

# The eJournal of Education Policy

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An international refereed journal providing  
perspectives on current policy issues facing  
K-12 and higher education



# **The eJournal of Education Policy**

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## **Historical Policy Influences on Balancing Educational Equity, Adequacy, and Local Control**

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### **Abstract**

In the United States, presidential election cycles tend to bring with them a spate of proposals for how the federal government can address adequacy and equity issues in K-16 education. The overall cost, complex web of independent funding mechanisms in play, and the lack of appetite for giving up more local (or state) control tends to temper those proposals in practice. However, as these debates continue, it is worth reflecting back on the history of the more influential ideas of how to provide a more adequate and equitable education to children. These key cases and scholarly theories provided the foundation for the current debate around how to balance equity and adequacy for students and taxpayers. This article tracks the evolution of these concepts and how they inform current tensions between equity, adequacy, and local control in educational policy proposals.

**Keywords:** School finance, equity, adequacy, local control, K-12

### **A Historical Perspective on Distributing Educational Resources**

The Twentieth Century brought with it sweeping educational reforms aimed at meeting the needs of a growing immigrant population and standardizing the delivery of educational services. With these reforms came a renewed interest in developing a more dependable system of financing schools and attempts to improve the collection and administration of the property tax. The property tax experienced dramatic development from the Civil War to World War I and during this time became the only significant source of local revenue.

The political battle over the use of the property tax to fund education spilled over into courtrooms across the country. The *Kalamazoo* decision (1874) in Michigan was the first of a

series of state court judgments that upheld the right of local school boards to levy taxes for the support of public high schools. This case and those that followed in other states led to legislation that not only provided for, but eventually required, the establishment of public high schools (Reese, 1995). With elementary and secondary schooling now a function of local and state governments, educational financing became a product of combining local property tax revenue with various forms of state aid. Private funds became less significant in the funding of public schools, and the provision of educational opportunities to those who would otherwise not be able to afford them became a driving motivation behind the expansion of the common school.

### *Early Equity Models*

As the business of providing education increasingly became the responsibility of the state, equity concerns rose to the public consciousness. It was clear that despite the decreased dependence on private funds, not all districts enjoyed the same capacity to provide adequate educational opportunities. By the start of World War I over a quarter of state legislatures had enacted some form of equalization program to complement deficient local funding. As crude equalization initiatives grew in number, they also became more refined and in 1923 a simple model for school finance was proposed by George D. Strayer and Robert Murray Haig that would greatly influence the development of these policies. The Strayer-Haig model (Lindholm, 1974) provided that educational resources should be distributed in the following manner: "compute the costs of a satisfactory minimum educational offering in each district of the state. Compute the yield in the district of a uniform state mandated local tax levy on the equalized valuation of property. Provide the difference between the costs of the minimum program and the yield of the required minimum program and the yield of the required minimum tax levy from state funds."

The movement to provide state funds in an equalizing fashion served as the backdrop for the difficult financial times ahead. Just as the depression had touched nearly all aspects of life in the United States, by 1933 its effects had ravaged school systems all across the country. The Chicago City School Board defaulted on twenty million dollars in salaries, and in Alabama eighty-five percent of the schools shut down altogether (Smith, 1982). The resulting fiscal strain brought adequacy concerns to the forefront as school systems struggled to meet even the most basic educational needs of their communities. School officials turned to the federal government for aid and had reason to be optimistic in light of the variety of programs supported by the New Deal legislation.

By November of 1933 federal money was invested in vocational education, school building projects, and remedial education programs. These programs provided relatively little in the form of relief, but opened the door for more substantial federal involvement in the future. As a result, the role of the federal government in financing of public schools was oriented towards bringing "core" educational opportunities up to higher adequacy levels for disadvantaged groups of students or reaching federally identified adequacy goals (Smith, 1982).

During this era, from 1930 to the mid-50's, local communities became steadily more dependent on state support. In 1930 the average state share of educational expenditures in the United States equaled under seventeen percent, but by 1951 this number had increased to forty percent (The Tax Foundation, 1954). The reason for this is two-fold. At the local level, officials in most states were restricted to the property tax as a source of revenue for not only education, but other public

services as well. Moreover, low property assessment practices during this time not only contributed to a smaller tax base, but also affected school districts' ability to borrow for capital outlays.

### *Cold War School Funding*

So as local school officials dealt with these issues, state governments embarked on a series of initiatives aimed at increasing educational opportunities and providing more equitable distributions of resources. The most popular vehicle for dispensing state aid was the flat grant. In 1950 every state used some sort of flat grant aid and in five states it was the vehicle for allocating all state funds (The Tax Foundation, 1954). The flat grant provided funds to school districts based on pupil enrollment. As a result, districts of varying fiscal capacity received equal per pupil resources from the state. In response to the disproportionate spending needs of the poorest and wealthiest districts to provide similar educational opportunities the majority of states developed equalizing formulas during this era and provided grant money based on some measure of local fiscal ability. Equity grants were commonly combined with minimum foundation programs, establishing a basic minimum effort.

In 1958 the Sputnik revolution sparked federal interest in educational funding as the National Defense Education Act provided categorical aid for the improvement of instruction in mathematics, science, and foreign languages. Despite the success in passing this legislation, the backlash that followed was enough to bring each of President Kennedy's ambitious education bills to defeat throughout his presidency. Kennedy struggled with conservatives who feared the federalism of education in the United States. However, after the assassination of President Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, a former school teacher and principal, took advantage of a political climate that was sympathetic to the fallen president's policies and moved Kennedy's education agenda forward (Vinovskis, 2008).

Congress passed a key part of Johnson's Great Society agenda, the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965, which provided more than one billion dollars in aid for public schools (Gutek, 1986) On the heels of this legislative success President Johnson also pushed through Congress the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965 which created a series of programs operating under the umbrella term Operation Head Start (Vinovskis, 2008). From 1957 to 1967 the federal role in funding education increased from four percent of total expenditures to just under nine percent (United States Department of Education, 1993).

### *The Modern Model*

By the 1970's the basic finance structure of federal, state, and local support that would dominate school-funding structures through the Twentieth Century was in place. Federal resources played a limited role in the equalization of opportunity and were geared primarily towards achieving a variety of compensatory education standards. There are several political obstacles to the federal government playing an increased role in ensuring educational equity. However, the limited resources allocated for educational expenditures were more likely to reach poorer districts because children in those districts were more likely to qualify for the types of compensatory programs funded by federal dollars.

## **Educational Adequacy Theories of Guthrie and Clune**

During the 1980s James Guthrie and William Clune were influential voices in the movement to distinguish adequacy from equity both legal and as a policy issue (Houck & DeBray, 2015). James Guthrie proposed that funding an adequate action involves a balance between public interests and private preferences (Guthrie, 1983, p. 471). According to Guthrie the political process should serve to make decisions and financially support those educational activities which benefit the common welfare. Offered as examples are reading, writing, arithmetic, and some level of political understanding. Guthrie writes, "social cohesion, economic productivity, civic virtue, and national defense are among the many public policy goals that we have established for our schools." Although the educational goods that serve the common welfare serve the individual as well, Guthrie makes the distinction between national needs and desires of local citizens. To the extent these goals overlap it is unclear whether Guthrie supported decision making through the political process or by the marketplace.

