

The Price Paid for Low Quality Teaching in the US

There is no single component so central and important to our hopes for saving the public school system as the teachers. They are on the front line, having daily contact with the students, and are basically the ones that struggle to revive schools. But the continual worsening of conditions in urban schools for teachers: low pay, overcrowded classes, increased responsibilities, outdated and meager resources are disintegrating the number and quality of teachers in them.

Salary becomes a major issue when considering the quality and worthiness of teachers in urban compared to suburban schools. For example, in 1991, a teacher in a suburban school got paid 20% more annually than a teacher in an urban school (Kozol, 1991, p.30).

The schools of this nation are only as strong as the communities of which they are a part (Frady, 1985, p.85). With less money available from federal, state, and local governments because the money is being allocated elsewhere, schools are forced to rely on the people of their communities. However, declining test scores, racial and social class prejudices, and inadequate school facilities have people abandoning the urban schools.

When we shed light on the responsibilities of the teachers, a massive number of people can only stumble upon the fact that their duty consists of giving homework and detention. It is quite easy to determine that a teacher's job seems easy when compared to other jobs as there are summer offs. Yet, it is also believed to be a low-status job, which is not farther away from the truth either.

A teacher's job is not as easy as it seems. They dedicate their own lives for the sake of their students. They are supposed to deal with several issues in their student's lives and issues of their own within a very short time span. Pressure builds up as the workload increases.

Most of the teachers see their role as altruistic agents who can inspire students to learn and to achieve their hopes and dreams. Teachers play an essential role in society and in the upbringing of an entire generation. We should consider teachers to be the unsung heroes of our society because they are never given enough praise or a high enough salary when we consider the amount of hard work that they put in. This is even more evident in the urban setting where teachers are expected to overextend themselves to meet the needs of students. Teachers in these high need districts should be compensated better.

Being a teacher is not an easy task at all. It requires an immense amount of dedication, hard work, and patience. You may ask, "*Why does it need dedication and hard work?*" Every student in an institution requires individual attention. Teachers are part of a student's life journey from kindergarten through graduation and sometimes

beyond. Teachers not only develop the academic skills of the students but also recognize and nurture their true potential as well.

Teachers take upon themselves the burden of providing knowledge while often working in less than ideal conditions. Some teachers begin to lack motivation due to the schools and other surroundings in which they work. It is also nearly impossible for them to earn as much as an average employee (even though they deserve higher salaries) by working 6 hours a day and 183 days out of 365 days a year.

Another problem that surfaces in countries like the United States of America is that a large number of students represent different backgrounds and languages. Often the reason for students facing several academic challenges are the different backgrounds they came from. Many come from poor countries or poorer communities in the United States where early childhood education may be different or, at times, non-existent.

In urban schools, the major difference in how students face academic challenges is due to having different enriching opportunities and safety nets to increase their chances to succeed. For example, in suburban schools, families may have opportunities to travel and have access to early reading programs and daycare programs. Some urban families may not speak English or have access to additional opportunities to learn.

They do not have funds to travel or to pay for enrichment activities. Based on these limitations, it is often difficult for a student to catch up with the rest of the students. Some children might have faced a financial crisis, or have not had access to medical support or other things, whereas the students in suburban setting might have access to all the facilities and opportunities needed to increase their chances to be ready and successful in school. Dealing with students from many different environments often requires teachers to break the barrier of racism and to deal with obstacles to learning based on cultures or communities. This can be a real challenge for a teacher.

A major issue in our society is that a majority of the teachers have been taught to teach children who belong to privileged areas – or at least to “*traditional American families.*” Because most teachers come from similar backgrounds as many traditional students, some teachers may find it difficult to teach children who belong to different ethnicities or cultures. On the other hand, students do not see themselves identified with the teachers in front of them.

Despite all the challenges, every institution tries its best to retain its valuable and important teachers. At the same time, finding teachers who resemble the students they serve is a priority. Connecting with all students is essential to teach them.

The struggles of the teacher include the responsibility for the education of every student – many of whom are not able to perform well in their academic tests or examinations. Their failures often become a source of stress for the teachers.

