



2015

Wide as the Waters: Comparing Student Performance in Alabama and Florida from 1992-2011

Kellie Slappey Nothstine
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

 Part of the [Education Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nothstine, Kellie Slappey, "Wide as the Waters: Comparing Student Performance in Alabama and Florida from 1992-2011" (2015). *Master's Theses*. 2898.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/2898

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).
Copyright © 2015 Kellie Slappey Nothstine

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

WIDE AS THE WATERS:
COMPARING STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN ALABAMA AND FLORIDA
FROM 1992-2011

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
KELLIE SLAPPEY NOTHSTINE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 2015

Copyright by Kellie Slappey Nothstine, 2015
All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This wouldn't have been possible without both my parents who gave me the option and choice of what my education would look like; who sacrificed for me to have true *school choice*. For my mother: for staying home for and with me.

To my best friend, my husband Ray, Thank you for supporting me in this, for pushing me to finish this, for loving me through this and through everything. Thank you for your unconditional support and love in everything. Thank you for extending grace to me every day in all things. I wouldn't be who I am without you.

Our goal is to have a system in which every family in the U.S will be able to choose for itself the school to which its children go. We are far from the ultimate result. If we had that-a system of free choice- we would also have a system of competition, innovation, which would change the character of education.

—Milton Friedman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	2
Research Question	5
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Comparing International Education Systems that Employ Marketization	7
Comparing School Choice Options in the U.S.	9
Decentralization versus Centralization	11
History and Background of Education Policy in Florida	13
History and Background of Education Policy in Alabama	15
CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODOLOGY	18
Comparison Methodology	19
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	23
Conclusions	28
Limitations	33
Suggestions for Future Research	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	36
VITA	44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Pupil-Teacher Ratio	24
Figure 2. Per Pupil Spending	25
Figure 3. Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	26
Figure 4. Fourth Grade Reading NAEP Scores	27
Figure 5. Fourth Grade NAEP Math Scores	28

ABSTRACT

The school choice movement has been making significant traction within the United States in the last decade and a record number of states have implemented school choice programs that introduce competition to the traditional public schools and treat education like a market. The marketization of education and making traditional public school truly compete against alternative schooling options is more often discussed in theory but in reality is infrequently applied on a large scale. In an attempt to truly gauge the advantages, disadvantages, and real life application of what can result when market forces are applied to a state's education system and what this policy can yield not just in theory but in concrete measurable outcomes, this paper compared and contrasted one state that has employed no means of market forces into education until 2013 (Alabama) and one state that has allowed an array of forms of competition to the traditional public school for numerous years Florida.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1983, a national commission was formed in order to investigate the health of America's education system, and compare it to other developed countries around the world. The commission reported their findings in the landmark report A Nation at Risk (US Dept. of Education, 1983). The findings of the study were astonishing. The Commission reported that American students scored last in all of the 19 categories when compared against other industrialized nations.

Now, over twenty-five years later, unfortunately not much has changed. According to the government agency, The National Center for Education Statistics, American students compared to other industrialized nations, scored below 29 other countries in mathematics and below 22 other countries in science (US Dept. of Education, 2012; Chappell, 2013; Hanusehek, 2014). American students also lag significantly behind other countries in geography, history and foreign languages. Some scholars argue that U.S student scores would not look so bleak if social class differences were accounted for when comparing countries. Martin Carnoy and Richard Rothstein argue that the average U.S. score in reading and math are low because a disproportionately greater share of U.S. students comes from disadvantaged social class groups, whose performance is relatively low in every country. (Carnoy & Rothstein, 2013). However if you look at student scores within the U.S., especially when compare

to other countries it is hard to ignore the fact that the United States is considered one of the wealthiest nations in the world, and outspends every other nation when it comes to per student spending costs (US Dept. of Education, 2012).

Statement of Problem

Based on these statistics, the case can be made that America's public schools are not providing the education necessary for our children as they fall behind the rest of the developed world. It has been suggested that we must look to schooling options outside of the public system, for help. "Education shouldn't be one-size-fits-all," argues Stacy Henninger, a spokeswoman for the Road to Educational Improvement through Choice Foundation; Henninger suggests that parents need choices to be able to create the best learning environment for their child (Schwartzman, 2009, pp. 1).

After all, even a great school is not always the right fit for *every* student, and sometimes children need a new opportunity to succeed. However, critics have argued that parents *do* have school choice; parents have the option of sending their child to private school. Nevertheless, for lower income families, that option is frequently not a reality and a quality education for their child is far too often out of reach (Levin, 2001). Legislative action in favor of school choice presents a true opening for children and their parents to have a *real choice* in regards to not only education, but their future.

Purpose of the Study

By comparing the two states this paper will potentially be able to see where and when Florida diverged from the same education path as Alabama but also pin point potential policies that Alabama could "borrow" and potentially produce similar outcomes.

This paper will not be looking to see if options outside of the traditional public school benefit children who attend these schools but what happens to the children who are left within the traditional public school system. One of the most popular arguments in favor of school choice policies, according to David Figlio and Cassandra Hart (2011), is that when public schools are faced with true competition they will improve. Within the American education system funding follows a child, therefore when programs like vouchers, tax, credits and even charter schools are implemented public schools are forced to directly compete with these schools to retain and attract students. This is often called the marketization of education.

This idea of treating education like a market and making traditional public schools truly compete against alternative schooling options is more often discussed in theory but in reality is infrequently applied on a large scale. In an attempt to truly gauge the advantages, disadvantages, and real life application of what can result when market forces are applied to a state's education system and what this policy can yield not just in theory but in concrete measurable outcomes, this paper will compare and contrast one centralized state that has employed no means of market forces into education until 2013 (Alabama) and one decentralized state that has allowed an array of forms of competition to the traditional public school for numerous years (Florida) (Ladner, Leferre, & Lips, 2010)

Starting in 2001 Florida enacted a plethora of market driven education policies that introduced competition to the traditional public schools in the form of charter schools, school vouchers for disabled students, and tax credits for low income students (Figlio & Hart, 2011, pp. 74-5; Ladner, Leferre, & Lips, 2010). In contrast Alabama

currently does not allow vouchers, tax credits, open enrollment within public school districts, or any form of charter schools to operate within the confines of the education system (Ladner, Leferre, & Lips, 2010). School choice legislation was passed in Alabama for the first time in 2013 that would allow parents to receive a tax credit for transferring their child from a failing public school to a private school. However, the law has not gone into effect and is currently being challenged in both state and federal courts (Ujifusa, 2013). As of yet the traditional public school system in Alabama has not experienced market forces and there is no data to determine what the effects of this new legislation will look like.

Alabama and Florida are analogous to one another in terms that they share a similar history of education reforms, racial make-up and struggles with segregation, socioeconomic characteristics and hail from the same region. Both states produced fairly equal outcomes on student achievement during the 1990s. With Florida's implementation of marketization practices in education reform Florida saw a drastic increase in their student outcomes (Harris, Herrington, & Albee).

This paper looks to see what variables within each of these states might have helped to contribute to the education gulf that now resides between these states in terms of student performance.

This comparison and contrast between these two diverse types of education systems is needed to try and understand the real life effects that marketization can have on education. When dealing with the projected outcomes of schooling we are forced to look at schools as how they currently exist rather than as they might when the "reforms" are implemented, by utilizing a state by state comparison of two states that have a variety

of variables that are equivalent this paper will attempt to project the potential outcome of a reform.

