law and involved issues other than damages such as “specific performance of contractual obligations, enforcement of a trust, restitution of goods wrongfully acquired, imposition of an injunction or the correction and cancellation of false or misleading documents” (<http://yahoo.com/reference/enncyclopedia.index.html>). Over time the equity courts established their own rules, doctrines and precedents which began to rival the law courts. Thus, in response to this conflict the two courts were joined with the Judicature Act of 1873, which is the basis of the modern court system that applies “both legal and equitable principles and offer both legal and equitable relief.” During the same period courts of equity began to appear in the United States and by the 20th century courts of law and equity had combined into a single system.

Many argue that the concept of equality of opportunity is the founding principle of the United States. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created

¹ Common law is distinguished from other forms of judge-made law from parallel court systems. In medieval times, for example, common-law courts were secular, as contrasted with the ecclesiastical courts of the Roman Catholic church. Common-law courts did not deal with merchant law, which was administered in mercantile courts, or with maritime law, administered in the admiralty court. Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

equal with certain inalienable rights,” however, this concept originally applied only to white males. It did not include women or minorities. The concept of social equity within the United States can be argued to have emerged on the political scene as early as the colonialization of the Native Americans. Many “16th-century Spaniards agonized over the ethics of conquest. Important Spanish jurists and humanists argued at length over the legality of depriving the Native Americans of their land and coercing them to submit to Spanish authority. For the Native Americans, however, these ethical debates did little good (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002).

Social equity issues concerning African-Americans began to appear more prominently with the emergence of the Abolitionist Movement during the 18th century. “Eminent statesmen from the earliest period of the national existence, such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton, regarded slavery as evil and inconsistent with the principles of the Declaration of Independence” (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002). The Society of Friends also known as Quakers strongly opposed slavery and protested against it. The Presbyterian Church also made several formal declarations against slavery between 1787 and 1836. Thus anti-slavery views continued to grow.

The major force behind the Abolition Movement was the American Anti-Slavery Society founded in 1833 by W.L. Garrison. “It sought an immediate end to slavery in the U.S.” and “promoted the formation of state and local auxiliaries to agitate for abolition” (<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia.html>). On January 1, 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by Abraham Lincoln, which granted liberty to about 3,120,000 slaves. “With the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution in 1865, slavery was completely abolished” (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002).

Another major event concerning social equity was the Women’s Suffrage Movement, which began in the United States during the 19th century. During the colonial period American women were perceived as unequal to men and thus lacked the capacity to reason. Based on this belief, women were denied the right to vote. However women argued they were inherently equal to men and thus should be permitted to vote as men did. Feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster, and Ernestine Rose, and men sympathetic to the cause like Thomas Paine argued that women have the right “to share on equal terms with men the political privileges afforded by representative government and, more particularly, to vote in elections and referendums and to hold public office” (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002.). It wasn’t until 1919 that the United States Congress passed the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, even though, “many individual states had granted women this right decades earlier”(Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002).

The Civil Rights Movement also played a pivotal role concerning the concept of social equity. It was “first and foremost a challenge to segregation, the system of laws and customs separating blacks and whites that whites used to control blacks after slavery was abolished in the 1860s” (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002). Although the movement was a “political, legal, and social struggle to gain full citizenship rights for black Americans,” it was also a struggle to achieve racial equality and improve the political and economic conditions of minorities” (Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002). As a result of the Civil Rights Movement the U.S. government implemented

several affirmative action programs and issued several key legislative acts, such as The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, in an attempt to rectify injustices of the past against minorities.

Overall, social equity involves safeguarding “protected classes,” which “are defined by state and federal law and include: race, color, national origin, religion, creed, gender (sex), age, disability and veteran's status. These groups have been designated as "protected" because of certain "injustices" which have occurred against the members of these groups in the past and present. Social equity is the means used to help to redress these injuries. The term also covers the protection of certain "fundamental" rights which we all enjoy as citizens of a free society.”(http://www.ship.edu/admin/social_equity/whatis.html). Thus social equity can be defined as...

“...nothing more than doing justice to our fellow employees, students, or acquaintances who have, as a result of membership in a protected class, suffered injuries now or in the past. These injuries take many forms but generally consist of some form of harassment or discrimination which has caused the victim to suffer a loss of the equal rights and opportunities that we all cherish as American citizens”(http://www.ship.edu/admin/social_equity/wh/whatis/html).

Essences

Social equity includes issues like virtues, justice, fairness, equal moral value, resource ethics, human rights, etc. Efficiency includes issues like economic efficiency, productivity, material well being, etc. and freedom includes liberty, pursuit of happiness,

individual choice, voice options, etc are the main elements when dealing with this concept (Falkenberg, 1998).

