

PACT 454-5 Winter 2024

The Education Industry: Public Education in an Era of Outcomes

Pranav G. Kothari, Adjunct Lecturer of Social Enterprise

Email: pranav.kothari@kellogg.northwestern.edu | P: 312-519-6567Office Hours via Calendly: <https://calendly.com/pranavkothari/25-minute-pact>

Creating public education systems that work for every child and student remains an ongoing challenge. Despite considerable innovation in school structure, governance, application of technology, evaluation, and billions of public and private dollars, we remain limited in our ability to scale schools, districts, state, and national education systems that consistently produce improving outcomes for all students.

In the United States, many are specifically focused on the education needs of students who are low income, are native speakers of a language besides English, have learning challenges, or are otherwise in environments where educational obstacles outweigh assets. Can public education serve so many different types of learners at scale? If so, how do we build schools and school systems that create equitable educational opportunities and outcomes now and in the future?

This half credit course will look at the education sector from a variety of vantage points. While much can be learned from theoretical constructs in education, understanding how critical issues play out in local contexts forces the discussion and analysis toward practical solutions and documented results.

Throughout the course, we will focus on specific dimensions of public education in the U.S., while bringing in related and comparable examples from education systems beyond the U.S.

Students will have a chance to unpack complex issues in a changing education landscape. The hope and expectation of the course is to have candid and respectful engagement around both the education challenges that make the front page of the newspaper and that are noted in this syllabus, but also their root causes such as race, class, gender, poverty, and institutional and individual obstacles to educational success. Students will be asked to complete a response paper on a critical education issue of their selection as well as complete a group project focused on business planning for a school district trying to implement improvement strategies.

Grading will be based on the following:

- 25% Student Participation
- 25% Response Paper – Due January 19, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. via Canvas
- 50% Final Group Project – Due February 9, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. via Canvas

Additional resources are provided throughout the course on Canvas for those who have a deeper interest in specific topics. Inclusion of specific readings does not imply an endorsement of specific positions, policies, authors, funders, researchers, or publishers. Content specific to the impact of COVID-19 on education will be added to Canvas throughout the course and embedded in class discussion.

Class meets on Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. in January and February 2024. ***Attendance on the first day of class, January 4, 2024, is mandatory.***

Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being on the NU help [website](#) and [app](#).

If you are unable to participate in class in person, please notify Prof. Kothari via email at least 24 hours in advance so that we can arrange class recording.

January 4, 2024 – Class #1 – Note: First class attendance is mandatory.

The Advent of Modern-Day Education Reform

Our first class will provide a brief history of public education in the U.S. leading up to the advent of the modern education reform movement in the 1990s, federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, and most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The class will investigate the standards and testing movement and consider key issues related to education measurement and evaluation since the publication of “A Nation at Risk”.

Learning Objectives (Readings and Class)

- Learn about the education backgrounds of fellow students and their perspectives on domestic and global education issues
- Build a shared understanding of public education in the U.S. and how it compares to public education in other developed countries
- Orient students to the overall learning arc of the class including content and norms

Required Reading

“Five Ways U.S. Education Differs from Other G-20 Countries” - http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2016/01/7_ways_US_differs_G20_education.html

“A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” – <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/130020/a-nation-at-risk-report.pdf> (Skim)

“‘A Nation at Risk’ Demanded Education Reform 35 Years Ago. Here’s How it’s Been Bungled Ever Since” - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/04/26/the-landmark-a-nation-at-risk-called-for-education-reform-35-years-ago-heres-how-it-was-bungled/>

“What America Can Learn from Smart Schools in Other Countries” - https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/upshot/what-america-can-learn-about-smart-schools-in-other-countries.html?_r=0

“What We Can Learn from Finland’s Successful School Reform” – https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_us_schools_can_learn_from_finlands_approach_to_education#

Additional Resources

“Education in the United States – A Brief Overview” - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/edus/index.html>

January 11, 2024 – Class #2***Addressing the Scarcest Resource: Talent in Education***

A theme that will recur throughout the course is the recruitment, retention, and growth of effective teachers in the classroom. Like any organization, talent is at the heart of generating successful outcomes. Several barriers have limited our ability to place and keep high quality teachers in schools (and particularly high-need schools), though some national organizations, and local communities are making meaningful progress in stemming the tide and building up effective talent pipelines.