In essence, Guthrie proposed defining a core set of educational goods along what can be referred to as horizontal adequacy (Pijanowski, 2015). Guthrie defines this core as those educational goods that provide, "the knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective participation in a democratic society" (Guthrie, 1983, p. 475). The mechanism for determining what counts as core is left to the political process, but it is clear that the primary social good driving the core is political participation.

The measure of adequacy used by Guthrie is student performance in core areas and to the extent an educational good is important to the public welfare, "then the government should make certain that all students who are reasonably capable of learning this material have done so" (Guthrie, 1983, p. 475). To ensure equal opportunity within the core, Guthrie proposed that the "core curriculum should be available to every eligible student in the state." Moreover, "the state should provide full financial support for this undertaking; none of the expenses should be met through local taxation. The amount of funding available to a local school should be a function of the needs of its students and of the cost differentials, if any, within the state. Additional state revenues should go to those schools that serve disadvantaged students or youngsters with other learning disabilities" (Guthrie, 1983, p. 476).

Guthrie goes on to make a distinction between establishing adequacy standards for the common good versus defining what is adequate for individuals. This distinction is motivated by an effort to distinguish outcome goals that Guthrie feels should be determined centrally vs. locally. Three mechanisms were posited that provided individuals choice for those educational activities that primarily serve private benefit. The first involves school choice and allows for families to select their public school. A second mechanism is a user fee system based on "educational coupons" for non-core offerings. Coupons would be available on a sliding scale cost plan and, "purchasers could use the coupons to secure educational services for themselves or for their children at any public or private school approved by the state. Among the many subjects that individual households might choose as supplements to the state-mandated core are foreign languages, music, art, dance, remedial reading, auto mechanics, or medieval architecture. Coupons should encourage diverse offerings by private entrepreneurs" (Guthrie, 1983, p. 476)

The final mechanism for private interest is a voucher system that allows for as much as six additional years of schooling beyond the compulsory schooling period at state expense. This voucher is intended for use at any time during one's life and may extend to higher education.

The Guthrie proposal offered elements of both horizontal adequacy (differentiating the core from educational extras) and vertical adequacy (establishing thresholds tied to social goods). Moreover, the heightened equal opportunity standard associated with the core is consistent with a sliding scale adequacy analysis that increases equal opportunity standards as educational goods move along the horizontal adequacy axis towards the core (Pijanowski, 2016).

William H. Clune (1997, p. 342-354) offers a theory for educational adequacy through an interconnected eleven-part "remedy:"

1. Target outcomes of an adequacy standard are defined by high school graduation and student assessment through minimum competency tests.
2. Empirical data of the extent and distribution of the exclusion from educational opportunity must serve as the foundation of reform in the financing and restructuring of high-poverty schools.
3. Every adequacy remedy should be introduced in experimental phases, starting with the lower grades to determine whether raising the achievement of disadvantaged children up to high minimum standards is possible within the reasonable range of resources.
4. The effects of mobility should be studied and appropriate administrative remedies (e.g., altering enrollment zones and providing transportation) should be implemented.
5. Schools should join an accelerated school network in an effort to share educational and change processes needed to produce desired outcomes.
6. A reasonable estimate of base funding should be established, extra instructional costs of \$500 to \$2000 per pupil should be assumed, and reasonable estimate of extra input costs should be made. Also important is an effort to offset extra costs by identifying and reallocating any waste or slack budget in the district or school, and to capture all existing revenues that are available for financing improved instruction.
7. High poverty schools should receive a high foundation grant, a special categorical grant, and supplements for extra costs, all guaranteed by the state under some reasonable system of sharing state and local taxes to support high minimum outcomes for all children.
8. Schools must be induced to join accelerated schools networks and discover the obstacles in the course of implementation.
9. Site-based management is recommended with accountability to the chosen model of accelerated education plus evidence of progress toward success on any reasonable measure of key outcomes such as student achievement and attainment.
10. High-poverty choice schools should be included in the adequacy remedy. The substantial deregulation and site-based management characteristic of voucher schools may be an advantage to success.
11. A focused policy initiative must be established at the state or district level.

The Clune proposal raises important questions regarding the technical operation of an adequacy approach, particularly in point two and three which identifies the need for a better understanding of the level of exclusion in high poverty schools and the financial viability of raising the achievement of the least advantaged to meet high adequacy standards. The answers to these



questions will affect balance between adequacy and efficiency and inform where additional resources are allocated.

Clune also discusses how equity standards may be affected by a judicial move towards outcome driven adequacy standards. Clune (1994, p. 380) offered a three part remedy which he refers to as *equity plus*:

1. A high foundation program, that is, an equal spending base rather than a guaranteed tax base, together with diminished emphasis on equality with the wealthiest districts;
2. Compensatory aid and services; and
3. Performance oriented educational policy (such as more ambitious curriculum, accountability for results, and a more efficient organizational structure).

Clune sees the move to high foundation programs and compensatory aid as a shift to focusing resources on meeting educational standards rather than fair access to tax resources. Clune discussed the next step in the evolution of a combined equity and adequacy approach as *true adequacy*. *True adequacy* moves away from traditional fiscal remedies by representing "a more complete integration of school finance, policy, and organization, reflected in tight coupling between" the needs of students, the structure of the school finance formula, accountability, instructional process, governance structure, and delivery standards (Clune, 1994, p. 381).

Although Clune's theory does not specifically refer to a tiered system of adequacy standards it can be inferred in the true adequacy design of accountability and school finance. Each community is allowed to select "any reasonable measure of key outcomes" and accountability is linked to that selection. If high school graduation with minimum achievement scores is the benchmark, a principled method of determining those thresholds is still necessary. Horizontal and vertical adequacy standards tied to social goods such as democratic participation are viable to drive local outcome standards. The school finance structure calls for full funding of programs for high minimum outcomes. This is a likely outcome of a sliding scale system that promotes strict equal opportunity standards for core educational goods.

### **Funding Adequacy**

Attacks on systems that rely heavily on local property taxes have typically centered on equity arguments, but there are implications for adequacy as well. School finance litigation has historically highlighted the inability of many districts to provide adequate levels of education to students (*Abbott v. Burke*, 1990; *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York*, 2001; Roellke, Green & Zielewski, 2004; *Rose v. Council for Better Education*, 1989). Traditional adequacy arguments view the local contribution to school funding as primarily providing "extras" after a threshold level has been reached. According to this scenario the role of the state is to provide a minimum level of educational resources for every district in the state. Once the threshold level has been met, the state's responsibility ends and local agencies are free to provide additional educational opportunities. Unless reforms are driven by some notion of high adequacy with heightened equal opportunity standards this approach could potentially lead to severe disparities in access to educational goods.

One version of high adequacy requires that the threshold is set at the level connected to reasonable access or participation in society. A high adequacy argument assures that local spending above the threshold buys only "extras" and all districts are provided with the resources to provide educational opportunities below what is considered extra. While conceptually high adequacy is appealing for providing rigid adequacy standards without compromising key components of equity, technically there are several difficulties with this approach.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to high adequacy is the cost most likely associated with raising the threshold to a high level of participation. Depending on the threshold set, it may be that the overwhelming majority of schools currently spend well below this point (e.g., all children succeed in college), and the cost of raising minimum standards in such a fashion would require an injection of new reform dollars that history would show to be politically difficult to secure. Moreover, it is reasonable to expect that even those districts already spending at high levels might prefer to opt for increased property tax relief over increasing the resources already earmarked for creating higher levels of educational opportunity. It is also likely that lower wealth districts facing increased fiscal strain and demands to provide a variety of social services that compete with education for scarce dollars would also opt to distribute funds more conservatively with regard to education.