Research Question

Via a comparative case study this paper seeks to answer the question: what are the factors that can explain state level differences in education between Alabama and Florida and illuminate the student performance gulf that seems to have emerged between these two states in the last twenty years?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the US among the fifty states there is a wide discrepancy of how education operates in each state. Although many states manage centralized education departments, there is a rapidly growing trend of states to move in the direction of decentralization and in some capacity integrate educational choices. In 2011, twelve states enacted legislation granting more education options to parents and greater levels of autonomy to local schools (Burke and Sheffield, 2011). During the 2013-2014 school year educational choice programs grew to include thirty-nine programs in eighteen different states, plus Washington D.C. (School Choice Alliance, 2014).

This movement is only gaining momentum as the US economy continues to be in a downward spiral, since decentralization claims to be more efficient and save states thousands if not millions of dollars (Figlio & Hart, 2011). It is important for education researchers and comparativists to understand the true implications of this growing education reform trend.

The US is not isolated in this movement towards education reforms that focus on decentralization and marketization (Fiske & Ladd, 2000a; Fiske & Ladd, 2000). These two theories are driving nations, regions, and states' decisions when it comes to how they construct their education policies. Because these two theories have become so dominant in most recent education reform that has happened in and will be constructed in the US

and around the world, it is vital to understand the theories true implications when applied in real life scenarios.

Comparing International Education Systems that Employ Marketization

To fully grasp the potential implications of these theories this paper will compare two states within the US. Whereas numerous studies have been conducted on countries like New Zealand, Finland, and Netherlands, who operate with extremely decentralized education systems and employ marketization of education; these studies do not fully reveal the implications that will occur in the US (Denessen, Slegers, & Smit, 2001; Fiske & Ladd, 2000a; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Morphis, 2009; Patrinos, 2009; Wylie, 2006).

Denessen, Slegers, and Smit's 2001 paper argues that parental choice is a stimulus for improving current schools because they want to compete to "win" over the parent. They argue that increasing parental choice enhances the role of market mechanisms in the education system and that the quality of education will increase when competition is a factor and the principle of "demand and supply" is introduced (Denessen, Slegers, & Smit, 2001; Levin 2001). Denessen, Slegers and Smit delve into when parents are given a true choice to the school that their child can attend, what are the factors that parents consider and what influences their choice. However their paper only utilizes data from Europe and the authors admit the limitation of the reach of their findings. Because so much of their findings are based on parents attitudes towards education it would be unwise to extend their findings and assume that parents in the Unites States would feel and act the same way with education choices.

Wylie sets out in her paper to investigate whether New Zealand's decentralization system of schooling improves student achievement and productivity (Wylie, 2006).

Wylie looks especially to students from low-income homes to see if their access to educational opportunities was improved by the introduction of competition between public schools in New Zealand. Wylie only considers the nature of school choice in New Zealand and does not attempt to apply it to anywhere else.

Morphis also looks to New Zealand's decentralized system that operates a market-based system of education (Morphis, 2009). Morphis focuses on the history of the New Zealand's system and then analyzes how New Zealand funds their schools and allows them to operate in the market-based system. But again she isolates her research and findings to New Zealand and their unique system of education.

Patrinos points out that the Netherlands is one of the oldest national education systems based on school choice in the world, which makes it ideal to study when trying to determine the true effects of school choice (Patrinos, 2009). Patrinos does look internationally to try and compare some education systems to the Netherlands but his paper only pulls out generalities that other countries might try and implement, hoping to gain the same results that the Dutch have.

Fiske and Ladd in their book, "When Schools Compete," and in the article, "Level Playing Field," look at the market driven approaches in education of New Zealand (Fiske & Ladd, 2000a; Fiske & Ladd, 2000). While they do list factors that did and continue to work in New Zealand and well as the faults of the system they act more like "suggestions" for other countries looking to implement the same marketization of education like policies. They do not compare what these policies might look like in other countries or states.

There are too many differing variables across countries to know for sure how a theory or education reform will play out in a different nation when enacted. This thesis proposes that one useful way to hypothesize and understand how each education reform theory will react in the US is to examine the theories on a smaller scale as they have been implemented in different states.

Comparing School Choice Options in the U.S.

Several papers have taken a unique approach of comparing private and public schools within the same district or city when vouchers or other school choice measures are introduced. Greene and Marsh (2009) attempted to study the effects that vouchers were having in Milwaukee and reported that there was evidence of modest positive effects on the traditional public schools when the competition of vouchers was introduced. However because Milwaukee is such a small area and competition is limited to that radius interpreting the evidence from this study that competition of vouchers will improve public schools should be limited.

Chan and McMillan (2009) and Figlio and Hart (2011) both studied the effects that tax credits had on the public school system. Chan and McMillan (2009) analyze tax credits in Ontario and the competitive pressures that were placed on the traditional public schools as they competed with the private schools for the same students but without the incentive of the tax credits. When the tax credits were introduced to families who sent their children to private schools the test-passing rates of the children who remained in public schools rose over time but the gains were not sustained since the program ended after two years. Figlio and Hart (2011) comes close to conducting a study similar to the one in this paper by looking at the marketization of education and the effects of

competition in Florida when an array of school choice options are made available. Their paper is analogous to this one in that they look at public schools before the schools choice options were made available and then after. They also focus on how the public schools students continued to perform after competition variables were introduced. Their study is isolated to only Florida and does not compare how those same principles would play out if enacted somewhere else.

The Figlio and Hart (2011) study focuses on analyzing if competition and market ideas, when implemented in education work and what the true implication of decentralization is in the US. However no studies have been executed which have directly compared one centralized and one decentralized state. This paper is needed to fully understand the direction that education reform is headed in and the implications of that reform within the US.

Bowen and Trivitt (2014) follow up on the Figlio and Hart (2011) study by focusing on the Florida A+ Accountability Program and what effect if any did the private school voucher program have on public school achievement because of the competition aspects of the program. Bowen and Trivitt (2014) argue that recent data reveal that there was no evidence that the vouchers drove academic improvements in the traditional public schools. The mere existence of vouchers for children to attend private schools does not independently produce an increase in students' academic performance who continue to attend the traditional public school. Bowen and Trivitt (2014) did conclude that something else, unobservable, is at play when it comes to choice and competition, and offer that perhaps parental attitudes or involvement is this unknown factor.

This is in line with past research that has suggested that offering parents the mere “choice” automatically gives them more positive feelings to their school and their child’s education (Reay, 1996). That the introduction of choice and involving parents in this process sometimes can be enough to lead to academic improvement on behalf of the child; that something physiological “clicks.” (Valent, 2014; Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1995). This theory or idea unfortunately is as Bowen and Trivitt suggested, unknown and unobservable.

Decentralization versus Centralization

One must understand the theoretical debate that is driving education reform to fully grasp what market mode and competition mean in terms of education and how they should be evaluated by researchers. Centralization is a top-down approach, where the majority of authority and decisions are made at the federal or state level. Decentralization strives to give local schools, teachers and parents autonomy. For supporters of decentralization it comes down to giving schools and primarily parents as many options as possible and a voice in their child’s education. “Parental choice is seen as a stimulus for school improvement and quality control of schools” (Denessen, Slegers, & Smit, 2001, pp. 3). Parental choice is being used as the main proponent to push education systems into acting like a market where competition and supply and demand are the forces driving the quality of education (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Woods, Bagley & Glatter, 1998).