As mentioned earlier the concept of social equity refers to a set of standards that apply to our personal and social relationships with other individuals and groups. These standards consist of rights and duties that apply to members of certain protected classes. These protected classes include race, color, national origin, religion, creed, gender, age and disability. These groups have been designated to as protected because of certain injustices that have happened against members of these groups in the past and present. Social equity is the means used to help rectify these injustices. Social equity covers the protection of certain fundamental rights, which we all should enjoy as citizens of a free society. Social equity leads to the expansion of opportunities and the creation of more choices not only for those in need, but for the broader community as well. Furthermore, the concerns in social equity concern equal treatment, demand, need, preferences and willingness to pay.

In addition, since change is inevitable and necessary for the sake of the future generations, social equity includes the commitment to the achievement of a dignified, peaceful and equitable existence and equitable opportunities (Faith, 1999). Max Weber seems to be most accepted within the fields of sociology and other social sciences in regards to dealing with modes of inequality. Weber believed that we are living within a sort of “iron cage” which cannot allow us to look beyond rules and regulations of our capitalist system. He emphasizes the importance of power relationships in society and states that those who hold the positions at the top of the power distribution are the people who hold most of the power in society and thus make the choices for the direction and

reproduction of the entire society. The majority of society who resides at the bottom of this power distribution has limited power and is unable to make choices that would lead them to their aspirations. The core attributes of the economic system are alienation and bureaucracy, which create a dehumanizing effect on the characters within the system. Weber states that there are three dimensions of inequality: class (which correlates to economy), status (which correlates with the social aspects of society) and party (which correlates with the society). The meaning of justice is correlated to the “question of fairness in distribution, where justice cannot be achieved by distributing the same, standard good to all social classes”. Therefore, in order to achieve equality, unequal means need to be employed (Connell, 1993). Finally, social equity and justice must prevail in order to help formulate a collective identity that affords freedom to all members of society (Lillian, 2000).

“Most governments have been based on the denial of equal rights; ours began by affirming those rights. They said some men are too ignorant and vicious to share in government. Possibly so, said we; and by your system, you would always keep them ignorant and vicious. We propose to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier altogether,” – Abraham Lincoln 1858.

The key to "restoring social equity," is to shift the nation's philosophy of social protection "from emphasizing rights to clarifying responsibilities" (The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1998).

Pros

There can be many reasons why one may deem that social equity has positive as well as negative effects on a global scale. We need to understand the extent to which social equity has positive features on society. Social equity can be looked at as the fairness in the delivery of services to each and every citizen regardless of the economic resources or personal traits. Each individual has a right to be given equal treatment by the political, economic and social fabric that we are all interwoven into. Due to the suffrage of minorities as well as women it is evident that the provisions made underneath the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments were not being sufficiently carried out to include the god given rights that the our species had since the start of the history of the United States.

Not only does social equity serve as a positive feature by allowing everyone to be treated equally and fairly, but it also brings the private industry into the picture.

Whereas, private industries were dominated by WASP (White, Anglo, Saxon, and Protestant) males, they excluded Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and women of all races.

Though stockholders interest must remain paramount to the company, social equity has opened the private sectors eyes to the moral and ethical responsibilities they have to contribute to society at large.

Historically traceable since the start of mankind race has been utilized to divide and conquer people of all walks of life. It has also been used as a method of hierarchal structure where WASP was placed at the top of the spectrum and others arranged along their supposed defeated patterns of development. With the division of races breeds the hatred of racism, which has been cultivated to suppress those outside of the top of the hierarchy leading them to believe that they are inferior to the likes of those always in

power. With social equity this hierarchy begins to dissemble. It is with social equity's distribution that everyone can see that the word equality is not just an eight-letter word but also a substance by which all should listen and adhere to in order to bring about productive change to those who have been suppressed.

The preamble of the constitution states that: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." We cannot live within a state of the union that is not united in equal justice and we can never expect to attain a perfect union where everyone does not have the equal distribution of services or the ability to attain them. Therefore, not only is social equity littered with pros it is by the mere fact that everyone is born with inalienable rights that so many such as minorities and women do not receive that social equity should be utilized.

Cons

Inequality has been at the root of education since the 1960's. Due to the vast chasm created by majority of white Americans during that time, including the policy makers, minorities, in particular minorities living in urban areas have been the victims of unequal education. The implication of social justice on education can be explored through the inequality of administering education throughout the United States. Many feel that the administrative fixes created during the sixties have given minorities the equal educational opportunities promised by the decision of Brown vs. Board of Education.

