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Economics of Education  
HW 4

**1 Even the most self-styled opponents of “Big Government” support more spending on education. What are they thinking?**

People who support spending more on education often do because everyone supports helping children. We can think of this the same way as “investing in people” like what’s in the book, but I think it’s especially popular because everyone likes helping children. Education is associated with a bright future, who wants to be the person who doesn’t support helping children have a more successful future? Education is seen as a way to escape poverty and is associated with a better lifestyle (less stress, more health and happiness, etc) and if spending on education is what people think gives this opportunity to young people, then it makes sense that they support spending more on education.

Also, education is seen as something that you *earn* not something you are given. Investing in education is like spending to give kids a *chance* rather than giving a handout. I think this is why 60% of strong republicans are in support of spending more on education. Education is viewed as a chance not a handout so even people who dislike handouts are willing to have the government spend if it goes towards giving kids the chance to earn for themselves in the future. This relates to the argument “Government has to make sure that even the poorest children get a good education” because education is seen as a way to give every child a chance at a better future.

**3 What is the best way to cut education spending? Compare and contrast your proposal with the most compelling alternative approaches.**

I think the best way to cut spending on education is to have less time in school and require job-shadowing/job training days instead. If school cut out, let's say, 3 weeks of school and allowed students this time to job train or job shadow, this would give students a better idea of what the working world is like. This is similar to incorporating vocational learning, however, this would be attending a real work place rather than being still in school learning a practical skill. Learning "on the job skills" and realizing which skills are needed would be more beneficial for students than sitting in boring classes where they learn nothing, or even if they did learn, how often will they use their knowledge on the job of Greek mythology? 3 fewer weeks of school would reduce education spending because that is 3 less weeks of paying teachers (their pay would be cut to adjust for the number of hours they work) as well as save money at the schools themselves (lights wouldn't be on, heating/air conditioning wouldn't be on, etc.) 3 weeks in this example is an arbitrary number, perhaps more or less time would be better.

This compares with cutting fat from curriculum. Even if those classes remain, less of them would occur with my proposition. Time that would be used learning useless info would instead be used to learn about career interests, marketable skills, and provide networking opportunities.

My proposition is not directly related to cutting subsidies for tuition; rather my solution discusses a way of making education less expensive since costs would go down. The problem with subsidies for education is this doesn't incentivize education officials to get rid of fat. Having fewer government subsidies and shifting

education costs to students would reduce attendance, and perhaps cause schools to be more frugal because they would want more revenue which comes from more students. Schools would act as a private firm in this case.

**6 Apply Caplan's "politics of social desirability bias" to a non-educational issue.**

I think that support for political correctness on a college campus is an example of "politics of social desirability bias." This is not to say that if you are not deemed 100% politically correct by the liberals you are a complete bigot, rather, there are people who dislike the extreme political correctness who are not bigots. But if you say on a college campus that you do not support political correctness than liberals who make the "popular campus opinion" paint you as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.

People like Walter Williams make clear that they do not support political correctness, certainly not levels adopted by mainstream liberals or on campus. Williams notes that "there is no diversity on the basketball team" and is not afraid to show his opinion of campus attitudes and even their hypocrisy. As a student, I see plenty of Facebook posts complaining of how out of touch Williams is, but in private (not on social media) I have had conversations with people who agree with him.

It's emotionally appealing to be politically correct. It can go to such an extreme where it keeps distance between people because people are afraid that they will say the wrong thing or offend someone. Saying things on their mind or truths such that on average there are more crimes in predominantly black neighborhoods is something people don't talk about because it socially unappealing, you can be painted as racist. Or when making policy, it's not socially desirable to say that an

increased welfare state subsidizes poor behavior. When something is subsidized, we should expect to see more of it. Saying this is socially undesirable.

### **7 Critically analyze Caplan's case for child labor**

Something Caplan didn't mention in the "What's wrong with child labor" section of the book is conformity. Conformity is something employers seek which is shown by signaling. If a child chooses to work instead of go to school or work part time while under age 14 (if this was legally permitted) than people could think, "Can this kid not socialize with his classmates? Why can't he conform to his peers? Is he too stupid for school, and if so, that is more reason for him to be in school!" These assessments would not necessarily be valid, but they could signal to employers that the kid was not fit for school like his peers and that he cannot conform.

Although I agree that learning on the job is better job training than attending useless classes, some may assume that kids who want to work in place of going to school are doing so because they are not smart enough for school, not that they want to learn about careers.

I agree with Caplan that unpaid internships are "okay" but unpaid job training at McDonalds would cause outrage.

Something worth noting in the section is that parents would prefer their kids to be babysat instead of job training/working. Also, not every working person wants kids around while they are at work. Perhaps interested kids would be fun to have around, but who is to say that kids who are bored in school will suddenly not be bored if they are at work? And if kids are bored at work, and are not forced to be there to make a living (such as their parents would be) then it would be better to

have the kids be bored at school rather than being an inconvenience to someone working.

**9 The Case Against Education lists three criteria for meritorious education. How does your own education measure up to his standards?**

The three criteria for meritorious education are worthy content, skillful pedagogy, and eager students. The content I've dealt with has not been very worthy on the average. I am taking into account every college course I've taken, gen eds and classes for my major and minor, economics and public health respectively. Many times the content has been dry. Sometimes the content seems so abstract that its dry, as in the only time I would ever use it is on the exam for that class. If I cannot apply information to the real world then I generally find it less interesting. I would say my econ classes have been the most worthy, though, because much of what I learn can be applied to the real world, as in I can see real example of price floors and understand the economics principals behind it.

On the average I have been lucky with my teachers at GMU. I have had some teachers that have been extremely unoriginal and boring, but I have also had teachers who really made class fun. My favorite teachers at Mason include Williams, Rustici, Boudreaux, Moszoro, Caplan, and Professor Nye in the English department. These teachers are inspirational because of how enthusiastic and knowledgeable they are; they make the information easy to understand and fascinating. Teachers who read off slides and play videos are unskilled; these teachers make class unmeritorious.

Eager students are hard to find. I must admit that I look to my phone and computer at times during class, but I try to keep that to a minimum. When students

come to class and ask questions, do the assignments on time, and follow along with the notes they make class better overall. When everyone keeps up with class I can see how the teacher appreciates it, which in turn makes that teacher better because they are more enthusiastic. Students in my upper level econ classes are actually pretty eager. Students in my gen ed classes are much less eager, this makes sense since gen ed classes are required. Many students are there because they have to be, not because they want to be. On the other hand, students who skip class can benefit eager students by skipping. Professors prefer to teach eager students over disinterested ones, so if only eager students come to class then the professor tends to be more enthusiastic. More enthusiastic teachers tend to be better teachers. This is also assuming that the teacher has mastered the material and that the students are working to master the material.