Reformers believe that if they as a taxpayer are paying for a commodity: education, then inevitably they should have a right to choose which school their child attends (Figlio & Hart, 2011). Supporters of the decentralization of education agree,

schools have little freedom to innovate or meet local needs if they are trying to constantly meet strict government regulations (Altbach, 1971). Organizations run best when decisions are made closest to the consumer, the same applies to education (Archer, 2005). When parents have a real choice in regards to the school their child attends, schools are forced to compete with one another and supporters of education reform argue this consumer pressure with force schools to improve their services and develop to meet consumer demands (Howell & Peterson, 2006, p. 15). The reformers argue that the consumer/parent in essence regulate how schools conduct themselves not the government.

Proponents of centralization oppose the breakdown of regulations in regards to education, especially when public funding is involved. Most education systems still maintain uniform curriculum standards across the state, implement standardized testing, and teachers must meet some basic form of accreditation (Morphis, 2009; Thomson, 2008).

Within regular markets, government agencies, implement regulations and there is a constant *pau de deux* between the sellers, buyers, and government over how much regulation is needed. There is a fine line that is drawn between what is stifling markets and prohibiting growth and when do you protect the consumer. Reformers still grapple with how much autonomy each individual school should possess and how to draw the line between regulation, standards, and accountability. Ideally, there needs to be enough freedom and flexibility for teachers to be innovative while achieving successful results. In determining what factors influence student achievement Jefferson argues that a simple input output algorithm to try and predict how students will perform academically

is not realistic (Jefferson, 2005). What we spend per child on schooling does not necessarily translate into how the child will perform academically. Jefferson goes on to reiterate that there are a multitude of variables that have to be examined when not only predicting student success but also determining why children perform differently across schools, districts, and even states (Jefferson, 2005).

When examining decentralization and centralization in terms of education how money is being spent is almost as important in determining success that a child will see in the classroom as the amount. Clark argues that how a state and district uses funds and operates their schools can be a bigger predictor in of how the student will perform academically than just simply looking at educational funding numbers alone (Clark, 1998).

Some of the factors that have been identified as contributing to the success that students may have academically beyond funding is classroom size or student-teacher ratio. Harter re-iterates that although student-teacher ratio can be beneficial in explaining student performance socio-economic backgrounds of students can be just as revealing (Harter 1999).

History and Background of Education Policy in Florida

To better understand the current differences between Florida and Alabama's education systems we need to examine where they have come from in terms of education reforms.

Since colonial times, southern states have leaned heavily upon laissez-faire thinking to guide their political, economic, and education decisions (Edwards & Richey,

1963). Continuing laissez faire philosophies kept southern states property taxes the lowest in the country and often underfunded public schools (Vold & DeVitis, 1991).

However in 1971, Florida Governor Reubin Askew proposed tax reforms within the state to change the way education was funded. Askew argued that education could not run effectively and Florida could not compete nationally unless funds and accountability were increased (Harvey, 2002). Askew understood that success in education relied upon more than just increased funds, therefore an enlightened citizenry was the main goal of his education reforms (Askew Papers, 1971).

Informed citizens who were offered education choices and local schools with more autonomy were the visions that drove the early education reforms. Askew created the Citizen's Committee on Education (CCE) to study education within Florida and to make recommendations for change, most of which were adopted from 1971-1973 (Harvey, 2002).

The committee first set out to change how Florida distributed educational funds and gave local schools and districts more power over how their money could be spent (Education, 1973). In 1973, Florida schools began to be funded by local and state money on a per-pupil basis based on a recommendation of the CCE (Harvey, 2002). In the CCE's 1973 final report they argued that children are not alike and should not be educated like they are. Education is not one size fits all, was the message of the CCE (Education, 1973).

The Florida legislature adopted many of the proposed changes in 1973, for which Askew and the CCE had called for. In all, sixty-two changes were made in education law. This was the most radical education reform that the state had seen since the 1940s and it

set Florida on a course of decentralization (Legislation Report, 1973). The biggest resonating reform was a move to school based management. Askew argued that a state-centered approach to education did not equal success in the long term; this argument paved the way for Governor Jeb Bush's 2000 education reforms (Harvey, 2002).

In 1998, Florida Governor Jeb Bush campaigned for an array of education reforms across the state known as his "A+ Plan" (Ladner & Lip, 2009). The education reforms passed from 1999-2001 included mandating standardized testing in public schools and begin funding schools based on the FCAT test. However, the biggest push in Bush's "A+ Plan," was for more parental choices in regards to education (Education, 2010).

The first step to parental choice came with the 1999 McKay voucher program for children with disabilities. These state-funded vouchers allow special education students to attend a private or public school of their parents' choice (Figlio & Hart, 2011). The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship was established in 2001, and provides an income tax credit to corporations which contribute money to a nonprofit scholarship-fund which in return grants scholarships to low income students to assist them in attending a private school of their choosing (Camparella, Glenn, & Perry, 2011). Student eligibility of the scholarships is based on if they qualify for the federal free or reduced lunch program.

History and Background of Education Policy in Alabama

During the time that Florida was undergoing one of its most extensive education reforms, Alabama was undertaking similar efforts. In 1968, Alabama, under the direction of Governor Albert Brewer, enacted education reforms in an attempt to catch up with the rest of the southern states' academic levels (Harvey, 2002).

The 1968 education reforms in Alabama focused on equalizing education, primarily when it came to funding throughout the state (Vold & DeVitis, 1991). Within the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Alabama was struggling with paying white and black teachers the same salary and even ensuring that all public schools, whether the population was primarily white or black, received comparable funds (Vold & DeVitis, 1991). Brewer commissioned the Alabama Educational Study Commission to study the state of education and provide recommendations to the Alabama legislature.

Under the Commission and Brewer's direction, the State of Alabama increased education spending more than \$100 million from 1968 to 1970 (Brewer Papers, 1969). Teachers, white and black, began receiving comparable salaries and both received pay increases of 12.9% in 1968, putting them on par with other teachers in the South (Brewer Papers, 1969). Without a doubt, Brewer's education reforms brought Alabama into the 20th century and allowed their education system to be competitive with other Southern states like Florida (Harvey, 2002).

While Alabama began to make significant gains in education once funding was on par with the rest of the nation, the state still lagged behind academically. In 1984, the Alabama State Department of Education created a task force as part of "A Plan for Excellence" (Vold & DeVitis, 1991). The Alabama legislature responded to the recommendation made by the task force with the Education Reform Act of 1984, which implemented longer school days, required homework in each subject area, implemented statewide kindergarten, and developed a state-wide teacher evaluation system (Timar & Kirp, 1989). One of the outcomes from the "Plan for Excellence" was a statewide shift

towards unified policies and standards that were more specifically centralized (Vold & DeVitis, 1991).

The main cause of the centralization of the Alabama education system came from the influence of the Alabama Education Association (Latimer, 1979). While the Alabama Education Association (AEA) was created in 1856, they did not play a significant role in education policy until the 1970s (Bullock & Rozell, 2007). The reach and scope of the AEA's political arms have rapidly grown and as of 2009, 90% of all K-12 public school teachers were members of AEA (Vocino, 2010). The AEA, under the direction of Paul Hubbert since 1969, has pushed for a centralized education system that very rarely deviates from this agenda and does not entertain school choice ideas (Phillips, 2009). Many education experts have argued that there has been no deviation from the basic pattern of education that has marked Alabama for the last fifteen years (Vold & DeVitis, 1991). Hubbard has even gone on the record arguing that as long as he runs the AEA he will do everything in his power to keep school choice options, primarily charter schools, out of Alabama (Phillips, 2009).