The principles behind the decision are admirable, but the implementation of it is a far cry from equal. This is evident in the vast difference as exhibited throughout the vast divergence in test scores, quality of educational facilities, over-crowding, quality of resources, quality and quantity of teachers, dropout rates, and class sizes. Before 1960 blacks were forced to attend schools that were hardly fit to house the rodents that inhabited them. The separate but equal decision produced from Plessy vs. Ferguson was the precursor in creating this inequality in education.

Although there are a number of positive aspects coming from the origins of administrative social equity to the administrative fixes afforded by the Civil Rights Movement of 1960, finding the negative implications of social equity requires a look at the actual application of social equity in education. Digressing for a moment, we must look at the definition of social equity as implemented in education to get an understanding of the cons associated with differentiating from the theory of social equity and its effects. This definition, as defined by the present administration, is within the meaning of “leaving no child behind”. To most this looks as if it is a comment or slogan for election, however it does have within it the principle detrimental meaning to administer education to every child, whether in urban or rural communities, without discretion.

Even so, the cons associated with social education can be explained through implementation of policies, which many may interpret as “covert racism”. Meaning, the inequality in education cannot be observed from a distance. To understand this concept associated with education one must look at the past theories of “leaving no child behind” or the various administrative fixes such as desegregation of schools and affirmative

action. Even though, these ideas have helped in many ways, in many cases offering many minorities the opportunity to become well-known contributors to our society, we must take a trip to many urban communities and see whether a child is being left behind.

At the root of the cons associated with social equity and education is equality of sharing resources. Sure, desegregation of schools was a great idea, but looking at various statistics of urban and rural schools one will find that many desegregated schools are not really desegregated. For example; looking at the ethnic make-up of Richmond Public Schools (urban) we find that blacks make-up **90.72%** and whites make-up **6.82%** of the students who attend school, while in Chesterfield (rural) blacks make-up **17.7%** with whites making-up **76.6%**. This geographical segregation has produced various negative implications in education that can be observed today. With the large influx of minorities to urban areas, of which they were not permitted prior to the breakdown of rules and restricts afforded by the Civil Rights Movement, many schools became over-populated. Therefore producing the effect displayed today in overcrowded classes and schools.

Furthermore, this influx caused various seemingly non-educational issues such as social issues associated with low-income housing areas; parental involvement, drugs and crime become detrimental underlying concerns associated with this influx. Consequently, it affects the delivery of education. In addition to the cons mentioned previously, SOL-based spending can be associated with our premise. In many cases SOL scores are the significant factors in determining the quality and quantity of resources that will be distributed to various communities, therefore making it a potentially enormous con. These resources are in the form of money for teachers, computers, up-to-date textbooks, school programs to offset the social factors of children in low-income communities and

other equipment to facilitate learning. Nonetheless, these cons are key components in an attempt to understand the deep aspects of inequality in education.

The underlying aspect in the aforementioned cons lies in the allocation and distribution of the resources based on need and demand. This is crucial to point out due to the reality that it is the underlying factor in the inequality associated with education. In our capitalistic system, whoever has the money receives the better services. However, this notion is in direct opposition to the theory of equally educating all children without discretion. Today education for minorities has made progress; nevertheless as we will show most of the progress deals with the symptoms of a bigger underlying problem that stretches deep into the history of the United States.

II. THE PUBLIC POLICY AREA AND THE SPECIFIC SUB-POLICY AREA (SPPA)

Within the realm of social equity we find ourselves looking at different aspects of a broad spectrum. However, we will focus our attention on the public policy area as well as a specific sub-public policy area in order to give an in-depth look at the topic of interest. Social equity and education will be used in inference to refer us to the public policy area under discussion. The comparison of urban and rural school intermingling with social equity will become the specific sub public policy area of interest (SPPA).

In order to understand how both of these areas affect one another, we must probe into the historical perspectives of different cases within the system that have lead to social equity and education. Desegregation has had a significant impact on social equity

within the educational system. Therefore, it is our decision to probe into the past of the educational system of the United States and how it relates to the public policy area and the SPPA area. One particular case is riddled with the integration of public schools as well as that of social equity. In 1954 the Supreme Court made a ruling in the case of Brown vs. The Board of Education that will forever affect the concept of social equity within our school system as well as other public facilities.