Low adequacy is more attractive to high wealth districts that value local control and the ability to focus more local resources within their communities. The most common mechanism for guaranteeing some level of low adequacy is the foundation program. The foundation program has its roots in the Strayer-Haig model (Monk, 1990) and at its most simplistic compels local districts to levy property tax at a state identified minimum rate while guaranteeing a minimum level of revenue per pupil. When local resources are insufficient to reach the minimum revenue threshold state funds are allocated to compensate for the difference. While foundation programs have the potential to be successful in ensuring adequacy levels its use as a tool for equalizing educational opportunity is questionable. Pupil weighting is an example of a school financing mechanism that may be used in concert with a flat grant or foundation program to enhance equity. The goal of including pupil weights in a school finance formula is to provide resources that reflect the particular needs of different categories of students (Monk, 1990)

Establishing a foundation program based on adequacy reforms would require the state to establish threshold levels, goals, and program cost. In many cases thresholds and goals are already part of educational policy by setting graduation standards or exit exams for graduating seniors in core subject areas. However, determining the cost of these and other adequacy goals and determining a distribution system that allocates funds accordingly is a more difficult task. A variety of factors play a role in affecting the productivity of schools and influence the ability of students to benefit from educational resources. One important factor regarding the adequacy reform discussed here is that threshold levels are not set by measuring inputs or levels of educational resources. The primary focus is on the level of educational opportunity provided students and their attainment of educational goods. For this reason it seems counterintuitive to assume that a lack of productivity is merely a result of the need for more state resources. Conceptually this has legal as well as technical implications. An argument against the state claiming an inadequate education may revolve around the lack of resources provided by the state. However, if the state can show a lack of efficiency within the school district as a

contributing factor there may be reason to believe that fault rests at the local level. This argument becomes circular when one acknowledges that school districts act as agents of the state in distributing funds, but technically it raises the important issue determining what the goals are in adequacy. In a case where adequacy refers to levels of opportunity it may be legally irrelevant whether the issue is one of low funds or poor use of available funds. The remedy is an issue for the legislature and local agencies to reach, while the protection of adequacy and equity standards are the key conceptual and legal issues. Although courts have varied dramatically in how prescriptive their remedies have been to guide legislatures in their education reform efforts (Weishart, 2017).

However, it is reasonable that the state should provide schools with some level of resources that reasonably corresponds with the threshold levels established. There are several approaches for developing these resource standards. One approach is to examine schools that are already achieving at or above adequacy levels. The educational programs at these schools could be costed out taking into consideration the varying cost of purchasing educational goods. The results of such a study would be a guide to the costs of providing the threshold level of educational goods in a state and that average could serve as a guide for distributing resources within the state and setting a foundation level of support

The "successful schools" average cost approach has the benefit of relying on data that is easily accessible and drawing on a variety of districts that may employ several different delivery systems. This allows for greater variation in local decision making but may also represent a wide range in the cost of providing similar levels of educational opportunity. However resource levels are determined, it is important for states to consider several local factors that affect spending needs. Factors such as cost of living, size, and incidence of poverty may all play a role in determining the resources needed to reach a productivity threshold.

It may also be important to avoid undifferentiated measures of educational resources when determining the cost of reaching adequacy outcomes. Research has long suggested that *general* measures such as expenditures per pupil hold little if any correlation with educational outcomes (Monk, 1990; Hanushek, 1997), but deeper explorations into how those resources are spent are necessary to uncover the ways educational expenditures *can* improve student outcomes (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2015). As a result, it may be more informative to base cost decisions on research that addresses allocation decisions more deeply imbedded in the education delivery system. Teacher training, facilities, materials, and support staff are examples of measures that may be used to understand resource flows at disaggregated levels and their effect on productivity.

### **Implications for Policy**

The call for adequacy based reform may include an increased emphasis on centralized goal formation. The threshold setting element of adequacy arguments is easily linked with the process of determining performance measures in standards based systemic reform. In fact, one of the primary purposes of standards based reform is to define the specific goals of an entire educational system. This is intended to identify the necessary elements of an effective education so that resources may be more efficiently allocated, and to promote some level of unity through common educational experiences. The success of these objectives relies on some measure of

adequacy that ensures the level of education provided is effective and sufficient to provide the intended educational effect. Moreover, centralized goal formation lends itself to establishing similar adequacy standards across schooling systems. This is ultimately attractive to policy makers in that it offers a more reliable basis for comparison across schools, districts, and states.

However, there are legal, political, and delivery roadblocks to implementing adequacy reforms that compromise local control over the financing of schools and development of curriculum. Given the judicial protection of the right to local control in the past it seems unlikely that a governance structure in support of adequacy based reform could survive legally and politically without a balancing provision for local decision making. The nature and extent of local decision making needed to clear the political roadblocks remains unclear, but conceptually there are options for reconciling notions of adequacy, equity, and local control.

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## **Business Studies and Employability Skills Development in Junior Secondary Schools in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined business studies and employability skills development in junior secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis Kwara State. Five research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. A survey research designed was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprises all the 4570 teachers in all the private and public junior secondary schools and the employers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. However the target population includes all the 1305 business studies related teachers in all the junior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The sample of the study includes 250 teachers in all the junior secondary schools and 250 employers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. A structured questionnaire titled “Business Studies Questionnaire” (BSQ) and “Employability Skill Development” (ESDQ) were used to obtain relevant data. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that level of knowledge acquisition in business studies was rated high by business studies teachers, employability skills level of junior secondary schools students were rated high by the employers of labour also, there was positive relationship exists between accounting, office practice, marketing and employability skills development in junior secondary school Ilorin Metropolis Kwara State. The study concluded that the students that graduated within Ilorin metropolis are possessed with basic soft skills; digital, technical and analytical skills required that could make them employable after graduation. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that there should be provisions of qualified teachers who can instill the right knowledge, innovations, skills, and attitude to the students for them to be employable in the outer world.*

**Keywords:** *Business studies, employability, skill development*

### **Introduction**

Education is seen as tool used in the development of countries social, political, technological and economic endeavors. Also, as the process whereby the organized knowledge of the past

generation is made available for the current or newer generation. The general purpose of education is to equip an individual with the relevant skill required of the students to survive in the wider world. Several subjects had been designed by the curriculum developers to equip students with the necessary skills that will be required of them in the wider world. In labour markets the employers expect the graduates to demonstrate the knowledge gained to provide them with employability skill required for their job. The subjects that had been designed by experts to achieve these aims of developing employability skill in students of business studies include Office practice, Mathematics, Business Studies, Marketing, and Accounting among others.