Alabama has consistently continued on a trend towards centralization (Bullock & Rozell, 2007). While local officials are still in management roles, the majority of the decisions that are made concerning schools are made at the state level. The real control is at the state level, leaving a gap between those who make policies and those who are responsible for the results (Epstein, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To adequately compare education systems across Alabama and Florida's and to potentially recognize other variables that might have affected Florida's student assessment outcomes, this paper accounts for each state's: student-teacher ratio, per pupil spending cost, and the percentage of students that are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program across a fifteen year span. The data was acquired from the National Center for Education Statistics.

To measure student assessment outcomes across states this paper relied upon the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test. I chose to compare NAEP results because it is the largest nationally and continuing assessment of American students that measure a variety of subjects. Individual states have been conducting this test since 1990 and the assessments are uniformly administered employing the same test booklet across the nation (Grissmer, 2000). Results from the NAEP serve as a common metric and unit of analysis that is easy to compare among states.

For the NAEP data I went directly to the National Center for Education Statistics, which compiles all of the data and results of the NAEP each year. Because I am only concerned with how marketization and competition has affected those left in the public schools I only looked at assessment results from traditional public school students. Analyzed NAEP assessment results for mathematics and reading scores for fourth grade

for Alabama and Florida for years 1992-2011.

Comparison Methodology

Some studies employ the use of comparison as an end in itself but this study utilized comparison as a methodology. Exercising a comparison case study allowed this paper to create a frame of reference to which varying observations can be made about NAEP test scores from Alabama and Florida as well as the correlation to their system of education (Raivola, 1985, p. 363).

A comparison case study allowed me to clarify, illuminate, and develop concepts in an attempt to explain education reforms success and failures seen in Alabama and Florida (Bendix, 1963). Moreover, the investigation of similarities and differences in context, educational phenomena, and student assessment outcomes, combined with comparison of actual findings and what might be expected from existing education systems provides one example of how policy itself can be developed and refined (Fairbrother, 2005, p. 19).

The increased range of variation produced when examining an education system or phenomenon in more than one state enables and requires us to make explicit comparisons of similarities and differences on the variables of interest, in order to discover the common and the unique, and therefore to build and modify our theoretical explanation of relationships discovered in the course of research (Merritt & F., 1977; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This paper employed an intra-national comparison in conjunction with a historical comparison to understand the NAEP data for Alabama and Florida for the years 1992-

2011 in conjunction with their respective education reforms. Research has shown that substantial understanding can be gained from conducting intra-national comparisons (Fairbrother, 2005, p. 7; Crossley & Jarvis, 2000, p. 263).

In conducting the intra-national comparison the aim was to understand the evolution of two separate states that were originally quite similar but have diverged and to try and measure the respective outcomes and in this specific case the effect that marketization has had on education (Powell, 2009, p. 162; Fairbrother, 2005, p. 7). By comparing and contrasting states that share similar contextual characteristics, have a parallel history, and are from the same region and as well as have a past of equivalent results from student performance indicators allowed this paper to compare states that face a similar level of difficulty in producing outcomes (Salganik, 1994, p. 127).

When applying the method of intra-national comparison it is important to make sure that the states being evaluated are “functionally equivalent” and are being approached and compared in somewhat scientific units (Raivola, 1985, p. 364). Comparison becomes the substitute for experimentation (Arnove, Altbach, & Kelly, 1982, pp. 3-11). To ensure the functionally equivalent of the two units being compared Warwick and Osherson have suggested three questions as a framework (Warwick & Osherson, 1973). 1. Do the concepts or units being compared correspond? 2. How is the correspondence of measurements to be assessed? 3. Can the problem of how concepts are linguistically expressed be resolved?

Do the concepts or units being compared correspond? More specifically do the definitions given to specific concepts correspond and are the meaning of these definitions

constructed in identical manners? For Alabama and Florida it is important that I used a unit of analysis like the NAEP test results that is conducted in an identical manner in both states to make it comparable: I wanted to compare apples to apples not apples to oranges. In doing this it was also vital to keep in mind outside variables that can affect the results of the test scores such as per pupil spending, student teacher ratio, and socioeconomic background (Warwick & Osherson, 1973; Raivola, 1985, p. 368).

How is the correspondence of measurements to be assessed? How are valid indicators for general and specific concepts found? I utilized the same indicator across states for student assessment to ensure that the indicator for the concept produced identical results for comparability (Warwick & Osherson, 1973; Raivola, 1985, p. 369).

Can the problem of how concepts are linguistically expressed be resolved? The outside variables such as funding and class size can play a crucial role in informing this data comparison with NAEP test scores. In the case of Alabama and Florida I measured these outside indicators and accounted for their effects. The fact that both states share parallel economic and social characteristics also helps to linguistically make sure the concepts are being expressed and understood in the same terms (Warwick & Osherson, 1973; Raivola, 1985, p. 369).

One of the goals of education systems is to increase the academic performance of all students and comparing states that face similar challenges to one another allows us to pin point policies that have worked in some cases and that have potential to be “borrowed” resulting in similar outcomes in the corresponding state (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Importing and exporting education concepts to improve education within each

state based on the policies that have worked in a similar area should be one of the aims in conducting a comparison study (Beech, 2006; Powell & Solga, 2010, p. 708).

Comparison case study goes beyond simply being a methodology for this paper, it is framework to view existing policies and to build on those policies. Comparison is meant to be the vehicle for the diffusion of ideas in education, this happens in translation and transfer across state borders when comparing Alabama and Florida and seeing what produced successful outcomes in student assessment (Powell, Bernhard, & Graf, 2012, p. 240).

Comparison as a tool compels us to better understand education reforms in our own systems by studying others (Cook, Hite, & E., 2004). Via comparison this paper will show how education reforms have changed structures and outputs in Alabama and Florida. By comparing education reforms in differing states, this paper can move research endeavors beyond description and explanation to broader general explanations about policy theory, development, and the concrete effects of marketization on education.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data collected for the variables: student-teacher ratio, per pupil spending cost, percentage of minority students, and the percentage of students that are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program, was gathered for the years 1992-2011 for Alabama and Florida, only looking at the public schools. The data was inputted into Excel and analyzed in a graph tracking the similarities and variances between the two states over time. The NAEP data was treated the same way, imputing into Excel where it was to be analyzed in a line graph to easily compare when both states test scores were similar and when they began to vary.