Life for African-Americans across the board has not been an easy road to travel before and after the ruling by the United States Supreme Court on Brown vs. The Board of Education. Many still feel separate and unequal even within the 21st century. Though Brown vs. The Board of Education will forever remain a historical case that has altered the lives of African Americans; it has also altered the lives of all racial and ethnic groups within the United States. For us to understand how far we have come, we must first dig deep into our roots to look at where we've been. For it is only when one is able to see the differences in both areas that they are better able to understand who they are. With that in mind we will look at the public policy area: Social Equity and education for minorities before Brown vs. The Board of education and later look into our specific sub-public policy area: desegregation of schools and social equity for minorities as it relates to the decision of the supreme court in Brown vs. The Board of Education.

For more than a century African Americans sought to ensure access to equal educational opportunity and have fell short of reaching their goal on numerous occasions. Religion, education and community have proven to be the cornerstone of self-determination on the part of African Americans. It is these cornerstones that they have been able to produce such a rich history plagued with significant struggles and triumphs.

Before *Brown vs. The Board of Education* many prominent examples can be found in the early and unrelenting legal struggles to segregate public schools. Numerous school cases typify the ongoing struggle for civil rights, social equality and racial justice in the United States.

Parents from ordinary walks of life were willing to step forward and bear the consequences of legal action in the hopes of achieving educational equality for their children as well as take on the burden for all minorities that were disadvantaged by the non integration of the school system. Individuals or small groups of parents appear to have acted on their own in the earliest cases. In later cases state and national strategies of the NAACP clearly were at work. Slowly the actions of attorneys representing parents and school children chipped away at legal segregation in schools. Court decisions began to provide some measure of protection for the idea of equality even in the bleakest of times for African Americans.

One of the earliest cases in history reported was in 1849, *Roberts v. The City of Boston*. To understand this case and how it is intermingled with our public policy area we must also understand the key issue of slavery. Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts by the late 1700's; as a result of this action Boston schools were not segregated. However, African Americans felt they were at a disadvantage because white teachers and students in integrated schools harassed and mistreated African-American children. In the face of this discrimination, parents petitioned for special schools for their children. Their efforts to have a segregated school were denied by the state legislature. Consequently, the first segregated school for African-American children was privately established in 1798. By 1840, there was growing concern about the prejudice fostered by

separate schools. Two years later African American parents began publicly expressing resentment because they were taxed to support schools their children were not allowed to attend. These parents began petition drives to close down the segregated schools. They petitioned in 1845, 1846 and again 1848 without success. The final effort was undertaken in 1849 under the legal leadership of attorneys Charles Sumner, and Robert Morris, an African-American activist who shared the title abolitionist with his colleagues. Although this was a joint community action, the lead plaintiff was Benjamin Roberts, thus emerged the case of Roberts v. The City of Boston.

In their petition to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, attorneys for the African-American parents outlined the circumstances believed to be unlawful. Parents explained how their children had been denied enrollment in all Boston schools except the segregated Smith School. The Roberts case was unsuccessful because authorities reasoned that special provisions had been made for "colored" students to have a school. Support for their cause finally came from city officials when in April 1855 a bill was presented and passed by the Massachusetts legislature. This action provided that no distinction based on color, race or religion should be made for any student applying for admission to any public school in the state. And thus the fight for across the board social equity began.

Numerous court decisions followed, though not as popular as the decision made in Brown v. The Board of Education, that held tremendous weight. In 1881: Elijah Tinnon v. The Board of Education of Ottawa, where Elijah Tinnon an African-American parent spoke and acted for equal educational opportunity in Kansas before the concept had a name. He and six other parents questioned the placing of their children in a

separate room within the Central School and the qualifications of the teacher assigned to this room. The Board's contended that most African-American parents were in favor of black teachers teaching their children though there were unlikely to be qualified to do so. Judge Daniel M. Valentine wrote in upholding Tinnon "is it not better for the aggregate of human society as well as for individuals that all children should mingle together and learn to know each other?" (<http://classes.ils.edu/fall2001/civilrights/unit1.html>).

The case of *Elijah Tinnon v. The Board of Education* had significant impact on the sector of social equity within the public school system another case, which is well-known, has impacted not just education but all venues of separated but equal. In 1892 the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision by the United States Supreme Court set a precedent of "separate but equal" which would stand for more than 60 years. The *Plessy* decision set the states that "separate" facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional as long as they were "equal." The "separate but equal" doctrine was quickly extended to cover many areas of public life, such as restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools. Not until 1954, in the equally important *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, would the "separate but equal" doctrine be struck down.