Teachers are being held accountable for the progress or failure of every child. However, teachers cannot be held accountable in cases where the child faced multiple obstacles preventing them from learning. Some of these obstacles create academic gaps and lack of readiness to learn. If the child was raised under bad influences or

came from a community or country where they did not get basic educational services, holding a teacher accountable is just not fair or realistic.

Schools have changed rapidly in the last decade and are becoming more and more challenging because of the academic and social-emotional gaps our students have. In addition to the socioeconomic differences of urban and suburban public schools, private schools and now charter schools compete for the *“best and the brightest.”* Resources are taken away from urban districts in the name of helping and supporting the very students they are claiming to help. In urban districts, where there may be no or little parental supervision and community support, teachers become less in control and lack the support and resources needed to support the educational experience of the most challenging students. The lack of stable environments in school and at home compromises everyone’s education. In some cases, students’ actions might be a way of seeking attention or maybe because they face academic or personal challenges.

Teacher qualification:

Teacher qualifications can vary depending on the educational system, level of teaching, and subject area. However, some common qualifications typically include college degrees where individuals are receiving the training to become qualified based on state and federal standards. One apparent challenge is the lack of in-depth training on areas where education is not typically effective. This lack of effectiveness is evident in urban and rural areas. Colleges and universities should use data on student performance to create effective program where teachers are better prepare to interrupt the lack of academic achievement prevalent in many areas across the country. Most teachers hold at least a bachelor's degree in education or a specific subject area. Many also pursue advanced degrees (master's or doctoral) to enhance their knowledge and skills. In order to be qualified to teachers must obtain a teaching license or certification, which often requires passing specific exams and completing a teacher preparation program. Teachers should have a strong understanding of the subject they teach. This often means having a degree in that subject area or relevant coursework. Effective teaching requires knowledge of teaching methods and strategies. This includes understanding how to design lessons, assess student learning, and manage a classroom. Many jurisdictions require teachers to engage in ongoing professional development to stay current with educational practices, technology, and curriculum change. Good teachers often possess strong communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills. They should be able to connect with students, motivate them, and create a positive learning environment. Practical teaching experience, often gained through student teaching or internships, is crucial for developing effective teaching skills. These qualifications help ensure that teachers are well-prepared to support student learning and foster educational growth.

Evaluating teachers is crucial for several reasons:

Public and private education faces a challenge to connect teacher performance with learning. It is argued that many factors play a role in learning and teaching is only one factor that influence the rate of learning. As we will review below socioeconomic status plays a significant role in who learns and who does not. Teacher evaluations are constantly debated and plays an unfair correlation to teaching quality or teacher effectiveness. Regular evaluations help identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching practices. This feedback can lead to professional development opportunities, enhancing overall teaching quality. Effective teacher evaluations ensure that teaching methods are aligned with student needs, ultimately improving student outcomes and learning experiences. Evaluating teachers promotes accountability within educational institutions. It ensures that teachers are meeting established standards and contributing positively to the learning environment. Evaluations provide teachers with constructive feedback that can guide their professional development. This helps them stay current with best practices and educational trends. By recognizing and supporting effective teachers, schools can retain high-quality educators, which is essential for maintaining a stable and effective teaching staff. Teacher evaluations can help ensure that instruction aligns with curriculum standards and educational goals. This is vital for delivering a cohesive educational experience to students. Evaluation processes can foster a culture of collaboration, where teachers share best practices and learn from one another, contributing to a more supportive educational community. Data from teacher evaluations can inform school and district policies, helping administrators make informed decisions about staffing, training, and resource allocation. Overall, evaluating teachers is essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement, enhancing educational quality, and ensuring that students receive the best possible education.

