

If We Want to Create a Truly Fair and Just Society, We Should Abolish Private Schools. Do You Agree? Discuss with Reference to the Relevant Theoretical Literature.

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to discuss whether private schools should be abolished if we desire to create a truly fair and just society. This essay elaborates some advantages and disadvantages of private school abolishment. For my own point of view, if our aim is to create a truly fair society, the private school system needs to be abolished.

KEYWORDS

Fair and Just Society; Abolish Private Schools; Advantages and Disadvantages; Private School System.

1. INTRODUCTION

A major aim of this essay is to draw attention to construct a fair and just society and the discussion is whether the private school should be abolished in order to achieve the goal of the fair society[1]. In Rawls's theory, even though the fair and just society exists in the ideal world, decision makers and all of citizens can attempt to achieve the goal of equality for the ideal world(Rawls,2001). Private school system in this context triggers the unfairness and it impairs the right of poor people. Hence, some scholars claim that the private school system need to be abandoned(Swift,2004). Without private schools, the social class is not the determinant of the school entry requirement(Swift,2004). In this essay, the equality in education will be initially stated, since the definition of equality is indeed complicated. The second part is the impairments of the private school system to poor parents and children. The unequal educational resources, unequal educational outcomes and social exclusiveness will be demonstrated respectively. Eventually, when the private school system is abolished, there are still some improvements in public school system for the high quality education(Christensen,Aaron& Clark,2005). For my own viewpoint, if we want to create a fair society, we need to abolish private schools.

2. EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

This essay question is pertinent to the construction of fair and just society, though the society in reality barely can achieve the full justice and equality(Brighouse,2014). Nevertheless, in Rawls's theory(2001), he mentioned the ideal world that people can live in a fully just and equal society, and the requirement is that people with similar talents and abilities deserve equal opportunity to pursue their favorable positions irrespective of any social class people belong to(Brighouse,2014)[2]. Similarly, Lynch&Baker(2015) also state that the equality does not represent the equal outcome to everyone in the society. It proposes that everyone has the right to gain prospects for good life. In this

context, the fairness of the entire society seems not to have strong correlation to the equality in education. In fact, the education is closely tied to the economy of the society. In the capital society, the demand of highly skilled workers increases, which emphasizes the importance of the education (Brighouse, 2014). The education in the capital society is aimed to select and allocate citizens for the labour market and economic development (Lynch & Baker, 2015). Hence, the education and the economy of the entire society are mutually influenced, and the inequality in education to a large extent causes the inequality of the society, which negatively impacts the goal of creating a just society [3]. Due to the economic change, most of societies in the world have transferred to the capitalist societies. In those societies, advocates of capitalism insist that the market itself has the best way to allocate resources and opportunities within its mechanism (Adams, 2014). Therefore, the privatization of school system is considered as the most efficient way for the selection of the labour market (Adams, 2014). However, the school system in the mechanism of the marketization has unequally distributed educational resources to each school, which plays the important role in the quality of education. In this context, both Swift (2004) and Brighouse (2014) claim that the middle-class families gain the largest benefit, since parents from working or lower classes can barely acquire high quality of educational resources for their children due to the unaffordable tuition. Hence, the unfairness exists due to the unequal treatment to poor families which negatively impacts the goal of creating the fairly just society.

The principal requirement of equality in education is to alleviate inequality issue in education. In particular, firstly the decision maker needs to guarantee that students from all of social classes have the equal opportunity to access to the formal education, which is the most essential step to achieve the equality of education. (Lynch & Baker, 2015). However, the existence of private schools is against the requirement of equality in education, and the entire private school system need to be abandoned [4]. Lynch and Baker (2015) emphasize the equality is not only the equal right of the participation in the formal education, but also the equal treatment, the appreciation and love should be given to people from poor families. To be more specific, poor students are not treated differently from students from middle or upper classes. In the meantime, Rawls (2001) also states the analogous idea of equality. He believes that the benefits of the least-advantaged group of people need to be prioritized in order to mitigate inequality and finally achieve the fairness. The least-advantaged people in this context are poor parents and children and they can gain the least benefit from the private school system (Brighouse, 2014). Therefore, the equality here requires the decision-maker to reallocate resources for those vulnerable group of people, and one of the most effective methods is the abolition of private schools.