Business studies have been regarded as a basic subject that is required of the students in the commercial world. In this period of economic meltdown, business studies can be considered as one of the fundamental ways for getting a success in life and to fit in the labour markets. It is also seen as a way of equipping our youth with necessary skills for them to stand on their own and not rely totally on white collar jobs. This has been the trend for decades of years which has reduced the rate of unemployment. The Collins Dictionary has defined business studies as “an academic subject that embraces areas such as accounting, marketing and economics.” Mostly, business studies are the study at an academic level of how businesses operate in the various global marketplaces, both at a practical and theoretical level. Various subjects are nested in business studies as stated above, which their purpose are different from one another, but they are all geared towards the same goals which is the inculcation of theoretical and practical aspect of business studies as a whole. Ahmed (2015) reported that business studies are an integral part of vocational education “which has encourages the use of the head and the hands in acquiring specific practical training required in business and industry at the junior secondary school level.” Business studies such as book keeping, commerce, office practice, shorthand and typewriting. While at the senior secondary school these studies are allowed to stand on their own as separate subjects whereby students move towards a career option which they are likely to pursue further professional training at the university. Oluwalola (2018) affirmed that learning of business studies in Junior Secondary schools required technical, psychomotor and critical thinking skills for effective learning to take place. If these skills are acquired it will enable the learner to have necessary skills to be self-reliant after their secondary education rather than looking for employment. Business studies as a course or program are defined as that course or aspect of study that inculcate in the students relevant skills that can be used in the business world. Therefore, the general objectives of Business Studies as stated in the Curriculum (2007), therefore are to: provide the orientation and basic skills with which to start an occupation for those who may not have opportunity for further training; provide basic business skills for personal use now and in the future; prepare students for further training in Business Studies; relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy; and develop basic skills in office occupations (Sakina, 2016). Also, Shuga (2010), explained that the main purposes for introducing Business Studies in secondary schools curriculum were to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to achieve success in the place of work, tertiary education or training, as well as our daily business life. In furtherance, Eze (2011), was in support of this statement when he added that the goals of business studies curriculum were to enable students to:

- ❖ gain an understanding of business concepts through the study of subjects such as commerce, shorthand, office practice, book keeping and computer;
- ❖ develop the skills, including critical thinking skills, and strategies required for self-employment;
- ❖ apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through the study of business to a variety of learning tasks and relate them to business phenomena on the local, national, and global levels; and
- ❖ develop lifelong learning skills that will help students adapt to technological advancements, the changing workplace, and the global economy (Sakina, 2016).

Employability is a multidimensional concept about individual capabilities of retaining a self-rewarding job, in employers' organizations as human resource requirements for fulfilling operational tasks to function effectively in order to meet up in the society. According to Yore and Knight (2006), employability skill is a set of achievements, skills, understanding, knowledge and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations and/or area of specialization, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the organization, the community and the economy at large. It is the college's responsibility to identify and implement the appropriate soft skills training approach to help students with this transition. An understanding of the attitudes in relation to these various skills is important because education and industry seem to work in separate systems, and employers historically have not clearly communicated their needs and expectations for the college graduates that they have sought to hire (HEA 2006). Considering the extent to which business studies contribute to the employability skill development of the students in the junior secondary schools, certain aspects and variables that contributed to this development include the course combination which include accounting, marketing, and office practice. Hence, these areas will be used in the measure of business studies in this study.

An employability skill has to do with the appropriate skills that have to be possessed by the students in order for them to function well in the world of work. Employability skills are the basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job and these can be divided into three categories: Basic Academic Skills, Higher-Order Thinking Skills, and Personal Qualities (Robinson, 2000). In furtherance, employability skills has been seen by Overtoom (2000) as transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. These skills are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. Employers today are not looking for employees that are only capable in basic academic skills like reading, writing, science, mathematics, oral communication and listening, but they also seek and prefer students with higher order thinking skills like learning, reasoning, creative thinking, decision making and problem solving skills. They also prefer employees that have personal qualities which include responsibility, self-confidence, self-control, social skill, honesty, integrity, adaptability and flexibility, team spirit, self-direction, good attitude to work, cooperation, self-motivation and self-management (Romer, 2015). Employability skills are typically considered as essential qualifications for many job opportunities and hence have become necessary for an individual's employment success at just about any level within a business environment (Business Dictionary, 2015). Employability skills are necessary for success in the modern workplace and in the world of work.



Students' employability skills have been given so much attention where many countries of the world now devise a means by which the students are being tested whether they are equipped with the required skills or not. For instance, the Conference Board of Canada developed a checklist of employability skills that will be needed for one to enter, stay in, and progress in this present era (CBCES, 2000). Employability skills should be embedded in the curriculum; universities employ a range of initiatives to make them more explicit to students for the acquisition of the skill (Cranmer, 2006). Employability skills are the non-technical skills and knowledge necessary for effective participation in the workforce. They can include skills such as communication, self-management, problem solving and teamwork. They are also sometimes referred to as generic skills, capabilities, enabling skills or key competencies (Nishad, 2013). Lovejoy (2000), also said that in order to integrate employability standards into the curriculum, technical educators are required to use innovative teaching techniques. While designing the curriculum, planners should involve the industry partners so that they can incorporate real workplace procedures and systems in instructional strategies so they can be incorporated into the teaching and learning process by using innovative teaching methods and implementing authentic assessment so that students will be able to apply skills in real life situations (Riebe, Roepen, Santarelli, & Marchioro 2010). From the foregoing, it is therefore necessary to determine the influence of business studies and employability skill development among junior secondary school students. It is based on this background that the study of business studies and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State is paramount to study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The outcries of parents and employers of labour have sensitized the educators about the quality of education offered to the students and the influence of such education on the students' and the society at large. What lead to the lamentation of people is the fact that the educational institutions are said to be producing half-baked graduates who are not equipped with relevant skills that will be required of them when they get to the larger society. The hope of every citizen is that the students produced should be able to fit into any job relevant to their area of study in schools. This is because the employers are finding it difficult to rely heavily on the product of the school. This is marked by their statement that the graduates are not prepared and they do not have the required skill to perform the job offer to them based on the skills the students bring to the society. Based on the observation of the researcher and interaction with some employers of labours, it was discovered that the students need to go through another set of training when they got employed as the skills received from schools cannot make them fit into the job offered to them.

Under these circumstances, it is generally believed that the study of business studies should bring about development of students with appropriate skills required of them in the business world (Sakina, 2016). The process of imparting unto the students the education that will make them competent enough to be able to fit into the system whenever they are employed is far from being realized. The knowledge acquired by students' while in schools cannot be measured with the soft skills that will make them employable after graduation. To address this, there is need to empirically study and ascertain the relationship that exist between business studies and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between business studies and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. examine the level of knowledge acquisition in business studies in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State;
2. ascertain the level of employability skill of business studies students in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State;
3. examine the relationship between accounting and employability skills development in junior secondary school Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State;
4. find out the relationship between office practice and employability skills development in junior secondary school Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State;
5. ascertain the relationship between marketing and employability skills development in junior secondary school Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions are raised to guide this study.

1. What is the extent of business studies in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?
2. What is the level of employability skill development of business studies students in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?
3. Examine the relationship between accounting and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?
4. Establish the relationship between office practice and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?
5. What is the relationship between marketing and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State?

### **Hypotheses**

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between accounting and employability skills development in junior secondary school, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant relationship between office practice and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.
- Ho<sub>3</sub> There is no significant relationship between marketing and employability skill development in junior secondary school, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The researcher considered this design appropriate for the study because the study examined the relationship that existed between business studies and employability skill development in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The population of this study was comprised of all the 4570 teachers in all the private and public junior secondary schools and the employers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. However the target population of this study included of all the 1305 business studies related teachers in all of the junior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The sample of the study included 250 teachers in all the junior secondary schools and 250 employers in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique were used to sample 297 employers in Ilorin Metropolis while stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 297 teachers out of

1305 teachers in Ilorin Metropolis. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample the employers in order to give all the employers equal chance to participate in the study, while a stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the teachers to ensure there was a fair representative from each school sampled. The instruments that were used in the collection of data were two set of questionnaires titled “Business Studies Questionnaire” (BSQ) and “Employability Skill Development Questionnaire” (ESDQ) which was filled by the teachers and the employers respectively. It was validated by four experts from University of Ilorin and Kwara State University Malete. The reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. The instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.76 and 0.80 respectively for each of the clusters. The researcher with the assistance of field researchers administered the questionnaires to the schools and the employers were approached directly in their organization. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions raised to guide the study, while inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

The result of the study are presented and analyzed in the following tables.

