

School Finance EDST 555
July 2nd to July 19th, 2019
Room PCOH 1011

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General Description:

The term “school finance” is usually not a recommended topic at cocktail parties, but it should be. School finance is not merely about budgets. It is about the politics, policies and competing interests that go into deciding who and what matters in education. In this course, we will explore how equity and social justice are intricately connected to decisions about budget sources and allocations in educational settings. What is funded or cut? Is it science programs or music? Why is this? How do we fund special education and what does this say about what is valued and not by policymakers? This course looks at finance as part of larger socio-political contexts in Canada and BC. This course will be of interests to teachers, administrators, and those working on social justice and equity issues in K-12 education.

Aims, Goals, Objectives, Outcomes:

What should practicing school leaders know about the financing of education? Should we consider a budget as a discourse underlined by a certain understanding of what is public education, how should it be provided, for what purposes, and for whose benefit? These are the key guiding questions for this course. This course addresses itself to aspiring school-level administrators and to school-level administrators as aspirants to more senior leadership positions in education.

The answer to these questions necessarily involves more than knowledge of how to manage a school budget technically. First, some sense of how the financing of publicly funded education fits into the evolving economic context of both private- and public-sector activity is necessary if school administrators are to understand, engage in, and influence financial decision-making with more than a “recipe-book” approach. Second, let them find themselves prey to facile ideas about how much better life in schools would be if government—and school boards—simply used alternative approaches to distributing available resources, school leaders should have some general idea of the generic approaches to funding education that are possible and the advantages and disadvantages of each. They should also understand some of the central issues, trade-offs, measurement problems, controversies, and dilemmas that transcend any particular technical approach to distributing available resources, especially the debate around the aims of public education and issues of adequacy and equity. Closely linked to the debate about the financing of public education, the aim(s) of education are also subject to an intense debate, especially when governments re-examine aspects of the provision of public schooling and struggle with defining the need for educational change. In order to participate intelligently and meaningfully within this debate and the discussion around issues of providing and financing education, educators need to understand the contested nature of education—how the debate is influenced by fluctuating social,

cultural, economic and political trends that emerge locally, nationally, and globally. Competing claims have foundations in diverse conceptions of the educated person, the good life, and the good society. Those conceptions operate within larger discourses that address foundational issues of purpose, paradigm, and finances in education.

These areas of concern define the terrain of this course. Students completing this course should have a solid working knowledge, appropriately contextualized, of education finance as it relates to the work of school-level and district-level leaders.

The principal goals of this course will be to foster understanding of:

1. the changing place of publicly funded education in the context of a rapidly evolving, increasingly globalized, volatile, technology-intensive, knowledge-based economy,
2. basic alternative approaches to funding education, their rationales in terms of equity, adequacy, and efficiency, and their applicability to different types and levels of educational services,
3. issues surrounding alternative revenue sources for education with particular focus on the property tax and market-driven funding mechanisms,
4. questions and issues surrounding school- and district-based budgeting process and management.

Weekly Schedule and Format

Each week will consist of four to five 2.5 hours sessions (14 sessions in total from July 2nd to July 19th, 2019). Instruction will consist of a combination of lectures by the instructor and guest speakers, participant presentation of cases, and small and large group discussions of financial issues. As a community of learners, you will be expected to share your personal, professional, and collaborative queries, explorations, and expertise through group discussions and projects. Participants will also need to have recourse to the Faculty of Education Library, and other sources, including the Internet, for the purpose of researching and preparing their presentations and final papers.

Assessment

Assessment will involve the following methods:

1. Contribution to class discussion and presentations - 10%
2. Critical Issue Focus Paper (40% — maximum 10 pages): *Equity and Adequacy*

Over the last three decades, senior levels of government in Canada have downloaded debt-driven budgetary constraint toward provinces, municipalities, local health and social-service delivery units, and school boards with the result that publicly-funded local agencies including school districts have been confronted with increasingly difficult budgetary and program choices—and decreased discretion to make them. At the same time school districts have been confronted with major identity changes from provincial restructuring initiatives—as well as growing fiscal pressure from their mandate to provide adequate, appropriate and inclusive services to special-needs and at-risk students. Indeed the question of overall funding adequacy

has been reshaping traditional ideas of equity in Canadian provinces as elsewhere. All of this adds up to a hard balancing act and hard choices that go with it. Given the fiscal, economic, and political realities of our time, should provincial reforms and local school districts budgeting practices channel a greater proportion of scarce resources into increasing equity or into providing higher quality and diversity of educational programs to the “more able?” Why? What are the probable fiscal, program, and social consequences of your position? In no more than ten double-spaced pages, expose and critique the most fundamental underlying issues in the equity and adequacy debate *as you currently understand them* with particular attention to their financial dimensions. This is *not* a research assignment. Above all, you are to take a reasoned position, supported with sound arguments and grounded in relevant research literature for or against realignment of resources in one or the other of these two basic directions, increased concentration on “excellence” or on “equality and equity.” As you do so, you will need to present some notions of what might constitute a reasonable and politically sustainable view of “adequate and equitable/equitable” funding. ***The paper is due on July 12th, 2019 at 16:00.***