In response to numerous unsuccessful attempts to ensure equal opportunities for all children, African-American community leaders and organizations across the country stepped up efforts to change the educational system. In the fall of 1950 members of the Topeka, Kansas Chapter of the NAACP agreed to again challenge the "separate but equal" doctrine governing public education. For a period of two years prior to legal action there were numerous attempts to persuade Topeka school officials to integrate their schools. This lawsuit was a final attempt.

Their plan involved enlisting the support of fellow NAACP members and friends, as plaintiffs, in what would become a class action suit filed against the Board of Education of Topeka Public Schools. A group of thirteen parents agreed to participate on behalf of their twenty children. Each plaintiff tried to enroll their children into school for white children that were nearest to their home, their attempts to gain enrollment was futile. This helped to build a case for the NAACP to file a lawsuit against the Topeka School Board. Coincidentally the NAACP headquarters was representing plaintiffs in school cases from Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina and Washington, D.C also. The unanimous 1954 decision of the US Supreme Court struck down the earlier precedent of "separate but equal" in regard to education on the grounds that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment. This ground breaking decision led to the integration of schools throughout the country, a step which many people had been working diligently to bring about.

Though this case was monumental in the desegregation of public schools it would take years before public schools would become fully integrated and it can be argued till this day in which we are presently in the 21st century that there still exist segregation of schools as well as facilities for education that are not equal to that of White schools. Though the desegregation of schools has taken place in years long gone, it is still believe that the segregation exists. Large number of schools in different localities has majority whites or majority blacks with little or few schools with equal integrated population.

The desegregation of schools brought on numerous problems we can question; was desegregation necessary for up lifting African-Americans or are we living in a dangerous situation where African-Americans are taught to believe that social equity is present since there no longer exist separate but equal facilities within education? Also,

are we separated and unequal but accept that which is placed before us? Are the inequalities present in majority black schools within the Richmond metro area being swept under a rug and are parents of African-American children becoming complacent in the battle to demand equal opportunity of quality education for their children?

It is therefore our opinion that the majority of public schools within the Richmond metro area after the desegregation of public schools are unresponsive and irresponsible, where educational mediocrity goes unchallenged. These public schools have utilized a system by which they demand the least possible output of the future minority leaders of our nation. Where the opportunity to improve upon the areas in which these urban school are lacking often are stifled by strict union rules and regulations and where they incorporate things such as the SOL when the basic educational needs of minority students are not being meet.

The majority of children in our inner cities are not learning. Test scores are abysmal, graduation rates are atrocious, and overall performance is so low that many schools have been shut down altogether. Entire school districts have been taken over by state boards of education. This collapse of public education is devastating to urban communities and the people who live there. Families refuse to purchase homes in neighborhoods where schools are failing. The stability of inner-city communities, like that of the suburbs, is determined by their ability to attract strong families. Communities that cannot offer families quality schools are condemned to failure and deterioration. Therefore, it is questionable to think that desegregation has in fully helped African-Americans reach the equality line when it comes to equitable distribution of education in the Richmond metropolitan area.

III. IMPORTANT SOCIAL EQUITY ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF THE RICHMOND-METRO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

The National Education Association (<http://www.nea.org/topics>) has identified several key issues concerning the United States public education system. I have chosen eight, which are most applicable to our specific public policy area. They are:

1. Accountability and Testing
2. Class Size
3. National Board for Professional Teaching
4. Priority Schools
5. School Funding and Modernization
6. School Safety
7. Teacher Quality
8. Technology in Schools

Each issue is discussed briefly:

Accountability and Testing

“Schools, teachers and students should all be held to high standards, and NEA believes that accountability should be shared by schools, education employees, policymakers and parents—with the ultimate goal of helping every student succeed” (www.nea.org/topics).

However many students are not succeeding. Statistically, the Richmond public school system scores 146 points lower on their SAT Verbal and Math than the Chesterfield public school system. So, who is to be held accountable for students failing assessment tests like the SAT and the SOL's students or teachers?

Class Size

“While many education reform proposals remain controversial, reducing class size to allow for more individualized attention for students is strongly supported by parents, teachers and education researchers” (www.nea.org/topics). Mosby has actually decreased in sized due to segregation, integration and renovation of several school buildings. It currently it has 505 students compared to 2500 students in the past. L.C. Byrd has not experienced a loss in student enrollment, but it does have “floating” teachers, which suggests that there is not ample classroom space for teachers to instruct students.

National Board Certification (NBC)

“National Board Certification (NBC) is an advanced teaching credential and a challenging professional development experience offered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The National Education Association is a strong supporter of this voluntary certification system based on high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do” (www.nea.org/topics). It is required that teachers take the National Teacher Exam (NTE) but it not mandatory that they take the NBC because it is a voluntary program. Should teacher be required to take it and if so what affect would it have on the academic success of students particularly minorities?