Consequences of low education:

The financial impact of low education levels can be significant and multifaceted, affecting individuals, communities, and economies. Individuals with lower education levels typically earn less than those with higher education. This can lead to increased poverty rates and reduced economic mobility, limiting opportunities for individuals to improve their financial situations. Lower educational attainment is often associated with higher unemployment rates. Individuals without a high school diploma or vocational training may struggle to find stable, well-paying jobs. At a broader level, a poorly educated workforce can hinder economic growth. A lack of skilled workers can limit a region's ability to attract businesses and investment, resulting in slower economic development. Individuals with low education levels may rely more on government assistance programs, such as unemployment benefits, food assistance, and housing subsidies, increasing the financial burden on taxpayers. Low education levels are often linked to poorer health outcomes, leading to increased healthcare costs. Individuals with limited education may have less access to healthcare and may engage in riskier health behaviors, resulting in higher medical expenses. There is a correlation between low

education levels and higher crime rates. This can lead to increased costs related to law enforcement, judicial proceedings, and incarceration, placing additional financial strain on communities and governments. A less educated workforce may lead to lower overall productivity, which can impact business profitability and economic competitiveness. Individuals with lower education levels may be less likely to participate in civic activities, such as voting or community involvement, which can affect local governance and resource allocation.

In summary, low education levels can have profound financial implications not only for individuals but also for communities and the economy as a whole, reinforcing cycles of poverty and limiting growth opportunities. Investing in education is essential for improving financial outcomes and fostering a more prosperous society.

Low Socio-Economic Status and education

Low socioeconomic status (SES) and education level are closely intertwined factors that significantly impact individuals and communities. Here's an overview of their relationship and implications. SES is typically determined by factors such as income, education, and occupation. It reflects an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others.

- Education Level: This refers to the highest degree or level of schooling an individual has completed, ranging from no formal education to advanced degrees.

- Individuals from low SES backgrounds often have limited access to quality educational resources, such as well-funded schools, experienced teachers, and extracurricular activities. This can hinder their academic achievement. An important consequence is how early childhood education is essential for these students but not often available. Early learning opportunities can vary greatly based on SES. Children from low-income families may attend lower-quality preschools or early childhood programs, impacting their foundational skills and readiness for school. The costs associated with education (tuition, books, transportation) can be prohibitive for low SES families, leading to higher dropout rates and lower rates of higher education enrollment.

Low SES is often associated with poorer health outcomes, which can affect educational performance. Health issues may impede attendance and learning capabilities. Families with low SES may prioritize immediate financial needs over long-term educational goals. This shift in focus can lead to lower educational attainment.

Individuals with lower levels of education often have fewer job prospects and may be confined to low-wage jobs, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This creates barriers to upward social mobility. Limited educational attainment makes it challenging to improve one's economic situation. Communities with high concentrations of low SES and educational disadvantage often face systemic issues, including higher crime rates, reduced civic engagement, and less community cohesion. Children of parents with low

education and SES are likely to face similar challenges, leading to a cycle of disadvantage that persists across generations.

Interventions and Solutions:

- Improving Access to Quality Education: Initiatives to fund lower-income schools, provide scholarships, and enhance early childhood education services.
- Community Support Programs: Programs that offer tutoring, mentorship, and resources for families can help bridge educational gaps.
- Financial Aid for Higher Education: Increasing awareness and accessibility of financial aid can encourage higher education enrollment for low SES students.

Addressing the intersection of low socioeconomic status and education is crucial for creating equitable opportunities and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Lack of qualified teachers in low SES schools:

The lack of qualified teachers in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools is a significant issue that affects educational outcomes for students. Here's an overview of the factors contributing to this problem and its implications:

Factors Contributing to the Shortage of Qualified Teachers in Low SES Schools

Funding Disparities:

Low SES schools often operate with limited funding, which affects their ability to hire and retain qualified teachers. These schools may struggle to offer competitive salaries and benefits compared to more affluent districts.

High Turnover Rates:

Many teachers in low SES schools leave the profession or move to more affluent schools due to challenging working conditions, lack of support, and the emotional toll of dealing with the impacts of poverty on students.

Teacher Preparation and Support:

Programs that prepare teachers to work in high-need areas may not be sufficiently robust. Additionally, many new teachers may lack adequate mentoring and support when they enter low SES environments, leading to frustration and burnout.

Workload and Resources:

Teachers in low SES schools often face larger class sizes, limited access to instructional materials, and inadequate support staff. This can lead to increased stress and a negative teaching environment, making it less appealing for qualified educators.

