Sample Literature Review

(In this sample, the first five sources are the ones with in-depth summaries and critiques. The rest simply present the thesis. Your list may be different—the ones you comment on in depth will probably be scattered throughout the list.)

Research question: How does funding for education affect economic well being?


Contrary to expectation, the article finds that traditional majors produce higher employment and job satisfaction than new, non-traditional majors intended to be more market-oriented. Part 1 summarizes recent educational reforms, part 2 presents data from a recent alumni study, and part 3 discusses the results. Suggests that education funding alone, without effective targeting, may not be enough to positively affect the economy. A major survey provides ample evidence; extensive sampling makes it representative. The assumption that job satisfaction is a good indicator of long-term economic stability is valid.


This article predicts major trends in education, with a focus on workforce education. Sections discuss private-public partnerships, formal measures to prevent attrition, testing, assessment, professional development and energy efficiency. The article implies that education funding will be an effective driver of employment. Evidence is sketchy and may not be representative of the nation’s schools. The author assumes that workforce education programs will produce job satisfaction and adequate employment, an assumption contradicted by Cabrera, Vries and Anderson.


The 2008 recession will, this article argues, drive down school funding at a time when it is most urgently needed, especially for low-income families. The article describes the effects of the economic downturn and efforts to deal with the problem. It suggests that budget cuts are likely, then describes the problems this will cause. The author points out that demand for education increases during hard times. This article’s thesis, if true, would indicate that lower school funding will negatively affect the economy. Evidence is very incomplete (only two states are directly cited) but probably representative of how states are coping with budget shortfalls. The assumption that “economically stressed” children will be most vulnerable is reasonable.


This article argues that funding for higher education should be overhauled. Sections describe the way current funding plans developed, different states’ approaches, common features of these methods, and the details of what the author considers a more effective plan. While it does not directly answer the research question, its description of existing funding models suggests that simply increasing dollar amounts will not significantly improve economic well being. The
evidence is from some of the most populous states in the nation, making it both sufficient and representative. The only flaw in the reasoning is the author’s assumption that a new model can be substituted for existing ones, which political obstacles makes unlikely.

This article finds that the one thing successful economies based on entrepreneurship have in common is a strong educational system. It describes different successful regions and different theories to account for their success. This thesis indicates that increased education funding would improve the economy. The evidence is sufficient but it is not clear that the examples cited are representative because it does not consider places with strong education systems that do not have an entrepreneurship-based economy. The assumption that correlation implies causation is a weakness.

Increasing all but the highest levels of education has a significant positive effect on economic growth.

The example of SAS Institute CEO Jim Goodnight supports the view that increased education funding will improve our economy.

Public funding for higher education among Latinos increases tax revenues and promotes overall economic well being.

Political science has much to teach us about income inequality, and particularly on how changes in education funding have created greater inequality.

School systems spend more money on wealthy students and on AP classes than on low-income students and remedial classes, which is what they should be spending on.

Because education of employees contributes to the value of companies more than their physical property, government should spend more on education.

Government leaders support funding for education even during the recession.