Guest Speaker – *Corey Richardson, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Golden Apple Foundation*

Learning Objectives (Readings and Class)

- Develop an understanding of root causes of teacher supply challenges
- Understand how teacher workforces are developed in select countries around the world
- Reflect on recommendations to improve teacher recruitment, retention, and training

Required Reading

“How Nations Invest in Teachers: High-Achieving Nations Treat their Teachers as Professionals” – <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/how-nations-invest-in-teachers>

“The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America’s Urban Schools” - https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf (Skim)

“Keeping Irreplaceables in D.C. Public Schools” - <https://tntp.org/publications/view/retention-and-school-culture/keeping-irreplaceables-in-d.c.-public-schools-smart-teacher-retention> (Skim)

“Solving the Teacher Shortage: How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators” - <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/solving-teacher-shortage-brief>

Additional Resources

“Shortchanged: The Hidden Costs of Lockstep Teacher Pay” – https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Shortchanged_2014.pdf

January 18, 2024 – Class #3***Financing Public Education in the U.S. and Around the World***

Our focus in class three will be on the critical element of how education and schools are funded in the U.S. and in select countries around the world. We will have a chance to discuss not only how much money is spent on a per student basis, but also the sources of those funds and how spending reflects priorities. How the U.S. raises and spends public education budgets relative to other countries will be a focus.

Guest Speaker – *TBD*

Learning Objectives (Readings and Class)

- Develop a working understanding of how select countries value and fund public education
- Discuss where various countries spend their public education dollars and areas of emerging and new investment
- Build a working knowledge of how education funding structures and strategies evolve

Required Reading

“America’s School Funding Struggle: How We’re Robbing Our Future by Under-Investing in our Children.” – <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lindadarlinghammond/2019/08/05/americas-school-funding-struggle-how-were-robbing-our-future-by-under-investing-in-our-children/?sh=1b0c851d5eaf>

“Breaking Down the Where and Why of K-12 Spending” - <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/the-where-and-why-of-k-12-spending.html>

“Education Expenditures by Country” - https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cmd.asp

“How is K-12 Education Funded” – <https://www.pgpf.org/budget-basics/how-is-k-12-education-funded>

“School Funding: Do Poor Kids Get Their Fair Share?” – <https://apps.urban.org/features/school-funding-do-poor-kids-get-fair-share/>

January 25, 2024 – Class #4

Future of Learning: It’s Personal

Our focus for class four will be on the future of learning based on emerging insights on the future of society and work. The class will anchor primarily on extensive research by KnowledgeWorks which released its fifth future forecast in November 2018. The class will be designed to have students engage directly in findings from the latest forecast and understand how the future of learning ties into current movements around personalized learning which has been accelerated by, but not solely beholden to, technology. We’ll identify the changing needs in the classroom for differentiated instruction, managing personalized learning at the district level, and public policies that support personalized learning.

Learning Objectives (Readings and Class)

- Develop insights on signals that indicate the direction and opportunities for learning in the future and a working understanding of personalized learning through frameworks and examples
- Understand how signals and forces impact how schools and education systems pursue learning outcomes today and how they impact society more broadly
- Discuss what human capital, technology, and management changes are needed in personalized learning environments and how those vary from traditional learning environments

Guest Speaker – *Jason Swanson, Senior Director of Strategic Foresight, KnowledgeWorks (Virtual)*

Required Reading

“KnowledgeWorks Forecast 5.0 – Navigating the Future of Learning”
<https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/forecast-5/> (Please download the referenced report and skim)

“LEAP Innovations Framework for Personalized Learning – Research Snapshot 2017” – <https://www.leapinnovations.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/learning-framework-v10.pdf>

“Sir Ken Robinson – Changing Paradigms” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U> (Video)

“What’s Possible with Personalized Learning” – https://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/iNACOL_Whats-Possible-with-Personalized-Learning.pdf (Skim)

February 1, 2024 – Class #5

Setting the Agenda: The Historical Role of Philanthropy in Public Education

Our focus during class five will be on the dramatic increases in foundation investments in education particularly in the 2000s by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation, and the new generation of foundations started by technology and investment/ hedge fund leaders. We will study the increasing role of big philanthropy on education programs and policy,

Guest Speaker – *Beth Swanson, CEO, A Better Chicago*

Learning Objectives (Readings and Class)

- Build an understanding of the role of philanthropy in education both historically and today
- Share perspectives on the appropriate role of private philanthropy in public education
- Consider different and varied approaches of how philanthropy can partner with public education

Required Reading

“Billionaires are Spending Their Fortunes Reshaping America’s Schools. It Isn’t Working.” - <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/30/17862050/education-policy-charity>

“Bloomberg’s Charter Push: Big Money and Bigger Political Peril.” - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/12/9/22826845/bloomberg-charter-schools-politics-750-million>

“Generous Giving or Phony Philanthropy? A Critique of Well-Meaning ‘Winners’” - <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/29/642688220/generous-giving-or-phony-philanthropy-a-critique-of-well-meaning-winners> (Audio)

“How Top Philanthropists Wield Power Through Their Donations” - https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/14/your-money/wealth-matters-philanthropy-david-callahan.html?_r=0