3. REASONS FOR ABOLISHING PRIVATE SCHOOLS

3.1. Unequal Educational Resources

Since the education in the capital society is considered as the commodity, and parents are consumers who have the right to choose the most appropriate school for their children, thus there is the competition between schools (Adams, 2014) [5]. The elite private school has overwhelming advantage in educational resources in comparison to those state schools. The smaller class size, elite teaching staffs and cutting-edge teaching facilities help those private schools to be the dominant roles in the market (White, 2016). In this case, parents from middle class and upper-middle class have more options than poor parents, since those prominent private schools require the expensive tuition, which directly exclude students from poor families. Therefore, poor parents have the limited choices compared with affluent parents and they can only send their children to schools with inferior resources (Swift, 2004). This situation definitely causes the unfairness, since students are divided into different levels of schools through their social classes (Lynch & Baker, 2015). However, White (2016) states the principle of liberty that people have the right to do anything with their money if they do not intend to harm other people [6]. This seems to emphasize the innocence of middle class people and

state the private school is not morally problematic, which is partially correct and the private school indeed undermines the right of poor students(Swift,2004). In fact, in the perspective of Swift(2004), when middle class people choose the elite private schools that hold the top educational resources for their children, the inequality of educational resources deprives poor students' right which is the opportunity to access the high quality education. Poor students can never obtain the top educational resources because of the unaffordable tuition. Swift(2004) also claims that the private school system can only benefit students whose parents have the ability to pay the tuition and at the same time poor students gain nothing and lose the right to pursue high quality education. Therefore, the principle of liberty is not completely correct and the unfairness indeed harms poor people.

3.2. Unequal Educational Outcomes

The research in the article by Green and Kynaston(2019) shows that in 2017 there were 48% students with A or above grades at A level in private schools, which is the entrance examination of universities for the high school students in Britain, and the national average was only 26 percent. Meanwhile, another survey depicts that the proportion of private school students access to top universities was nearly three times over than the percentage of public school students entering the high-ranking universities in 2010(White,2016). In general, the private school students obtain higher scores in examinations compared with state school students[7]. These academic outcomes to some extents exert the profound effect to students' future careers. Most of countries in the world have the strict requirement of education credentials in the job market. More specifically, the highly skilled jobs require the university certificates that prove the graduate's ability and his or her academic outcomes, and those certificates seem to help employers to select appropriate employees. In the modern society, whether the graduate has the certificate from top university or not has become one of the requirements to gain high-earning jobs(Brighouse,2014). However, according to the statement from Swift(2003), private school students who have the superior educational resources would have not behaved so well if they were in state schools. They unfairly jump the queue for university places and highly paid or fulfilling jobs. Hence, unequally distributed resources, educational outcomes and job opportunities are mainly caused by the private school system, which give rise to the inequality in the society and impair the right of poor people. By contrast, opponents of abolition of private schools proposes that public schools need to improve the quality of teaching rather than abolishing private schools(White, 2016). However, the public school merely depends on the public funding, and the UK public funding is limited and it is the same for every public school in each region and additional resources to some deprived areas(Swift,2004). Hence, the limited public funding and government support cannot support top educational resources in state schools. For instance, with the expensive tuition, top private schools can use the high salary to attract elite teaching staffs. Those teachers are either from high-status universities or specialists in some subjects including Mathematics, sciences, and other subjects, but the supply of those teachers is limited. When the high salary from prominent private schools attracts more elite teachers, there are less elite teaching staffs in public schools(Green and Kynaston,2019). Hence, poor students can hardly obtain the superior educational resources, and the unequal educational resources not only lead to low academic outcomes, but also limit their options of universities and future jobs, which are due to the existence of private school. Without private schools, the educational resources can be equally distributed and the social class cannot determine the better academic outcome(Swift,2004).