	Unacceptable	Poor	Marginal	Minimal Graduate Level	Quite Well Done	Well Done	Very Well Done	Excellent	Outstanding
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Evaluation of Critical Issue Focus Paper:

○ Clarity and consistency in presentation of issues	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Insight and originality	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Organization	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Presentation — English form and style, correct use of A.P.A. style	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Quality of critique:									
1. clear presentation of principal values and assumptions	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
2. sound and lucid argumentation	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
3. treatment of counterarguments	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
4. success in exposing equity/excellence/adequacy dilemmas, problems, and possibilities	0	2	4	6	7	7.5	8	9	10

3. School Budgeting Process in your School District (40%—maximum 10 double-spaced pages *due on July 22nd, 2019* / 10% - *Oral presentation scheduled for July 17th and 18th, 2019*)

Select a BC school district (could be your own district) and describe its approach to budgeting for the 2018/19 or 2019/20 budget year. Pay particular attention to:

- the profile of the selected school district: student enrollment, geographical location, size, etc.
- the main sources of funding:
 - public sources (government) and how the allocation to your district is calculated (funding formula)
 - private sources (international students, entrepreneurial activities, etc.)
- the consultation process followed by your school district
- how and on what basis (in terms of equity, adequacy, and/or equality) the budget has been constructed and financial allocation made within your school district (consult the official minutes of your Board of education)
- a critique of the process followed for the construction of the school district budget: what was the nature and content of the input provided by various stakeholders? What educational values are being promoted in the budget: adequacy, equity, social justice, and/or equal treatment?

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Evaluation of Budget Process Paper:

○ Clarity and coherence of budgetary process description	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Plausibility and appropriateness of process	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Organization of the paper	0	1	2	3	3.5	3.75	4	4.5	5
○ Presentation — English form and style, correct use of A.P.A. style	0	2	4	6	7	7.5	8	9	10
○ Overall quality of budget process:									
1. clear presentation of principal values and assumptions	0	2	4	6	7	7.5	8	9	10
2. description and critique of the stages and outcomes of the budget process	0	2	4	6	7	7.5	8	9	10

Order of Marking Standards

A Level (80% to 100%)

A+ is from 90% to 100% as it reflects exceptional work that greatly exceeds course expectations. In addition, achievement must satisfy all the conditions below.

A is from 85% to 89%. A mark of this order suggests a very high level of performance on all criteria used for evaluation. Contributions deserving an A show that the individual (or group) significantly shows initiative, creativity, insight, and probing analysis where appropriate. Further, the achievement must show careful attention to course requirements as established by the instructor.

A- is from 80% to 84% and reflects generally high quality of performance, no problems of any significance, and fulfillment of all course requirements. However, the achievement does not demonstrate the level of quality that is clearly distinguished relative to that of peers in class.

B Level (68% to 79%)

This category of achievement reflects an adequate but unexceptional performance when the criteria of assessment are considered. It is distinguished from A level work by problems such as:

- one or more significant errors in understanding
- superficial representation or analysis of key concepts
- absence of any special initiatives
- lack of coherent organization or explication of ideas

B+ is from 76% to 79%.

B is from 72% to 75%.

B- is from 68% to 71%.

C Level (67% to 60%)

C+ is from 64% to 67%

C is from 60% - 63%

The Faculty of Graduate Studies considers 60% as a minimum passing grade for graduate students. See the UBC Calendar for details. Students should check the University Calendar for information on what constitutes “Satisfactory Progress” for masters and doctoral students. In general, a grade of 68% must be maintained to remain in good standing. See the Faculty of Graduate Studies section of Calendar for more information.

Common criteria for all assignments

All assignments should be double-spaced using Times or Times New Roman, 12-point font. Conventions of written English language usage should be followed. All submissions should be checked for spelling and grammar and proofread. APA style should be used for all citations, quotes and reference lists. Guidelines for APA style can be found at <http://www.library.ubc.ca/pubs/apastyle.html>. Papers should be well organized, ***with an introduction and conclusion, and use headings and subheadings as appropriate.*** Assignments should be submitted as e-mailed attachments unless otherwise arranged with the instructor. Please keep a copy of all submitted assignments.