Priority Schools

“There is little doubt that some of our schools are unable to provide the kind of educational experience we want for America’s children. In too many of these schools, expectations of students are low, teachers and parents are frustrated and academic performance is poor. The need for change is urgent—particularly in our nation's highest-poverty schools, where students are not provided the books and materials, the one-on-one assistance and other resources they need to achieve” (www.nea.org/topics).

Mosby Middle School resides in the midst of a poverty-stricken neighborhood where students are failing academically, parental involvement is low and there is little opportunity to provide a quality educational experience. According to the concept of social equity no should be left behind, but this is easier said than done. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in a student’s academic success, but according to Jones parents of Mosby students cannot help their children because they themselves lack education.

School Funding And Modernization

“Too many of America’s schools are crumbling, crowded and obsolete. The National Education Association, more than half of all members of the House of Representatives and, surveys show, a majority of Americans believe it’s a national problem requiring a national solution” (www.nea.org/topics).

In response to the question “does the school require more funding?” both Principal Tylus (L.C. Byrd) and Dr. Jones (Mosby) answered with a definite yes. However, the need seems to be greater within the Richmond school. However, Dr. Jones

replied that even though the school has enough resources and books more funding is needed to provide *better* books and education for teachers, students, and parents.

School Safety

“Students learn best and achieve their full potential in safe and orderly classrooms. This positive academic environment begins with safe families and safe communities” (www.nea.org/topics). Upon entering Mosby Middle School we encountered locked doors while in contrast when entering L.C. Byrd we walked straight in without a problem. Students cannot learn effectively when they are concerned about their safety.

Teacher Quality

“The National Education Association works with researchers, educators and policymakers to assure a qualified, competent, caring educator in every American classroom. NEA’s commitment to teacher quality extends to each critical component of the teacher development continuum, including the quality of teacher education programs, the quality of beginning teachers and the continuing quality of experienced teachers” (www.nea.org/topics). Do low SAT and SOL scores depict low teacher quality? If so Mosby teacher are of lower quality than L.C. Byrd teachers

Technology In Schools

“Technology must be an integral part of the educational experience in order for today’s students to fully succeed in the 21st century. It is essential to teach students about technology, to effectively use technology in teaching and learning and to ensure that schools and libraries are appropriately equipped” (www.nea.org/topics).

IV. INDICATORS AND SORECARDS

In examining the premise and focus of this paper, it is important to display what would constitute inequality in education. Given that empirical data alone cannot be enough to understand our notion, this section will identify and discuss the most important social equity indicators that will be detrimental to understanding and possibly alleviate inequality in education.

The indicators that are issues and concerns in our sub-public policy area (SPPA) are as follows: equipment, educational facilities, graduation percentages, post-secondary education, teachers, and programs.

To further examine these indicators and their importance to understanding social equity we will discuss them as they relate to education. When defining equipment as being an important indicator, it is key to recognize that it is a detrimental component to learning if schools have the proper books, computers, classroom size, audio, LCD projectors and other “teaching tools” to facilitate learning. Therefore making equipment one of the top indicators. Next we look at educational facilities. Here it is significant to understand that the physical condition of the school must be conducive to learning. Imagine going to a building resembling a jail or an abandoned building for learning purposes. It will be hard to visualize that anyone would learn SOL’s are anything else pertaining to education, if they are required to attend buildings that look as damaged as some of the students may feel. Many studies show that proper educational facilities can induce the learning experience for the students (Hill and Celio, 1998). The third indicator is in the form of graduation percentages. This indicator speaks for itself, while at the same time making a statement for the quality of the educational experience in urban and rural

areas. The fourth indicator is post-secondary education. This indicator proves to be a unique testament to the system whether it is urban or rural. This indicator entails the percentage of each school system that have its students go on to attend and finish college. The aspect that makes this indicator unique is within the fact that the school system produces students who are first college-ready and who further go on to graduate from college. Therefore pulling a group of aspects together from the quality of education received in high school to their success in college. Next, we move into the quality of teachers as being an indicator of equal importance as the resources needed to operate a successful school system. Here key elements of the student's learning experience become apparent. In terms of quality of teachers, we would look at credentials such as degrees, experience, motivation (being determined by experience and level of their education) and knowledge level of students they have taught. The latter aspect can be measured in terms of the depth of knowledge the students have from the curriculum the teacher has given them. This can be tested through the student's attitude about certain subjects, given our experience with teachers it is important to note that as the level of enthusiasm from the teacher in his or her curriculum goes up so does the learning and enthusiasm of the student. Therefore contributing to the depth of the students' learning curve. Moving into the last indicator, which is entitled programs, we define these as facilitators of learning. Many studies show that extra programs that are parallel to the school curriculum, such as arts, can boost the students' motivation in learning (Irvine Quarterly, online publication). Therefore giving us a necessary tool to compare and contrast the quality of education in urban and rural communities.