**Research Question One:** What is the level of knowledge acquisition in business studies in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State as rated by business studies teachers?

**Table 1**  
**Level of Knowledge Acquisition in Business Studies in Junior Secondary Schools**

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	0	0
Moderate	20	8
High	230	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Key: Low = 15-29; Moderate = 30-44; High = 45-60**

Table 1 indicates the level of knowledge acquisition in business studies as rated by the teachers from sampled junior schools selected in Ilorin Metropolis. The level of knowledge acquisition in business studies was rated high (92%) by business studies teachers. This implies that the subjects considered under business studies have a high level of basic business knowledge that provides students with the ability to classify data into an element of accounting, important of record keeping and exchange of goods and values with others after their graduation from basic 9 class and prepared them with knowledge that will make them employable and self-reliance.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of employability skill of business studies students in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State as rated by employers of labour?

**Table 2****Level of Employability Skills of Business Studies Students in Junior Secondary Schools**

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	0	0
Moderate	31	12.4
High	219	87.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

**Key: Low = 15-29; Moderate = 30-44; High = 45-60**

Table 2 shows the level of employability skills of business studies students as rated by employers of labour sampled within Ilorin Metropolis. The employability skills level of junior secondary school students were rated high (87.6%) by the employers of labour. This means that graduates of junior secondary schools (Upper Basic 9) possessed with basic soft skills, digital and technical skills and analytical skills required that could make them employable after graduation.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Before performing the correlation analysis, preliminary analysis was conducted to check for outliers (that is, data points that are out on their own, either very high or very low, or away from the main cluster of points). Hence, with the knowledge of serious influence outliers can have on outcome of analyses, extreme outliers were removed from the data set which reduced the sample from 250 to 229.

Ho<sub>0</sub> There is no significant relationship between business studies and employability skills in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

**Table 3****Business Studies and Employability Skills Development in Junior Secondary Schools**

Variables	N	R	p Value	Decision
Business Studies	229	.147	.026	<b>Ho<sub>1</sub> Rejected</b>
Employability Skills Development	229			

**\*Significant  $p < 0.05$**

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson correlation analysis value, showed a low, positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = 0.147$ ,  $n = 229$ ,  $p = 0.026 < 0.05$ . Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a positive significant relationship exists between the business studies and employability skills development of junior secondary schools' students, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between accounting and employability skills development in junior secondary school, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

**Table 4****Accounting and Employability Development Skills in Junior Secondary Schools**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>p Value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Accounting	229	.080	.231	<b>Ho<sub>1</sub> Accepted</b>
Employability Skills Development	229			

**Non-Significant  $p > 0.05$** 

From Table 4, the Pearson Products Moment Correlation analysis value revealed a positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = .080$ ,  $n = 229$ ,  $p = .231 > 0.05$ . Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that a positive non-significant relationship exists between the accounting and employability skills development of junior secondary schools' students, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant relationship between office practice and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

**Table 5****Office Practice and Employability Skills Development in Junior Secondary Schools**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>p Value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Office Practice	229	.060	.364	<b>Ho<sub>2</sub> Accepted</b>
Employability Skills Development	229			

**\*Non-Significant  $p > 0.05$** 

From Table 5, the Pearson Correlation analysis value indicated a positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = .028$ ,  $n = 229$ ,  $p = .668 > 0.05$ . Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This means that a positive non-significant relationship exists between the office practice and employability skills development of junior secondary schools' students, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

Ho<sub>3</sub> There is no significant relationship between marketing and employability skill development in junior secondary school, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

**Table 6****Marketing and Employability Development Skills in Junior Secondary Schools**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>p Value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Marketing	229	.147*	.03	<b>Ho<sub>1</sub> Rejected</b>
Employability Skills Development	229			

**\*Significant  $p < 0.05$**

As shown in Table 6, the Pearson Correlation analysis value showed a low, positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = 0.147$ ,  $n = 229$ ,  $p = 0.03 < 0.05$ . Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a positive significant relationship exists between the Marketing and employability skills development of junior secondary schools' students, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

From the study it was found that the level of knowledge acquisition in business studies was rated high by business studies teachers. This implies that the subjects considered under business studies have a high level of basic business knowledge that provides students with the ability to classify data into an element of accounting, important of record keeping and exchange of goods and values with others after their graduation from basic 9 class and prepared them with knowledge that will make them employable and self-reliance. The findings is in line with the study of Albrecht and Sack (2000) said that to meet the challenges of the changing world, the schools should provide graduate with strong technical knowledge and the essential accounting skills to gain the knowledge and the essential skills to gain employment and make an immediate contribution to a business

The finding of the study revealed that employability skills level of junior secondary schools students were rated high by the employers of labour. This means that graduates of junior secondary schools (Upper Basic 9) possessed with basic soft skills, digital and technical skills and analytical skills required that could make them employable after graduation. This is in agreement with the opinion of Romer (2015) who stated that employability skills of the students, particularly fundamental skills, teamwork skills and personal management skills, as assessed by the students themselves and their on-the-job training supervisors or employers, are above average.

The findings also revealed that there was a significant relationship between business studies and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. This results is in line with the view of Sakina (2016) that significant differences exist in the extent to which business studies influences students' skills acquisition of keyboarding skills for self reliance and also students acquiring of computer skills for self reliance in junior secondary schools, Kaduna State.

The study indicates that there was a positive non significant relationship between accounting and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. This study agreed with the result of Seedwell (2015) that employers expect more knowledge of accounting packages and spreadsheet competencies for entry level graduates.

The hypothesis tested reveals that there exists a positive non significant relationship between office practice and employability skills development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The findings of this study differs from that of Seedwell (2015) who stated that as far as technological skills are concerned, employers indicated that the students are better trained in word-processing and knowledge of communications software skills. This implies that whatever the nature of the office and the way it is being operated, if the students are exposed to the adequate knowledge of office practice as a course in studying business studies, it will makes them to be more productive in the operation and the management of an office

The study also revealed that a positive significant relationship exist between marketing and employability skill development in junior secondary schools, Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The findings is in line with the study of Harrigan and Hulbert (2011) highlight how analytical skills are in short supply among marketing graduates, and they suggest integrating data analysis in marketing courses and developing new courses completely dedicated to analytical skills in the curriculum. This will enable to fit in, in the world of work and meet up with the demand of the employers in the labour market.