Continuous Class Work

Course participants are expected to attend all classes, to come well prepared, and to participate in all class discussions and activities. Preparation for class includes critically reading the required readings and preparing notes prior to class. Critical reading means paying attention to how authors build their argument. It also means paying attention to how you respond emotionally and cognitively to the readings—how do you feel after reading them? What do you agree with and why? What do you disagree with and why? What passages stand out for you and why? Quality contributions in the class are more important than quantity. Contributions to the class community include respectfully offering your own views; listening respectfully and reflecting upon the views of others; drawing others into the discussion; asking questions for clarification; responding to any conflicts in a mature fashion; having patience with ambiguity and confusion; communicating any concerns about the course to the instructor.

Policy Regarding Late Assignments and Class Absenteeism

All assignments are due on or before the date stated in the course outline. If you cannot meet a deadline, notify the instructor in advance and explain why you are unable to meet the deadline. Negotiate an appropriate revised due date. Classes are designed to provide opportunities for students to learn through interaction with the instructor and other students, and possibly with guest speakers. When classes are missed this learning is irreplaceable, therefore attendance and participation are important in order to optimize the course experience. Students are asked to notify the instructor in advance if they are unable to attend a particular class. Students who miss a class may be asked to complete an additional assignment to demonstrate proficiency with the content missed. Students who miss two or more classes may be asked to withdraw from the course.

Email and Phone Calls

If you do not get a return email within 24 hours, please email again. I check emails and phone messages from Monday to Friday and respond quickly.

Disability and Accommodation

If you have an impairment that requires accommodation in this course, please speak to me or provide me with documentation and recommendations from the Disability Resources Centre.

Policy Regarding Academic Misconduct

The integrity of academic work depends on the honesty of all those who work in this environment and the observance of accepted conventions such as acknowledging the work of others through careful citation of all sources used in your work. Plagiarism -including self-plagiarism - and other forms of academic misconduct are treated as serious offences at UBC, whether committed by faculty, staff or students. You should be aware of the sections of the University Calendar that address academic integrity (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/>) and plagiarism (<http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/policies.htm/>). The UBC library also has a useful web-based Plagiarism Resource Centre that explains what plagiarism is and how to avoid it (www.library.ubc.ca/home/plagiarism/). If you have questions or concerns about any of 5 these policies or conventions in relation to how they apply to the work you do in this course, please discuss them with the instructor.

Topics Outline:

I. The Overall Economic Context

1. Law of supply and demand and relationship to rationale for public funding of education:
 - supply and demand
 - rates of return on educational investments
 - education versus other public investments
 - educational production and cost functions:
 - theory
 - limitations
 - globalisation, technology, and the future of publicly funded education.
2. The private sector in education:
 - rationale for private provision
 - private funding
 - rationale across different educational levels
 - forms
 - implications
 - public funding of private schools in Canada
 - theory
 - critique
3. Taxation:
 - major current and historical issues surrounding taxation for school purposes as they relate to funding elementary/secondary education in B.C.
 - alternatives to local property taxation for school purposes (extended reliance on consumption or income tax, lotteries, for-profit entrepreneurial activities, etc.) and their impacts on issues of equity.

4. Fiscal equity and adequacy in education finance (with special attention to recent developments in British Columbia):
 - basic concepts of equity
 - horizontal
 - conceptual roots in horizontal equity
 - alternative approaches—assumptions and results
 - Canadian approaches to equity and funding
 - vertical
 - special cost and need grants
 - conceptual roots in vertical equity
 - alternative approaches: assumptions and results
 - Canadian & BC examples

5. Perennial, recent and current issues in elementary and secondary school funding in connection to:
 - adequacy
 - relationship between adequacy and equity
 - the challenge of defining and measuring adequacy
 - Market-oriented finance policy in BC and its impacts of equity and adequacy of funding public education
 - replacement of half the local share from provincial source with correspondingly greater exposure of public education revenues to economic fluctuations, and
 - transportation
 - program mandates and funding levels

II. School-Level Issues

6. Devolution of decision-making power about funding Site-Based Management:
 - rationale
 - issues
 - board control and school-level discretion
 - horizontal and vertical policy coherence
 - relationship to district and school site budgeting
 - conceptual issues
 - what is being delegated
 - to whom
 - why
 - balance of power