Evaluating the Achievements and Limitations of the U.S. Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

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Introduction

Children are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. One in 45 children experience homelessness in America each year. In the United States today, an estimated 1.6 to 1.7 million children are likely to experience homelessness over the course of a year.

Congress established the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program in 1987 in response to report that 57% of homeless children were enrolled in school. The EHCY program provides formula grants to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal rights to receive the free and appropriate education as same as other non-homeless children and youth.

Does the program work well? Which factor(s) influences the consequences of the program significantly? How to improve the result of the program in the future?

Research Design

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, state coordinators of the “Education Homeless Children and Youth” project are required to gather data on the numbers of various dimensions of homeless students issue.

The data collected from the Department of Education is from SY2007-08 to SY2011-12. The research will compare the five-year period national data in order to identify the achievements of EHCY and figure out the factors affect the homeless students’ academic performance through modeling the regression model, testing p-value at 95% confidence interval level of potential factors.

Preliminary Results

Sample

Grade 8 homeless students are a proper sample population because they are in right age with high cognitive competence and study ability.

Factors

- **Teacher Quality**: has direct relationship with students’ academic performance.
- **Funding**: infrastructure build, better equipment etc.
- **Student number and LEAs ratio**: as well as teacher-student ratio, pay different attention to students
- **Funding and LEAs ratio**: funding for each LEA to implement the program (hire teacher etc.)

Regression Results

**Regression results (95% confidence interval)**

- **Teacher Quality**: has significant influence on both Math (P=0.042) and Reading score (P= 0.022)
- **Funding**: no significant influence
- **Ratio of students number and LEAs**: has significant influence on Math score (P=0.022), especially when the ratio is above average, negative.

Key Findings

**Teacher Quality**

The high teacher quality has significant influence on homeless students’ academic performance at 95% confidence interval, which is the most significant factor influencing the results of academic performance.

**Ratio of students number and LEAs**

The average ratio between the number of students and LEAs is 26.838. According to research the ratio between the number of students and LEAs of some outstanding academic performance states, the average ratio of these states is N/LEAs=13, which is half of the national average number.

**Academic performance decreased states**

Even funding has no significant influence on students’ academic performance, observing the decreased trends of grade 8, almost every decreased states occupies the half bottom of economic development situation (IA, KY, MI, NE, TN, WV, WI).

Conclusion

**Achievement**

More homeless students have been enrolled into LEAs and received services from EHCY program. And most of them made excellent academic performance by resource allocated in an appropriate ways.

**Limitations**

Teacher quality varies from state to state and resource shortage, as a result of high number of students and LEAs and a low ratio between the funding and LEAs, is impeding the high academic performance of homeless students.

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