Recruitment Challenges:

Many qualified teachers are drawn to schools with better resources and working conditions. Schools in low SES areas may find it challenging to attract qualified candidates due to perceived challenges and lower job satisfaction.

Implications of the Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Educational Inequity:

The lack of qualified teachers perpetuates educational inequity, where students in low SES areas receive a lower quality of education compared to their peers in more affluent areas. This can lead to significant gaps in achievement and opportunities.

Student Outcomes:

Students in low SES schools are more likely to experience lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and reduced college readiness. A well-qualified teacher is one of the most significant factors influencing student success.

Impact on Learning Environment:

Inexperienced teachers may struggle with classroom management and effective instructional strategies. This can create a challenging learning environment, negatively impacting students' engagement and motivation.

Long-Term Economic Implications:

Students from low SES backgrounds with inadequate education may find it difficult to secure well-paying jobs in the future, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting social mobility.

Strategies for Addressing the Shortage

International Teachers:

Participating in international recruitment is a good option. Many countries around the world have been becoming fully bilingual. More importantly, they have created very high functioning educational systems for the most part private but with excellent results. Companies like Global Education Solutions have demonstrated that bringing talent to the US is a good alternative. This is part of a cultural exchange program that is bringing high qualified teachers to address the lack of quality teaching and the significant teacher shortage in the country.

Increased Funding:

Advocating for increased funding for low SES schools can help improve salaries, provide necessary resources, and support teacher recruitment and retention efforts.

Teacher Incentives:

Programs that offer financial incentives, loan forgiveness, or housing assistance to teachers willing to work in low SES schools can attract qualified educators.

Professional Development:

Providing ongoing professional development and support tailored to the unique challenges of low SES environments can help teachers improve their skills and retain them in the profession.

Partnerships with Universities:

Collaborating with teacher preparation programs to create pathways for graduates to work in low SES schools can help ensure a steady pipeline of qualified teachers.

Mentorship and Support Networks:

Establishing mentorship programs that connect new teachers with experienced educators can provide critical support, increase retention rates, and improve teaching quality in low SES schools.

By addressing the issue of qualified teacher shortages in low SES schools, we can work toward reducing educational inequities and improving outcomes for students who need it most.

Recommendations:

Use data to better prepare teachers:

Using data to better prepare teachers is essential for enhancing the quality of education and fostering effective teaching practices. Here's a comprehensive look at why data-driven approaches are crucial in teacher preparation. Data can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of teacher candidates, allowing teacher preparation programs to tailor their curriculum accordingly.

By analyzing performance data, educators can identify content areas or pedagogical skills where future teachers may need more training or support. Data allows educators to use evidence-based practices for curriculum design, ensuring that the content is relevant and effective. Continuous data collection can help refine teacher preparation programs, making adjustments based on what is working in real classroom settings. By using data on teacher performance, schools can monitor the effectiveness of their training programs and make necessary adjustments.

- Student Outcomes: Analyzing student achievement data can help educators assess the impact of teacher preparation on student learning, enabling them to link teacher preparation quality with student success. Data can inform the development of personalized training programs for teachers, focusing on their individual needs and the needs of their students. Data models can showcase best practices from effective

teachers, providing concrete examples for aspiring educators to emulate. Emphasizing data analysis in teacher training encourages a culture where decisions are based on evidence rather than intuition.

- Professional Development: Ongoing data collection and analysis can inform professional development opportunities, ensuring they are relevant to current teaching challenges.

Data can contribute to developing fair and comprehensive teacher evaluation systems that include multiple measures, such as student performance, peer reviews, and self-assessments.

Data-driven evaluations provide actionable feedback for teachers, supporting their professional growth and development. Data allows teachers to understand the diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and needs of their students, enabling them to differentiate instruction effectively. By utilizing data, teacher preparation programs can ensure that future educators are equipped to address systemic inequalities and support all students.

Data can facilitate partnerships between teacher preparation programs and K-12 schools, providing insights into the skills that are most needed in the field. Using data to engage parents and communities can create a more holistic approach to education and teacher preparation.