It is important to note that while these indicators are listed it is our contingent that they are not the only tools that may be used. Nevertheless, these indicators are important to the many other indicators that researchers currently use to examine education. This is due to the fact they are intrinsic in nature, meaning they enhance the present empirical data provided from the wealth of research that is present in the field. For the purpose of this paper Chesterfield County Schools systems were used as our benchmark to measure our focus on urban school systems, given that they ranked among the four top schools in Virginia (information gathered from the U.S Department of Education).

V. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SOCIAL EQUITY IN SPPA IN THE RICHMOND METROPOLITAN AREA

When it comes to equality and education, impoverished families are at a great disadvantage. Their children trail behind, even in the basic skills. These disadvantaged children are often placed in low-resource schools, compounding the problem and giving them little hope of being able to compete with their peers.

From our comparisons between Richmond city schools and Chesterfield county schools, the major challenges and obstacles found were as follows:

Major challenges and obstacles:

- Rapidly increasing enrollment
- Limited financial resources

- Greater diversity in Student needs
- Differences in Student achievement
- Inconsistent expectations

The challenges and obstacles presented above illustrate a great need for improvements in the Richmond City school system. Therefore, our group came up with strategies toward improvement that can be carried out in order to bridge this gap between educational disparities between the school systems.

Poorer children do not seem to have the luxury of living in a free society as their choices are severely compromised. The opening of older schools in order to compensate for overcrowding is evidence of rapidly increasing enrollment. For example, Mosby Middle School originally housed 2500, however due to desegregation, integration and renovation of old school buildings its student body decreased to 505 students. In neighborhoods that are racially segregated, efforts to create neighborhood schools could result in more racially segregated schools. This will hurt racially segregated schools, as it will stand in the way of collaboration between the Board of education, state and local governments.

Since resources are a major factor in the hindrance of continuing expansion and strengthening of schools, the school system needs to have tougher budget enforcement and operational efficiencies. Richmond city public schools are classified as an urban school system, therefore they receive federal money and grants, but less state money.

This can be a major factor of the insufficient funds it receives, as the budget for the school system for each year is based on a 20% increase from the previous year. Given that there is no accurate projection of how the budget is developed, this can often cause an underestimation or overestimation in the budget. The parents of the Richmond school system are usually unemployed. Approximately 55% of its students are on free lunches. In contrast, the Chesterfield school system does not receive federal money, but receives state money.

Disparities between the two schools systems are clear and rather disturbing. For one, in the Chesterfield county school, the science laboratories appeared to be well equipped and students were in the midst of dissecting squid, while Richmond city public school barely had adequate laboratory instruments. They had dilapidated looking faucets and sinks around the classroom. There are also clear disparities between technological advances between the two schools. In Chesterfield there was an abundance of unopened computer boxes stacked in a room, and they had many resourceful computer labs filled with modern computers; while the Richmond city school had barely three to four computer labs with approximately 15 out of date computers in each room.

In order to receive more financial resources schools can accept contributions from individuals, corporations and even civic groups. There needs to be support of the multipurpose use of facilities in order to bring more financial resources to the individual school. For example, they can rent out their auditoriums or gymnasiums in order to increase monetary gain. Most importantly the school system needs to emerge itself in better planning objectives in order to allow for increased efficiency. This will permit for the expansion of choices and opportunities. The schools need to provide for an

environmentally safe, secure, efficient and comfortable atmosphere for all students. They also need to be modernized on a 20 to 30 year cycle through a systematic schedule, in order to ensure equal up to date educational opportunities for all.

Next, we will go on to evaluate the greater diversity in student needs and the significant differences in student achievement.