Figure 1 tracks pupil-teacher ratios of fourth grade classrooms in traditional public schools in Florida and Alabama. Clearly there was a gulf between these ratios between the two states throughout the nineties but the gulf closed in the 2000s, leading the two states to very comparable ratios

Figure 1. Pupil-Teacher Ratio

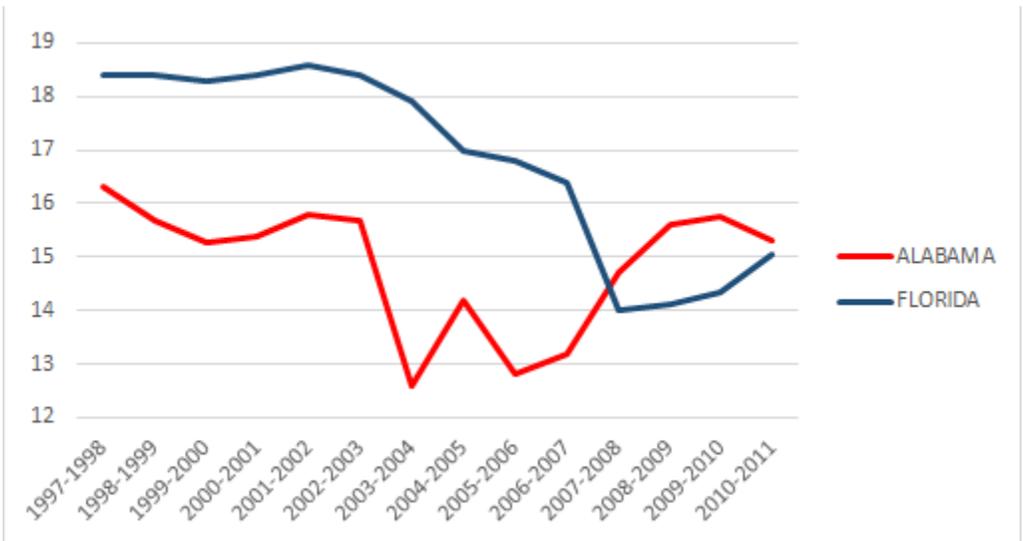


Figure 2 tracks per pupil spending of each state on students enrolled in traditional public schools in Florida and Alabama. The funding of per pupil spending gathered and represented in this chart is the total cost of federal and state funds combined. This chart reflect that money spent on students in both Florida and Alabama throughout the years studied stayed fairly comparable and students in both states have almost the exact same per-pupil cost currently.

Figure 2. Per Pupil Spending

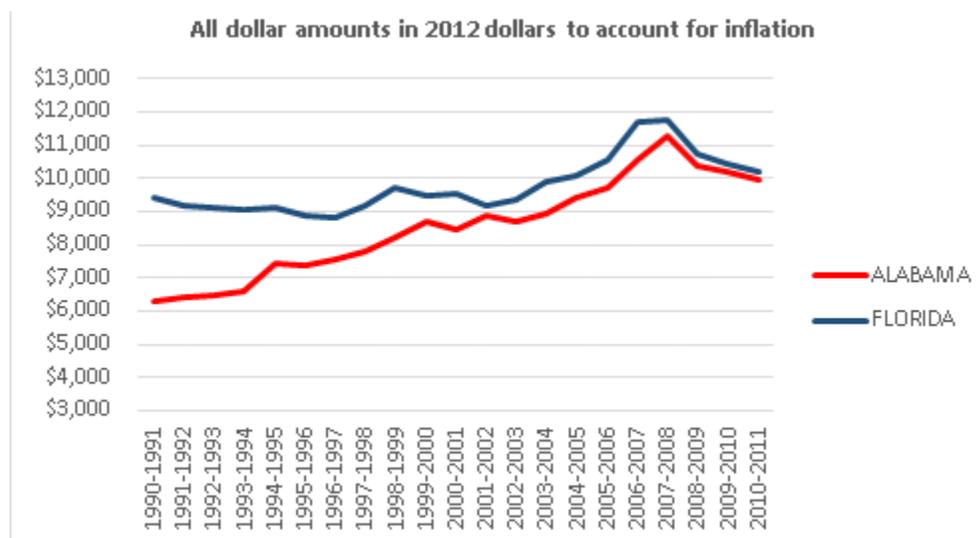
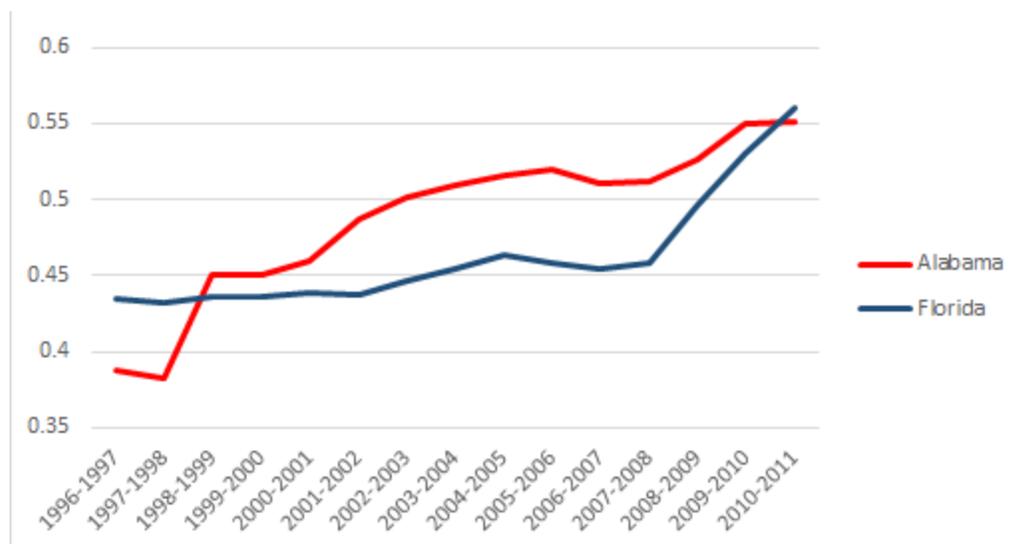


Figure 3 tracks students in both Alabama and Florida traditional public schools who are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch. This chart reflects that historically Alabama has had larger percent of its students who qualified for free and reduced lunch. Surprisingly the two states recently had almost the same percent of students qualifying for this program. This recent change and upswing for Florida is still too recent to draw any conclusory statements to why Florida has had such a surge in students who qualified, however the Florida Department of Education has offered one theory; the most recent recession significantly impacted Florida's major cities and a larger portion of Florida's families now fall below the poverty line (Jester, 2013). University of Florida Economist, David Denslow argues his own theory that more affluent families in Florida are waiting to have children (Denslow & Dewey, (2014).

Figure 3. Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch



Next this paper looked at NAEP scores of fourth grade students in both reading and mathematics. Figure 4 tracks the readings scores of fourth grade classrooms in traditional public schools in Florida and Alabama. Based off the data gathered and presented in this chart Florida and Alabama's NAEP readings scores were not that far apart in the nineties yet that gulf widened around 2000. While both states score's have consistently risen the gulf between the two states has been consistent and recently widened even more.