Equity in Education

- Bridging Gaps: A focus on deep understanding can help address educational disparities. By promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills, all students—regardless of background—can achieve greater success.
- Empowerment: Educating students deeply empowers them to challenge societal norms and advocate for themselves and their communities, fostering informed citizenship and social responsibility.

Effective Assessment Practices

- Formative Assessment: Deep knowledge allows for more effective formative assessments, enabling educators to gauge student understanding continuously and adapt their instruction accordingly.
- Authentic Assessments: It supports the design of authentic assessments that require students to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, promoting deeper learning.

Importance of teachers representing students

The representation of students by teachers who share similar backgrounds, experiences, or identities is a vital aspect of education that can significantly influence student outcomes and experiences. Here are several key reasons why it is important for students to see themselves represented in their educators:

Enhanced Engagement and Motivation

- Relatability: When students see teachers who resemble them in terms of culture, race, gender, or socioeconomic background, they may feel more understood and valued, leading to higher engagement and motivation to learn.
- Role Models: Representation provides students with role models who demonstrate that success is attainable. This can inspire students to pursue their educational and career aspirations with confidence.

Improved Academic Performance

Cultural Relevance: Teachers who share similar backgrounds as their students may incorporate culturally relevant teaching methods and materials, leading to deeper connections and better comprehension of the content.

Higher Expectations: Representation can lead to higher expectations for students, as teachers with similar experiences may be more likely to believe in their potential and advocate for their success.

Positive Classroom Environment

Creating a Safe Space: Diverse teaching staff can create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment, where all students feel safe to express their identities and perspectives.

Reducing Biases: Representation helps challenge stereotypes and biases, fostering a more equitable educational setting where different cultures and viewpoints are respected.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Understanding Context: Teachers who understand the cultural context of their students can tailor instruction to be more relevant and effective, addressing the unique needs and challenges that students may face.

Building Relationships: Teachers who share cultural backgrounds can build stronger relationships with students and their families, fostering collaboration and trust within the educational community.

Encouraging Diverse Perspectives

Broadening Worldviews: A diverse teaching staff introduces a variety of perspectives in the classroom, encouraging students to think critically and appreciate different viewpoints and experiences.

Preparing for a Diverse Society: Representation prepares students to thrive in a multicultural society by exposing them to a wide range of ideas, encouraging empathy and understanding of diverse backgrounds.

Equity in Education

Addressing Disparities: Having a representative teaching force can help address systemic inequalities within the education system, promoting equity and ensuring that all students receive fair opportunities to succeed.

Advocacy for Underrepresented Groups: Teachers who belong to underrepresented groups are often more likely to advocate for policies and practices that benefit their students and communities.

Building Community and Belonging

Fostering Connection: When students see themselves represented, it can help create a sense of belonging and community within the classroom, leading to positive social interactions and collaboration.

Encouraging Participation: Students are more likely to participate in class discussions and activities when they feel represented and included, enhancing their overall educational experience.

Professional Development and Teacher Retention

Empowerment of Diverse Educators: Representation encourages the recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching workforce, bringing varied experiences and insights into the educational environment.

Encouraging Others to Join the Profession: Seeing successful teachers from similar backgrounds can inspire students to consider education as a career path, further strengthening representation in the future.

Lack of skills of teachers educating English Language Learners:

The lack of teacher skills in teaching English as a second language (ESL) is a significant challenge that can adversely impact student learning and achievement in diverse educational settings. Here's an overview of the reasons behind this issue, its consequences, and potential solutions:

Reasons for Lack of ESL (English as a second language) Teacher Skills

Insufficient Training Programs

Many teacher preparation programs do not offer comprehensive training in ESL methodologies, leaving teachers unprepared to address the specific needs of English language learners (ELLs).

A lack of specialized courses focusing on linguistics, cultural competency, and the unique challenges faced by ELLs can hinder teachers' effectiveness.

Limited Professional Development

Ongoing professional development opportunities in ESL teaching may be inadequate, leading to stagnant skills and outdated teaching practices.

Teachers may not receive training in new strategies or approaches for engaging ELLs or in using technology effectively in their instruction.