Class size reductions need to take place in order to ensure smaller learning communities. This way no child will be left behind and thus allowing each child to receive more individual attention. Increased academic rigor can allow for expanded learning opportunities. Furthermore, the curriculum can be aligned with local, state and national standards, which can in turn provide more assistance to teachers and provide greater opportunity for student success. For example, mathematics can be introduced in early grades maybe even as early as third grade. Childhood education needs to be encouraged which will allow for a better learning foundation that can be beneficial to students in the future. For students who are most heavily impacted by poverty and English language development, a possible solution may be to acquire foundational reading skills in kindergarten and text reading skills in first grade. This will allow for continued improvements by teachers and principals in using a more rigorous curriculum, enhanced program implementation, and ongoing professional development. This will also allow more students among all racial and ethnic groups to keep the pace in achieving higher-level skills. Additionally, there should be services for students with special needs

such as a disability or learning impediment. They should also be taught basic life skills as our society is ever changing to allow them to become well-rounded individuals.

To reach the differing needs of students effectively, motivational speakers and mentors need to be available that come from similar ethnic and racial backgrounds as the students in order to relate to their needs and situations. For instance, Hispanic speakers can address Hispanic students, which could help bridge any potential communication barriers. Furthermore, there needs to be individual counselors for these student and these counselors or mentors should be readily available to advise them on the importance of school and show them the benefits of being educated as opposed to being uneducated. There also needs to be work done towards increasing student attendance, which could potentially reduce the student dropout rate.

Disparities in race and ethnicity are evident in nearly every assessment. The Richmond city school we visited was Mosby Middle school, this school is a failing SOL (Standards of Learning) school. The students appeared to be rather undisciplined as opposed to the well-behaved students at Chesterfield. Overall, SAT scores for the Richmond city public schools compared to that of the Chesterfield public schools are almost 200 points lower. Also, it is statistically evident that African-American students tend to have lower GPA's than their peers. For these reasons, the school system needs to provide instructional support and academic support for African-Americans, Hispanics and other minority students who are not achieving academic success. This should be a major priority for the school system.

Next, we will go onto assess the inconsistent expectations among students, staff and parents within the school system.

Poverty is closely associated with underperformance. Therefore, most importantly teachers, principals and support staff should be working with students, parents and the community to address this continuing trend. Academic supporters are a necessary to overcome such factors.

Understanding and improving teaching and learning is a fundamental part of the ongoing professional development of teachers and principals. There needs to be a framework that is developed to encourage quality collaborations among teachers, principals, and staff in the areas of curriculum, instruction, planning and building of professional learning communities, expectations, and student learning. In Richmond city public schools, we were told that parents have negative attitudes when summoned to appear in school on behalf of their children. This has an obvious negative effect on the child. Moreover, there needs to be more evidence of ongoing assessments of students and teacher progress. Teachers need to have peer assistance groups and mentors, who could help teachers, improve. This could also allow for the removal of teachers who perform poorly. Alternatively, teachers could be mentored and the school system could provide support for teachers who perform poorly, which will allow for greater teacher retention. As previously mentioned, lack of monetary means could greatly impact quality improvements which include teacher quality, staff development, and consulting teachers who perform poorly and educating them on how to effectively approach these types of students. Such expanded opportunities can allow teachers to achieve relevant workforce

experiences. As a result, teachers will feel more appreciated and be a direct positive force towards assisting in the change in a child's life. This type of expanded staff development, evaluation and leadership initiatives for teachers, administrators, and support staff will allow for a balanced approach to focusing on workforce excellence.

Furthermore, there should be more business partnership involvement that can provide for internships, mentoring, professional expertise, career awareness, and summer research grants for teachers, which again can serve as an initiative for teachers. This could potentially make a difference in helping students learn and achieve. These relevant experiences will allow for teachers to have more initiative, which could potentially trickle down to students. Students can then begin to develop a sense of investing in themselves. We need to have educational initiatives to encourage innovative strategies for implementing social equity initiatives and assuring their long-term survival and acceptance. Finally, due to the ever-changing society, we need to educate our youth on alternative strategies for preparing them to deal with social equity concerns.

In a study conducted by the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota, it was found that on average across metropolitan regions by the end of the 4th grade, African-American, Latino and students of poverty tend to be 2 years behind other students; by 8th grade, these students are 3 years behind other students; by 12th grade, students of color tend to be 4 years behind other students.

In conclusion, we feel education is one of the most important issues in regards to social equity. If the quality of education is not upheld across the board, our future growth patterns and the strength of existing communities will be at stake. The role of education

needs to be improved in order to meet human needs, particularly for those lacking in resources and social equity.

The key to solving the issues of the disparities that currently exist in comparison of urban and rural schools is realizing that the problem does exist. It is by doing so that educators, administrators, parents and everyone within the community can make a change in altering the present situation. To continue believing that equality exists within urban and rural education is turning the hands of time backwards to a decade where separate but equal was justifiable. We have currently embarked on a new century where no child within any educational system should be disadvantaged from another based on rural or urban affiliation.

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