### **Conclusion**

It is a general believe that the knowledge of business studies will provide the students with the required employability skills development when they got to the world of work. Based on the findings of this study, most of the subjects considered under business studies have a high level of business knowledge that provides students with the ability to classify data into an element of accounting, important of record keeping, and exchange of goods and values with others after their graduation from basic 9 and prepared them with knowledge that will make them employable and self-reliance and the students that graduated within Ilorin metropolis are possessed with basic soft skills, digital and technical skills and analytical skills required that could make them employable after graduation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the followings recommendations are made;

1. There should be provisions of qualified teacher who can instill the right knowledge, skills, and attitude to the students for them to be employable in the outer world.
2. There should also be allocations of enough time to teach the business related subject for better understanding so as to improve their intellectual and application aspect.
3. There should be provision of facilities to be used in order to enable them familiar with the techniques on the methods of operation.
4. Business Studies curriculum contents should innovative and properly taught so as to encourage acquisition of accounting, office practice and marketing skills in junior secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara state;
5. Business Studies and vocational training at the junior secondary level should be encouraged through proper funding, provision of state of the art equipment for better acquisition in order to make them employable;
6. Business Studies curriculum contents should be accurately delivered in order to achieve the desired objective of students which will be of benefit to them in the labour market for students in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara state.

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## **Does Latent Conflict Resulting from Deficit Thinking Among Educators Limit Latino Success in Early Childhood Programs?**

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### **Abstract**

Despite longstanding attempts to intervene in their early social and academic development, Latino students' traditionally low achievement levels have not improved over time. Many believe success has been impacted by limited preschool participation as fewer than half of eligible Latino preschoolers are enrolled and actively benefitting from available early childhood programs. This study explored commonly held reasons for limited early childhood attendance through use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Findings suggest parents have an interest and even a willingness to involve their children in early learning programming. However, perceptions shared by educators who participated in the study may not align with this. The information presented in this article stands to shed a new light on the relationship between parents and educators including those responsible for the decisions surrounding early intervention programming. Ultimately, findings suggest school leaders and policy makers very likely need to look past old assumptions in order to establish new pathways more capable of maximizing Latino participation in early learning programs.

**Keywords:** early intervention, critical race theory, Latino, opportunity gap, policy

## **Introduction**

The documented disparity between achievement results for minority students and their white counterparts is only exacerbated by the compounding effects of poverty (Carter & Welner, 2013). By the time Latino children, often in poverty, reach Kindergarten, they can be delayed anywhere between 12 and 18 months socially and academically (Carter & Welner, 2013; Hernandez, Takanishi, & Marotz, 2009). Decades worth of nation-wide intervention through early childhood programs like Head Start have consistently failed to close the early achievement gaps, often leaving the door open to “deficit thinking” patterns where blame is typically directed toward minority students and their families (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018; Walker, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Critical race theory, alternatively, finds fault with unsupported societal expectations and personally held attitudes believed to promote long-term bias towards minorities.

This article reports findings and presents implications from a study based in Arizona that had three primary focuses, each tied to the outcomes, interpretations and expectations just referenced. The first was to analyze Latino parents’ beliefs and the corresponding values that influence decisions concerning whether or not to send their children to early childhood programs. Aligned with this, it also explored parent or guardian beliefs concerning the meaning and value of school readiness. Finally, it investigated parents’ beliefs regarding their role in preparing their children for entrance into Kindergarten. Collectively, these areas of focus combined to provide a foundation from which to address implications for study, practice and finally policy.

## **Review of Literature**

The literature consistently denoted children across the United States of minority and low socio-economic origins are at risk of failing to achieve at nationally targeted testing levels (Saracho, 2015; Smith & Dixon, 1995). There is such an evident gap between students coming from a low socio-economic origin and those coming from better beginnings, that the disparity has been termed the “opportunity gap” by Carter and Welner (2013). While deficit thinking proponents would potentially assign blame to a lack of parental interest and engagement, there is substantial documented evidence that poor nutrition and a lack of access to early childhood programs could well be considered among the valid reasons responsible for the noticeable delays for minority and low SES students who are showing up in Kindergarten each year (Daily, Burkhouser, & Halle, 2010).

According to Saracho (2015), early childhood programs for minorities were largely originated because of high-level investment in the cultural deficit perspective. Programs like Head Start were not only originated because of deficit thinking, but were also designed, implemented and continue to be operated according to the same mindset which has always stressed “fixing” family structures, not just educating children in classrooms.

Proponents of the deficit paradigm often suggest that low enrollments for minority children serve as proof that the problem truly rests with the values and priorities of minority cultures. While they may cite statistics including the lowest percentage of attendance (27%) at early childhood centers (USDoE Institute of Education Science, 2014) as their proof, others (High, LaGasse, Becker, Ahlgren, & Gardner, 2000; USDoE Institute of Education Science, 2014) represent the low turnout as evidence of other problems like limited access or design flaws in the program as well as recruitment and operational approaches.

Blame is frequently assigned to cultural values according to Yosso (2005) and practices that are different from the mainstream segments of society. The tendency to debate the most important “cause” often limits and at times even effectively puts an end to constructive dialogue instead of moving forward and creating more comprehensive policy addressing what can be done to improve learning conditions for students who are at risk. There is a tremendous amount at stake with this issue. Knowledge is the capital that drives success in most societies, and America is no exception (Engle and Black, 2008). According to Yosso (2005) there are those who are politically motivated to sound sympathetic, all the while implying enough has already been done.

According to Durand (2011) as well as Hatcher, Nuner and Paulsel (2012), parents are not the obstacle they are portrayed to be by deficit thinking proponents, and they do in fact value readiness skills. Ultimately, it is important to define readiness in a more equitable manner (Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel, 2012), wherein the focus is limited less by perceptions concerning cultural limitations and instead strives to foster more agreement concerning the importance of gaining the needed pre-literacy skills found to be so vital for success in Kindergarten. Slutzky with DeBruin-Parecki (2019) noted through their extensive investigation into the topic that there is little agreement concerning a definition for readiness. Further, they conveyed that the intense national emphasis being placed on standards and accountability has swung the definition back towards primarily an academics-oriented position in places like Texas. For purposes of this study and this article, readiness has been conceptualized more holistically to not only emphasize measured academic development, but to also include social, emotional, and physical development as equally important and less discriminatory components of a well-balanced readiness model.

### **Focus of Study**

Emphasizing investment in future success ahead of perpetuating blame, it is of vital importance to better understand the underlying dynamics responsible for the disconnect between minority students and government funded early childhood programs. The study referenced in this article analyzed factors including beliefs, values and knowledge of Latino families in comparison to perceptions of the educators serving them. More specifically it also addressed the role of mothers and the relationships between families and schools. Ultimately, the study focused on parental attitudes towards early childhood programs, their beliefs concerning school readiness in general, and finally their perceptions concerning their role in preparing their children for the increasing demands of Kindergarten.

### **Research Methods**

A mixed case study approach was utilized in the study as it provided a complimentary approach for understanding complex social phenomenon (Check & Schutt, 2012; Creswell, 2007 and Yin, 2014). The survey instrument was developed by way of a multi-step process following extensive review of the relevant literature. The researcher consulted with several practicing colleagues in the field of education during survey construction. Two professors from the university provided critiques to assist in refinement of the first draft. Subsequent feedback was provided by three suggested experts in the field, and after modifications were made, the instrument was pilot tested with a small population outside of the sample and modified a final time with assistance from the expert panel already described to achieve the final protocol.

Purposeful sampling was utilized to maximize access to both representative parents within the overall school population, as well as expert educators available through the cooperating school district. The population for this study came from an urban Arizona school district serving students with a low socioeconomic background and high levels of minority students and families. In all 132 of a contacted 586 parents responded to a 30 question Likert-scale survey instrument, and 5 voluntarily completed the follow-up interview. Out of a possible 99 school employees who were contacted for survey, 24 responded. Microsoft Excel was utilized for analysis of descriptive quantitative data as hypothesis testing was not completed for this study. While transcription and analysis were completed for all survey responses. Findings will be described next and will be presented according to their connection to the original research questions.