Figure 4. Fourth Grade Reading NAEP Scores

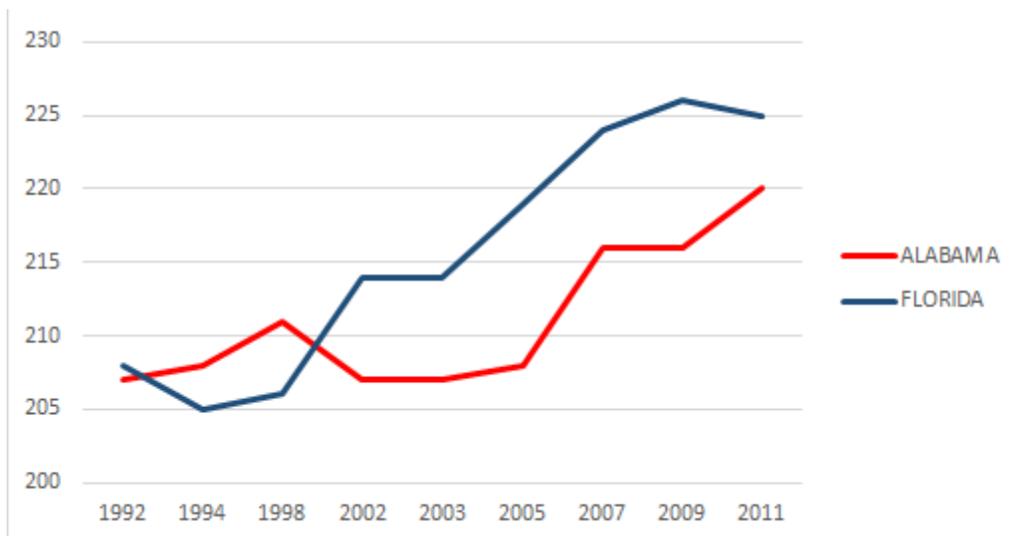
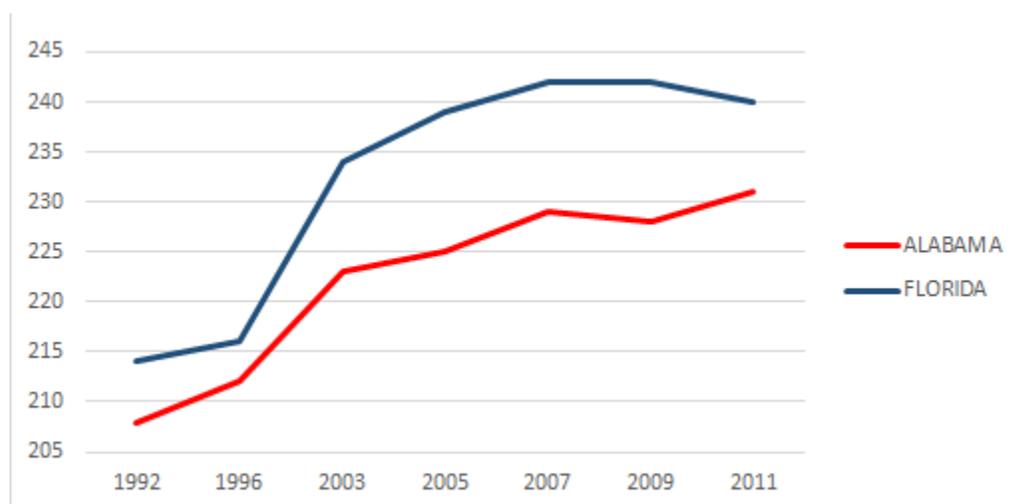


Figure 5 tracks the mathematics scores of fourth grade classrooms in traditional public schools in Florida and Alabama. Based off the data gathered and presented in this chart Florida and Alabama's NAEP math scores were not that far apart in the nineties yet again just like the reading scores that gulf widened around 2000. While both states scores have consistently risen the gulf between the two states has been consistent since around 2000.

Figure 5. Fourth Grade NAEP Math Scores



Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to attempt to answer the question, what are the factors that can explain state level differences in education between Alabama and Florida and illuminate why there is an education gulf in terms of student performance that has emerged between these two states in the last twenty years?

Based off the current NAEP scores of Alabama and Florida there exists an education gulf in academic performance between the two states that appeared in the early 2000s, the next steps are to attempt to identify why that gulf exists and what factors might contribute.

Income disparities could drastically affect a large margin between academic scores. The best way to measure low-income students is to look at the percent of the students in each state that qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program. Looking back at Figure 3, Florida and Alabama have almost the exact same percent of their students that are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch, demonstrating that there is not an unequal pull on one system that the other does not experience. Leading us to the

conclusion this factor does not significantly contribute to the gulf between Alabama and Florida's student performance.

Classroom size or teacher-student ratio could also be a telling factor and influential on scores. However this is a disparity that has been resolved and Florida and Alabama currently have almost the exact same ratio within their classrooms, as reflected in Figure 1. Knowing there is little to no difference in regards to teacher-student ratios in the classrooms of these two states points allows us to draw the conclusion that classroom size is not a substantial factor when it comes to explaining the gulf in student performance between Alabama and Florida.

Finally per-pupil spending costs could be the most powerful variable when it comes to student outcomes. However Figure 2 reveals that Alabama and Florida spend very close to exactly the same amount of money per child on education. Again this factor can be ruled out as a contributing to the significant education gulf in student performance between Alabama and Florida.

After taking into account the possible factors that could effect and explain the education gulf in student performance that has arisen between Alabama and Florida, it is easy to determine that Florida's education system holds some significant advantages to Alabama and is producing remarkable results for its students, but why? (see note)

Reviewing Figure 4 and 5, the NAEP scores in both mathematics and reading from Alabama and Florida seem to reveal that while both Alabama and Florida had comparable NAEP scores in 1990s a gulf seems to have begun to widen between the two states in terms of student performance around 2000. Several factors could explain this, two of which around 2000 that could explain the change in student performance: No

Child Left Behind was enacted in 2001 and Florida enacted school choice reforms in the form of vouchers and tax credits in 1998 and again in 2001.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was implemented in 2001 requiring standard-based education reform (Yell, 2006). The Act requires all states to develop testing assessments and standards. In this regard it is not surprising that the 2003 NAEP education statistics reflect academic gains for both states, especially in math (McDonnell, 2005). NCLB raised student's NAEP scores around the country and everyone rose almost equally (McDonnell, 2005). The unknown factor here then is not that Alabama fell behind Florida on NAEP scores after NCLB but that it appears that Florida's scores were raised drastically above Alabama. The drastic shift in Florida's test scores reflects that they met the national average and in some cases surpassed it (Yell, 2006). This gulf between Alabama and Florida probably cannot be entirely explained away by NCLB since NCLB affected both states equally and would not have created a gulf in academic performance that did not exist before.

This leads us to consider another possibility: Florida saw massive school choice legislation in 1998 and 2001, a factor that must be considered when assessing their 2003 academic scores (Ladson-Billings, 2006). *Education Matters* a publication of the Association of American Educators Foundations, argues that it is a reasonable conclusion that Florida's school choice education reforms are responsible for its high student achievement scores after 2000 (Ladner & Lip, 2009).

One last possible explanation or consideration that should not be forgotten when analyzing NAEP scores over time is the inclusion of students with disabilities (SD) and English Language Learner students (ELL) in NAEP tests beginning in 1998. The passage

of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended in 1997, required states to make accommodations in assessments to students who were considered ELL in order to fairly and accurately show their abilities. While the inclusion of these new students surely would make a difference in reported NAEP scores, the U.S. Department of Education has stated how important it is to continue to not only be able to compare states' NAEP scores to other states regardless of how many students may be eligible for accommodations but also be able to compare current NAEP scores to scores in the past without the inclusion of these students (US Dept. of Education, 2014). Even with inclusion of this new student population the US Department of Education has noted that it aims to reduce variation in what a state may report as its NAEP score. To reduce the variation in a state's NAEP score that the inclusion of ELL and SD students may be a factor, when NAEP scores are calculated a sample of SD and ELL students are used instead of the entire population of students (US Dept. of Education, 2014). Even with this in mind common sense says if one state has a much larger percent of its students who required accommodations this would have some sort of effect and would make it more difficult to compare to a state with a much lower percent of its student population requiring accommodations. During 2011-2012 school year 8.8% of Florida's students were ELL and only 2.4% of Alabama's were. One could make the argument that since Florida had a much larger percent of its students who were ELL this probably explains the gap between the two states NAEP scores, since more of its students required accommodations, potentially raising the NAEP score. However the National Center Education Statistics allows you to see the breakout and compare only ELL student's scores from the two states against one another. In 2011 ELL students from Florida scores

195 in reading and Alabama ELL students scored 189. Looking at only ELL students Florida's students are still performing significantly better than Alabama's. Unfortunately Alabama does not have data available before 2009 to track how its ELL students performed to be able to create a whole chart and compare ELL student scores between the two states. Not being able to fully look at ELL data from both states and compare and contrast the scores is a significant limitation to this study and limits the conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis.

