THE GEOGRAPHY OF SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM IN TEXAS: THE IMPACT OF "ROBIN HOOD" LAWS ON RICH AND POOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Abstract

Inequality in public school funding has plagued many states, causing many people to receive inadequate instruction. These problems result because school funding is primarily based on local property tax revenues. In an effort to reduce inequality, Texas implemented Senate Bill 7 in an attempt to reduce the funding gap between property-poor and property-wealthy school districts, as measured by per pupil expenditures. This study analyzes the impact of the redistribution of school funding in Texas from rich school districts to poor ones, as dictated by Senate Bill 7 – the Robin Hood law. This thesis examines how students in property-poor school districts performed on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test prior to receiving tax funds from wealthy school districts and then again after poor school districts received increased funding due to the Robin Hood law. The Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin and the Texas Education Agency were used to access data files for TAAS scores, financial information and demographic information. Regression models, correlations and test of independent means are used to determine a relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Descriptive statistics, Paired-Sample t-test and test of independent means are used to determine the educational impact of redistributed finances from property-wealthy to property-poor school districts. Results indicate that the redistribution of finances had a significant and positive impact on the percentage of students passing the TAAS test in property-poor school districts from 1994-95 to 2001-2002.