## Findings

### (RQ 1) What are Latino parents’ cultural beliefs regarding the meaning of Kindergarten readiness?

Educators (both teachers and administrators) who completed the survey did not give Latino parents credit for being aware of services available to them and their children. Along with having awareness of program availability, parents were aware that standards and expectations for children appeared to have changed as compared to what was in place with earlier generations. Whereas letter recognition and counting were sufficient in the past, there was strong parental awareness that this was no longer the case. It was also realized that social adjustment was important. Table 1 shows the actual responses of Latino parents as they were addressing readiness expectations. Table 2 shows teacher responses. In all the results indicate strong support for important benchmarks. Also, as shown with statement 2.5, parents did not demonstrate any proclivity towards keeping children home because they were young. Once again, administrators scored considerably lower (61.6% to 90%) when rating Latino parents’ understanding and acceptance that it is important for their children to be ready for Kindergarten. Finally, and understandably, numerous parents indicated it was important for the child to know English ahead of entering school.

Table 1  
*Parents’ Views on Readiness by Percent*

Parents’ Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
2.1. It’s important for my child to be able to express his/her needs.	78.8	17.4	.8				3.0
2.2. It’s important that my child learns to respect authority.	82.6	12.9	.8				
2.3. It’s important that my child values and respect our family.	76.5	16.7	3.0		.8		3.0
2.4. It’s important that my child learns moral values and good manners, and behaves appropriately.	78.8	17.4	.8				3.0
2.5. He/ she is still too young to go to preschool.	6.8	4.5	8.3	9.8	39.4	20.5	10.6

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2  
*Teachers' Views on Readiness by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
2.1. Latino parents believe that it's important for their child to be able to express his/her needs.	30.8	38.5	23.1		7.7		
2.2. Latino parents believe that it's important that their child learns to respect authority.	30.8	30.8	30.8		7.7		
2.3. Latino parents believe that it's important that their child values and respects his/her family.	46.2	46.2	7.7				
2.4. Latino parents believe that it's important that their child learns moral values and good manners, and behaves appropriately.	23.1	30.8	38.5	7.7			
2.5. Latino parents believe their children are still too young to go to preschool.	7.7	15.4	38.5	30.8	7.7		

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

**(RQ 2) What are the reasons leading Latino parents and guardians to enroll their children in an early childhood program?**

As was also demonstrated in RQ 1, educators again underestimated parent awareness of and commitment to early education. Only 15% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that parents possessed sufficient information about programming options, whereas 56% of responding parents agreed or strongly agreed concerning their awareness. Teachers came in more toward the middle between both other groups. As the Table 3 shows, parents were aware of and supportive of programs and options for their children. This was further supported by interview response. Additional interview feedback indicated that separation of a child from their mother is a very real issue. Still, along with exposing children to English, there was expressed awareness that the change in daily routine and development of a relationship at school was to be viewed as a positive for the child. In all, parents had an “improvement” outlook once again, whereas educators (Table 4) tended to continue to uphold a more negative and perhaps outdated outlook suggesting parents were lacking in awareness or values as has been portrayed by earlier research.

Table 3

*Parents' Views on Enrollment by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
3.1. I found plenty of information regarding preschool programs available within the district, which facilitated my decision.	32.6	23.5	8.3	3.8	1.5	.8	29.5
3.2. I was confident that the preschool program is good and would prepare my child for kindergarten.	48.5	18.9	3.0	1.5			28.0
3.3. I wanted my child to be well prepared for kindergarten and beyond.	59.8	10.6	2.3				27.3
3.4. I had sufficient information on the importance of preschool programs, which made the decision to send my child to a preschool program the easier to make.	38.6	25.0	5.3	1.5	.8	.8	28.0

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 4

*Teachers' Views on Enrollment by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
3.1. There is plenty of information regarding preschool programs available within the district, which facilitated their decision.		38.5	7.7	30.8	23.1		
3.2. Parents have confidence regarding the ECP's success.	7.7	30.8	30.8	15.4	15.4		
3.3. Parents want to ensure their children are more prepared to school.	7.7	53.8	30.8				
3.4. Parents have sufficient educational background to make the decision to send their children to ECP such as information about the importance of preschool programs.		46.2	23.1	23.1	7.7		

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

**(RQ 3) What are the reasons Latino parents choose not to enroll their children in an early childhood program (ECP)?**

If parents sent their children to programs, they were directed to opt out of this line of questioning for RQ 3. This means some care needs to be exercised in viewing the results because they represent a smaller and very specific sub sample. As can be seen in Table 5, there really were no visible trends to report. Parents had individual reasons for individual decisions that were based more so on specific needs at a given time with a given child as opposed to pursuing general inclinations, attitudes or cultural values. Administrators and teachers (Table 6) did reveal a trend, however, as 62% and 61% respectively responded in a way that reinforced their being of a belief that lack of parent information was the primary reason children did not attend early childhood programming when it was available to them. Further, more than half of the administrators concluded that parents were resistant toward programs because of their immigration status when parents themselves did not report this. Clearly as shown in Table 3 and parent statement 4.6 this is nowhere near the case in actuality.

It should be noted that whereas a subset of parents who “did not” send at least one of their children responded to RQ 3, all educators responded. Parents responded based on decisions and their own actual reasons for those decisions. Educators lacking that information instead based their responses on perceptions and attitudes along with values that each question and ensuing response seems to suggest are reflective of their overall impressions and widely held attitudes toward Latino parents and their motivations. In contrast, those parents who did respond to RQ 3 because of at least some level of opt out with at least one child, did indicate changed awareness over time (conditions were no longer how they had originally remembered them before) as opposed to the educators whos’ perceptions viewpoints appeared to remain unchanged.

Table 5  
*Parents’ Struggles with Enrollment by Percent*

Parents’ Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
4.1. I didn’t find enough information regarding preschool programs available within the district, and for that reason, I didn't enroll my child in a program.	8.3	7.6	6.8	5.3	9.1	3.8	59.1
4.2. I was not confident about the program’s success in preparing my child for kindergarten.	7.6	3.8	3.8	2.3	15.2	12.1	55.3
4.3. The programs available required too much parent involvement (such as long interviews) or a lot of documentation, etc).	7.6	8.3	6.1	6.8	10.6	6.1	54.5
4.4. I do not think that preschool programs are	4.5	2.3	3.8	6.1	16.7	11.4	55.3



	important for children to be prepared, and I chose to let my child to stay with me at home.							
4.5.	I didn't have enough information about the programs and how to have access to them.	8.3	8.3	6.1	4.5	9.1	8.3	55.3
4.6.	Sometimes we're afraid of receiving government assistance because of our immigration status.	9.8	6.1	5.3	2.3	9.1	12.9	54.5
4.7.	My child is too young to go to school.	3.0	2.3	3.8	3.8	21.2	9.8	56.1