3.3. Social Exclusiveness and Cycle of Privilege

The social exclusiveness is the common phenomenon among poor people in the capital society, and it is inseparably interconnected with the cycle of privilege among affluent people. The private school system and the marketization of the education directly result in the cycle of privilege and the social exclusiveness(Green and Kynaston,2019). The first part of this cycle is that children in wealthy families seem to be born with advantage in high quality education compared to children in working

class or poor families, since affluent families can afford the expensive tuition of elite private schools(Green and Kynaston,2019). In comparison to rich families, students in poor families firstly are excluded by the elite private schools. Secondly, in Britain, the superior educational resources include the professional teaching staffs and consultants who are able to help students to select the most appropriate universities in the domestic nation and foreign countries such as the United States and continental Europe, but also instruct them to achieve high scores in examinations(Green and Kynaston,2019). With the top educational resources in private schools, children in rich families tend to perform well and gain high marks in the entry examinations of universities in the worldwide range(Green and Kynaston,2019). After graduating from prestigious universities, they can acquire the high income jobs or their desirable jobs(Swift,2004). On the contrary, both Brighouse(2014) and Swift(2004) claim that students from poor families can merely make limited options for their universities without professional guidance. Otherwise, they may choose to work after high school and then embark on low income jobs due to the lack of educational credentials from high-ranking universities(Green and Kynaston,2019). Therefore, poor people are always excluded by those top universities and well-paid jobs, but rich people tend to gain high social status age after age. The cycle represents that the social class is reproduced, which indicates that affluent people can always own the wealth and poor people need to suffer the poverty from generation to generation(Green and Kynaston,2019). However, some Left-wingers who are supporters of private schools in the UK claim that poor people envy rich people with better-off resources, so they oppose with the private school system, and there are no exact problems in private schools(White,2016). This accusation is indeed biased and they only consider about the right of rich people. In this accusation, it seems that poor people ought not to fight for the right they are supposed to have, and they should accept the truth that they can only have inferior resources during their lifetime. This point of view is against the Rawls' theory for the equality of society, which is purposed to prioritize the benefits of least advantaged people(Rawls,2001). In fact, the unfairness exists due to the transmission of the social class from one generation to the next one and the deprivation of marketization to poor people. Furthermore, the equality of education in this essay concentrates on the point that poor people at least need to be given the opportunity to acquire the high quality educational resources(Lynch&Baker,2015). Hence, the cycle of privilege and social exclusiveness are against the rule of fair society. The two phenomena are caused by the private school system, and also the accusation of envy is biased and prejudiced, thus the abolition of private schools is necessary for the construction of truly just society.

4. IMPROVEMENTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Even though public school is considered as the more equal system than private school system, there are still some limitations in public school system. After abolishing private schools, the improvements of public schools are vital for achieving the high quality of education for every student. Those advocates of private school system doubt whether or not public school system can achieve the high quality education without private schools, since the best efficient way of allocating resources is the marketization in their perspectives(Adams,2014). In this case, without private school system, the government needs to attach much importance to the public school education. The funding may be limited, but the resources need to be equally distributed to every public school and also additional subsidy is provided for some areas with extreme poverty issue, which is the current UK government intervention to state schools(Swift,2004)[8]. In addition, the decision makers ought to focus on the quality of teachers and teaching facilities. The smaller class size and more teaching staffs in the public school can to a large extent enhance the quality of education. In this case, each student can acquire the sufficient tutoring time and suggestions from teachers(Christensen et al., 2005). Besides, the teaching facilities are also pivotal for educational outcomes. For instance, the new technology including computers and internet learning can assist teachers to make the instructions and help students to comprehend the knowledge. In the US, nearly every public school has computers for every student to learn(Christensen et al., 2005). Summing up, the enhancement of the educational resources

is aimed to provide the high quality education for every student in the state school in order to maximize least advantaged students' benefits and achieve the equality in education.

5. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the private school does cause the inequality and unfairness in the society. The system of private school undermines the right of poor parents and children(Swift,2004). The educational resources and educational outcomes are determined by the social class, which negatively affect the construction of fair and just society. Therefore, this essay advocates the abolition of private school system. Meanwhile, the improvements of public school system are necessary for high quality of education. In this case, all of students can acquire the high quality education in public schools.

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