Misconceptions About Language Acquisition

Some teachers may hold misconceptions about how language acquisition works, leading to ineffective teaching practices that do not support ELLs in developing their English language skills. Understanding the difference between learning a language and being proficient in a language is crucial for effective instruction.

Resource Constraints

Schools serving ELL populations may lack the resources—such as instructional materials, teaching aids, and support staff—needed to effectively teach English. Teachers may struggle to access appropriate texts, assessments, and tools that cater to ELLs at various proficiency levels.

Consequences of Insufficient ESL Teaching Skills

Lower Student Achievement

ELLs may struggle to achieve academic success due to a lack of effective instruction, leading to lower test scores and poor performance in school. Academic gaps can widen, as ELLs may not receive the support needed to keep pace with their native English-speaking peers.

Increased Dropout Rates

Students who do not receive adequate support in learning English may become disengaged from the education system and are more likely to drop out of school. This disengagement can limit future opportunities for ELLs and affect their overall well-being.

Social Isolation

Insufficient language instruction can hinder ELLs from forming social connections with peers, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Social interactions are vital for language development; without opportunities to communicate, ELLs may struggle to build friendships and integrate into the school community.

Long-Term Impact on Career Opportunities

ELLs who do not receive the necessary language skills may face challenges in pursuing higher education and securing employment, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage.

Proficiency in English is often essential for success in various professional fields.

Solutions to Improve ESL Teacher Skills

Enhanced Teacher Training Programs:

Teacher preparation programs should include robust coursework in ESL methodologies, linguistics, and cultural competency.

Collaborations between universities and school districts can help develop curricula that focus specifically on training effective ESL teachers.

Ongoing Professional Development:

Schools should provide regular opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development focused on best practices in ESL instruction and bilingual education.

Workshops, webinars, and peer collaboration can help teachers stay updated with new instructional strategies and technologies.

Resource Allocation:

Schools should invest in providing resources specifically designed for ELL instruction, including textbooks, technology, and supplementary materials.

Access to language assessment tools can help teachers gauge student proficiency and tailor instruction to meet individual needs.

Implementing Mentorship Programs

Pairing inexperienced teachers with experienced ESL educators can provide valuable support and guidance.

Mentorship programs can help build confidence and skills, allowing new teachers to gain insights into effective ESL practices.

Fostering Cultural Competence

Training programs should emphasize the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity, helping teachers understand the backgrounds of their students.

Educators equipped with cultural competencies can create more inclusive classrooms that support ELLs' social and emotional needs.

Conclusions:

Deep knowledge is pivotal in creating a robust educational framework that nurtures critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning. By prioritizing depth over breadth, educational institutions can better prepare students for the complexities of the modern world, ultimately leading to more informed, engaged, and empowered citizens.

Emphasizing deep understanding in teaching and learning not only enhances individual learning experiences but also contributes significantly to a more informed and equitable society.

The importance of representing students by educators who share similar backgrounds cannot be overstated. This representation fosters a more inclusive, equitable, and effective learning environment, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for all students. Schools and educational institutions should prioritize diversity among their teaching staff and implement policies and practices that promote representation, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to see themselves in their education.

Incorporating data into teacher preparation is not just about improving individual teaching practices; it is about enhancing the overall educational landscape. By using data strategically, teacher preparation programs can develop more effective educators who are better equipped to meet the challenges of today's diverse classrooms and ultimately improve student outcomes. The goal is to create a data-informed culture that prioritizes evidence-based practices in teaching and learning.

Addressing the lack of teacher skills in teaching English as a second language is crucial for improving educational outcomes for ELLs. By focusing on comprehensive training, ongoing professional development, and resource allocation, educational institutions can equip teachers with the tools they need to effectively support students in their language acquisition journey. Ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills not only enhances the educational experience for ELLs but also contributes to a more equitable and inclusive educational system.

Lastly, a progressive solution that has been showing great hope and promise is to bring teachers from other countries who have the vocation, dedication and skills to serve communities that are experiencing larger shortages and lack the talent essential to transform educational environments. This is a cultural exchange that allows teachers to come for 1-5 years to transform schools that fundamentally need their talent to diminish the academic gaps prevalent in education and more specifically urban setting in the US.

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