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 6  
*Teachers' Struggles with Enrollment by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
4.1. Lack of information regarding ECP's	30.8	30.8	23.1	15.4			
4.2. Lack of confidence on the program's success.	7.7		23.1	46.2	15.4	7.7	
4.3. Parents think that enrolling their children in an ECP requires too much parent involvement (such as long interviews) or a lot of documentation, etc).	7.7	15.4	23.1	38.5	15.4		
4.4. Parents think that preschool programs are not important for the children to be prepared and chose to keep them at home.		30.8	38.5	15.4	7.7	7.7	
4.5. Parents lack the necessary information to navigate the system.	7.7	38.5	38.5	7.7		7.7	
4.6. Families fear approaching government assistance because of their immigration status.	23.1	38.5	23.1	15.4			

4.7. Parents think their child is too young to go to school.		38.5	38.5	23.1
4.8. Families have application barriers due to limited English proficiency or difficulty documenting income.	23.1	23.1	23.1	30.8

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

**(RQ 4) What do Latino parents believe are their main responsibilities in preparing their children for Kindergarten?**

Overall, in the responses they provided parents (Table 7) indicated a supportive position toward early learning and toward childhood programming. In statement 5.6 only 26% indicated a belief that they could prepare their child better at home than they could expect others to do. Tied to earlier information, some parents did indicate having the means to do this, whereas those who lacked the means (expressed in earlier questions) voiced a preference for learning to occur at school. Administrators again tended to underestimate the viewpoints of parents, but in a less negative sense than proved to be the case with other questions. In fact most disagreed (69%) with the proposition that Latino parents preferred to prepare their children for Kindergarten at home, where as teachers (Table 8) responded in a more neutral manner.

Only one parent indicated it was her job to teach academic skills to her child. Though several indicated that school was a better place and better equipped for teaching academic and social skills.

Table 7  
*Parents' Preschool Priorities by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
5.1. It's important for my child to have social emotional skills, such as expressing his/her feelings, problem solving, waiting for his/her turn, etc.	59.8	27.3	2.3	.8	.8	1.5	7.6
5.2. It's important for my child to have early reading skills, such as vocabulary, letter recognition, letter association, etc.	65.2	21.2	4.5	1.5			7.6
5.3. It's important for my child to learn early math skills, such as counting,	61.4	23.5	5.3	1.5	1.5		6.8

	patterns, shapes and measurements.							
5.4.	It's important for my child to develop fine and gross motor skills.	63.6	21.2	5.3	2.3		.8	6.8
5.5.	I think my child will learn all of the above in kindergarten.	47.7	19.7	8.3	5.3	9.8	2.3	6.8
5.6.	I can prepare my child better for kindergarten at home.	16.7	9.1	13.6	19.7	19.7	14.4	6.8

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 8  
*Teachers' Preschool Priorities by Percent*

Parents' Statements	SA	A	AMD	DMA	D	SD	SKIP
5.1. Teaching social emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, recognition and expression of their feelings, social interactions and respect.	15.4	15.4	15.4	46.2	7.7		
5.2. Teaching language and early literacy skills, such as vocabulary, letter recognition, letter association and early writing.	7.7	15.4	30.8	15.4	23.1	7.7	
5.3. Teaching math skills, such as counting, patterns, shapes and measurements.	15.4	7.7	30.8	15.4	23.1	7.7	
5.4. Teaching fine and gross motor skills.	7.7	15.4	30.8	15.4	23.1	7.7	
5.5. They think their children will learn all of the above in kindergarten.	23.1	46.1	15.4	15.4			
5.6. They prefer to prepare their children for kindergarten at home.		7.7	30.8	38.5	15.4	7.7	

*Note.* SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, AMD = Agree more than Disagree, DMA = Disagree more than Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

## **Discussion**

A recent report published by First Things Arizona (2016) indicates that the state's youth are more likely to be born into poverty than peers found anywhere else across the United States. According to the same source, the youth across Arizona are also less likely to attend preschool than comparable groups across America. This is a problem that educators in Arizona are very familiar with, and have grappled with for a long time. Ultimately, understanding of the long-held challenges they face may help explain the reported perceptions of educators who participated in this study.

Results from the surveys and interviews only represent a small slice of Arizona thinking, but appear to confirm some enduring stereotypes, while honestly crushing others. Latino parents regularly rated and voiced support for early childhood programs. They recognized changes in standards and readiness expectations, and gave consistent indication that they were able to come to terms with those changes. They acknowledged their own cultural dispositions and consistently committed to responses which were supportive of the interventions that were intended and developed for their children. They saw the needs and the benefits that were present.

In contrast to parents, responses from the educators who completed the survey were consistent with the mindset of the deficit thinking paradigm in that they consistently rated Latino parents as resistant, uninformed and therein the cause of the problem. In as much as parents did not report overt tensions, there is reason to wonder where the educator perceptions are coming from. Are they personally held positions, or do they result from repeated exposure to information provided from reports documenting the dire conditions in Arizona? While this study exposed this question, it will take further investigation to definitively determine what the true educator motivations were.

## **Conclusions**

In light of these findings one really has to wonder how much parents potentially feel the effects of bias that is potentially held by some of the very people they depend on to provide their children's education. And, as result of these feelings, how much does diminished trust lead to limited school engagement and stunted future success. Yosso (2005) indicated that such bias is highly discriminatory and indicative of the thinly disguised racism that plagues society. There is no indication that parents are aware of the perceptions of the professional educational staff, which is probably a good thing. Still, according to Zamudio, Russell, Rios and Bridgeman (2011), bias is felt whether it is expressed or not, and it often makes minority parents feel unwelcomed.

Perhaps differences are not as drastic as numbers obtained through this study would suggest. There was indication that parents may have only recently modified their thinking and their perceptions to be in line with new standards and new expectations. Their attitude as expressed in this study is significant, but could also represent very recent change that evolves slowly and quietly. It is possible that the viewpoints of the educators revealed through this study represent outdated understandings as much as they represent heartfelt and intended bias. In any case, whatever the real reasons may be, implications of the study are significant and are addressed next.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Research that more broadly examined the outcomes from this study across all of Arizona and other parts of the United States would be important high stakes scholarship. The literature acknowledges critical race theory, but only to a lesser extent considers its impact on poor early childhood program attendance rates. It is reasonable to expect diminished engagement and limited success to be logical results of prolonged distrust of schools and their leaders. There is need to look into this perspective further. It would be beneficial to compare perceptions of these parents to those of non-minority parents to potentially better understand if there is also evidence of potential bias toward the students and families early childhood programs are expected to serve.

### **Implications for Practice**

School leaders need to be made aware of findings reported here. They need to work hard to avoid viewing the information presented here as condemnation and instead treat it as a powerful wakeup call. They need to work with the perhaps “newer” attitudes expressed by parents in this study and abandon old dead-end approaches in favor of building new understandings and new working arrangements with the stakeholders they serve.

### **Implications for Policy**

To add to the challenges unveiled by this study, programs like Head Start, though well intended, have some of the most minimally credentialed, minimally supported, and minimally compensated employees conceivable. There is tremendous disservice at a national policy level in consistently providing the documented neediest students across the nation with the least qualified resources available. To then find fault with their parents’ cultural leanings, and consistently offer this as the root cause for their ongoing lack of success is truly demeaning and representative of societal prejudice that too easily goes unchallenged in America.

Even with a small sample size and the clear need to replicate this study, the potential policy implications at local, state and federal levels are staggering. At best there is need to update the thinking of service providers and leadership to be more in line with the more progressive attitudes expressed by parents in this study. At worst the findings presented here affirm the underpinnings of critical race theory and identify tremendous need to reexamine the overall thinking and the leadership approaches linked with programs for minority and low SES student populations.

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