Education is complicated and a wide variety of variables play into why some students perform better than others academically. This paper has accounted for some of those variables and found that based on the data this paper did examine, school choice options or the marketization of education has some effect on traditional public schools, or at least they have in Florida.

Some researchers and policy makers treat the marketization of education and school choice like it's this magical solution that will fix everything. They act like our public schools are failing on all accounts and if we simple created school options everything would be perfect. This is not reality. Education is a process, an experiment. Ideally each state would approach education like this and would involve parents and teachers in this process of figuring out what works best for the state, district, county, and each individual child.

There are some fantastic public schools and there are great teachers in every school-even the schools that are deemed failing. Despite all of this sometimes it's not enough for some students and they merely need a different opportunity in terms of education. This is the beauty or if you will the "magic" of school choice, it provides an

opportunity. School choice can play out in many different forms: vouchers, charter schools, homeschooling, open enrollment in public schools; call it whatever you want, but it all should be called an opportunity for a child.

This is what is lacking in Alabama, educational opportunities. If this paper suggests only one thing, it would be that Alabama has become stagnate in terms of education. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education initiated, “Race to the Top,” a competition between the states that graded them on innovation and reforms in education; Alabama was ranked last (U.S. Department of Education, 2010.)

Limitations

This paper attempted to point to key factors that are easily measured, consistently recorded, and are viewed in the education world as main contributors to how a student will perform academically. But as this paper implied previously, there are countless variables that can effect student achievement, from whether a child comes from a broken home, their race, family income, their parents own education, etc. The mere number of factors that were not tracked and measured which can effect student achievement, limit this paper’s reach. Unfortunately some variables that can truly impact a student’s academic performance cannot even be accounted for in quantitative measures.

One of these variables that this thesis did not consider is population. During the 2012-2013 school year Alabama had 744,637 students enrolled in its public schools whereas Florida had 2,692,162 students enrolled (US Dept. of Education, 2012). While there is a vast difference between these two states in sheer number of students the actual number of students in each classroom within a state is the measurement that would have the potential to impact how a student might perform academically, which is why student-

teacher ratio was the variable that was picked to be considered within this thesis. Still for more of a complete comparison between these states, population and enrollment numbers could be considered.

A potentially significant variable that could greatly affect overall student achievement scores that was not calculated into this thesis is race. Historically white students have performed better than minority groups on academic achievement tests (Fryer & Levitt, 2004). This gap between groups is referred to as the achievement gap. The National Center for Education Statistics NAEP math and reading assessments in 2009 and 2011 reveal that nationally black and Hispanic students lagged behind their white peers on average 20 test score points (US Dept. of Education, 2012). Alabama and Florida both have large populations of minority students that could easily affect their NAEP scores. During the 2012-2013 school year enrollment in Alabama traditional public schools was 58% white, 34% black, and only 5% Hispanic. Florida on the other hand during the same school year had enrolled in traditional public schools 42% white, 23% black, and 29% Hispanic students (US Dept. of Education, 2012). However while there still persists an achievement gap between racial groups emerging research is showing that the more significant achievement gap is between socioeconomic groups (Reardon, 2011). Considering that the gap between rich and poor students is widening and growing at a much more significant rate, this thesis chose to calculate the percent of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch. However by not calculating racial groups academic scores in each state limits the research application of this thesis.

Another limitation is the concept of “educational borrowing.” This was explained in the literature review but just because one concept, policy, or practice is successful in

one place does not mean that it will have the same results in another place. This extends not only to countries and states but can be applied to even counties within the same state. Simply because Florida is a Southern State and has for the most part the same student-teacher ratio, percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and even spends almost the same amount of money on per-pupil costs as Alabama, does not guarantee that Alabama would have the same results as Florida if it enacted the same school choice policies. There is no absolute way of foretelling what school choice would look like in Alabama and what the results would be.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is needed before absolute conclusions can be drawn on the true impact of marketization of education. More state by state comparisons should be made between states that have similar variables as in the case of Alabama and Florida-where one state is operating school choice and the other is not.

NCLB effects are still undetermined and intermingled due to parallel timing of Florida's school choice legislation. More research should be done to isolate the two events in an effort to determine to true scope of each. Perhaps a study of each state before and after NCLB to determine the average margin of increase/decrease could be of some help.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altbach, P. (1971). Education and neocolonialism. *Teachers College Record*, 72(4), p.543-558, <http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 1648, Date Accessed 6/22/2011.
- Archer, J. (2005). An Edmonton Journey. *Education Week*, 24(20), 35.
- Arnove, R., Altbach, P., & Kelly, G. (1982). *Comparitive Education*. New York: Advent Books.
- Askew address to the Florida Education Association delegate assembly, Jacksonville, Florida, March 6, 1971, Askew Papers, S126, B11.
- Ball, S. J., Bowe, R. and Gewirtz, S. (1995), Circuits of schooling: A sociological exploration of parental choice of school in social class contexts. *The Sociological Review*, 43: 52–78.
- Beech, J. (2006). The Theme of Educational Transfer in Comparative Education. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 1(1), 2-12.
- Bendix, R. (1963, August). Concepts and Generalizations in Comparative Sociological Studies. *Sociological Review*, 28(4), 532-539.
- Bowen, D., Trivitt, J. R. (2014). Stigma without Sanctions: The (Lack of) Impact of Private School Vouchers on Student Achievement. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, [S.I.], v. 22, p. 87. Brewer press release, April 16, 1969, Brewer Papers, Box 39.
- Bullock, C. S., & Rozell, M. J. (2007). *The new politics of the old South: An introduction to Southern politics*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burke, A., and Sheffield, R. (2011). School Choice in America 2011: Educational Opportunity Reaches New Heights. *The Heritage Foundation*. Retrieved from: <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/08/school-choice-in-america-2011-educational-opportunity-reaches-new-heights>.
- Camparella, A., Glenn, M., & Perry, L. (2011). *Hope for America's Children*. Washington D.C. : Alliance for School Choice.

- Carnoy, Martin & Rothstein, Richard. (January 28, 2013). *What do International tests really show about U.S. student performance*. Economic Policy Institute.
- Chappell, B. (2013). U.S. Students Slide in Global Rankings On Math, Reading, Science. *NPR News*.
- Clark, C. (1998). Using School-Level Data to Explore Resources and Outcome in Texas. *Journal of Education Finance*, 23(3), 374-389. Education. *Comparativ Education Review*, 48(2), 123-149.
- Cook, B., Hite, S., & E., E. (2004). Discerning Trends, Contours, and Boundaries in Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 48(2), 123-149.
- Crossley, M., & Jarvis, P. (2000). Introduction: Continuity, Challenge and Change in Comparative and International Education. *Comparative Education*, 36(3), 261-265.
- Denessen, E., Sleegets, P., S & Smit, F. (2001). Reasons for school choice in the Netherlands and in Finland. *National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Retrieved on September 20, 2011 from website: <http://www.ncspe.org/readrel.php?set=pub&cat=60>
- Fiske, E.B., & Ladd, H.F. (2000). *When schools compete: A cautionary tale*. Washington, DC.: Brookings Institute Press.
- Fiske, E.B., & Ladd, H.F. (2000). A level playing field? What we can learn from New Zealand school reform. *American Educator*, 24(3), 1-6.
- Florida Department of Education . (2011a). *Florida's Charter Schools*. Florida Department of Education .
- Florida Department of Education. (2011b). *Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program*. Florida Department of Education.
- Fryer, R., & Levitt, S. (2004). Falling Behind: New Evidence on the black-white achievement gap. *Education Next*, 4(4).
- Frendwey, M. (2014). Hope Action Results: Year book 2013-2014. *The Alliance for School Choice*.
- Gewirtz, S., Ball, S.J., & Bowe, R. (1995). *Markets, choice and equity in education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for*

- Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Grissmer, D. (2000). *Improving Student Achievement: What state NAEP Test Scores Tell Us*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Hanusehek, E. (2014). Why the U.S. Results on PISA Matter. *Education Week*.
- Harris, D., Herrington, C., & Albee, A. (2007, January). The Future of Vouchers: Lessons from the Adoption, Design, and Court Challenges of Florida's Three Voucher Programs. *Educational Policy*, 21(1), 215-244.
- Harter, E. A. (1999) How Educational Expenditures Relate to Student Achievement: Insights from Texas Elementary Schools. *Journal of Education Finance* 24(3), 281-302
- Harvey, G. E. (2002). *A question of justice: New South governors and education, 1968-1976*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Howell, W., & Peterson, P. (2006). *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press.
- Jefferson, A. L. (December 07, 2005). Student Performance: Is More Money the Answer? *Journal of Education Finance*, 31 (2), 111-124.
- Jester, E. (June, 16,2013). More Students getting free or reduced-price lunch. *Gainesville Sun*.
- Ladner, M., Lips, D. (2009). Does Demography Dictate Destiny? *Education Matters*, 1-3.
- Ladner, A., Leferre, A., & Lips, D. (2010). *Report Card on American Education*. Washington D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (October 01, 2006). From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools. *Educational Researcher*,35, 7, 3-12.
- Latimer, M. K. (January 01, 1979). "No-Party" Politics at the End of the Wallace Era. *Publius*, 9, 1, 215-227.
- Legislation Report, 1973: Associated Industries of Florida, "Summary of legislation: 1973 regular and June special session," no date, ca.
- Levin, H. M. (2001). *Privatizing education: Can the marketplace deliver choice, efficiency, equity, and social cohesion?*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press.

- McDonnell, L. M. (January 01, 2005). No Child Left Behind and the Federal Role in Education: Evolution or Revolution?. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80, 2, 19-38.
- Merritt, R., & F., C. (1977). Politics and Educational Reform. *Comparative Education Review*, 21(2/3), 247-273.
- Morphis, A. (2009). New Zealand school reform. *National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Retrieved on September 20, 2011 from website:
<http://www.ncspe.org/readrel.php?set=pub&cat=235>.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1983.
- Patrinos, H. (2009, October). Private education provision and public finance: The Netherlands. *National Center on School Choice, Vanderbilt University*.
- Phillips, R. (2009, November 20). AEA chief Paul Hubbert says he'll battle to keep charter schools out of Alabama. *Press-Register*. Retrieved from
http://blog.al.com/live/2009/11/aea_chief_paul_hubbert_says_he.html.
- Powell, J. (2009, May). To Segregate or to Separate: Special Education Expansion and Divergence in the United States and Germany. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(2), 161-187.
- Powell, J., & Solga, H. (2010, September). Analyzing the Nexus of Higher Education and Vocational Training in Europe: A Comparative-Institutional Framework. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35(6), 705-721.
- Powell, J., Bernhard, N., & Graf, L. (2012, January). The Emergent European Model in Skill Formation: Comparing Higher Education and Vocational Training in Bologna and Copenhagen Processes. *Sociology of Education*, 85(3), 240-258.
- Raivola, R. (1985). What is Comparison? Methodological and Philosophical Considerations. *Comparative Education Review*, 29(3), 362-374.
- Reay, D. (1996), Contextualising Choice: social power and parental involvement. *British Educational Research Journal*, 22: 581-596.
- Reardon, S. (2011). The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations. *Russell Sage Foundation*
- Salganik, L. (1994). Apples to Apples: Comparing Performance Indicators for Places

with Similar Demographic Characteristics. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 16(2), 125-141.

Schwartzman, Bryan. (2008, July). *Tax Breaks Given for Scholarship Donations*. REACH Foundation

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2004). *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Thomson, K. (2008). An evaluation of the charter school movement in Alberta. *National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University*. Retrieved on September 20, 2011 from website: <http://www.ncspe.org/readrel.php?set=pub&cat=198>.

Timar, T. B., & Kirp, D. L. (March 01, 1989). Education Reform in the 1980s Lessons from the States. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70, 7.)

Ujifusa, A. (2013). School Choice Program in Alabama Challenged in Federal Lawsuit. *Education Week*.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of education statistics, 2008*, Chapter 6 (NCES 2008-022).

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Inclusion of Special-Needs Students (July 2014).

U.S. Department of Education, Race to the Top Assessment Program. *U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan announces winners of competition to improve student assessments* (September, 2010).

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of education statistics, 2012*, Chapter 6 (NCES 2008-022).

Valent, J. (2014). Better Data, Better Decisions Informing School Choosers to Improve Education Markets. *American Enterprise Institute*.

Vocino, T. (2010, February 2). *ALabama Education Association*. Retrieved November 22, 2011, from Encyclopedia of Alabama: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2528>

Vold, D. J., & DeVitis, J. L. (1991). *School reform in the Deep South: A critical appraisal*. Tuscaloosa, Ala: University of Alabama Press.

- Warwick, D., & Osherson, S. (1973). Comparative Analysis in the Social Sciences. In D. Warwick, *Comparative Research Methods*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Woods, Ph.A., Bagley, C., & Glatter, R. (1998). *School choice and competition: Markets in the public interest?* London: Routledge.
- Wylie, C. (2006). What is the reality of school competition? *New Zealand Council for Educational Research*.
- Yell, M. L., Katsiyannas, A., & Shiner, J. G. (March 01, 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act, Adequate Yearly Progress, and Students With Disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38, 4

VITA

Kellie Slappey Nothstine was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. While she attended private school for parts of her elementary and secondary school years, the rest of the time she was homeschooled; picking out her own curriculum, books, subject matter and outside classes she attended.

Nothstine graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. It was there that she wrote her senior thesis on the First Amendment and the constitutionality of school vouchers. After undergrad Nothstine worked at the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she contributed to the lobbying effort which resulted in legislation to lift the cap on charter school expansion in 2011. Nothstine worked in Representative Blackwell's office, the Chairman of the Education Committee in the North Carolina General Assembly, conducting research and drafting legislation on a plethora of education issues.

In 2011, Nothstine moved to Chicago to pursue her masters in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies at Loyola University Chicago while simultaneously attending Loyola University Chicago School of Law. While in graduate and law school Nothstine worked for the Legal Advocacy Center within the Jewish Child and Family Services, acting as an advocate for parents whose children have special needs in the Chicago Public School

System. She currently works at the U.S. Departments of Education in the Office for Civil Rights, investigating and enforcing school compliance on federal disability laws.

Nothstine anticipates moving back to Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband, upon completion of her Masters and Juris Doctorate degree.

THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Kellie Slappey Nothstine has been read and approved by the following committee:

Noah Sobe, Ph.D, Director
Professor of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

Tavis Jules, Ed.D.
Professor of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature that appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

Director's Signature