

Fast Facts

Arguments and Evidence: The Debate over Collective Bargaining's Role in Public Education

What —

The CEEP Educational Policy Brief, *Arguments and Evidence: The Debate over Collective Bargaining's Role in Public Education*, examines the research on collective bargaining in education. The brief describes the contours of the public debate over the role of collective bargaining agreements in elementary and secondary education in the U.S. with a focus on the relationship between teacher's unions and reform. The brief also examines the empirical research on the effects of collective bargaining and includes Policy Perspectives by association representatives of Indiana teacher unions, school boards, and superintendents.

Why —

Collective bargaining agreements in education have become a flashpoint in debates over educational reform. Some reformers have suggested that teacher's unions are obstacles to important educational reforms, a view rejected by proponents of teacher unions. A better understanding of the role of collective bargaining in education is critical to resolving this debate.

How —

The research on the effects of collective bargaining is limited and ambiguous. Different methodological approaches have led to very different conclusions as to the direct effects of collective bargaining. However, there is some evidence that collective bargaining may have an indirect effect on student achievement by influencing structural factors like class size, school resources and teacher salaries, and teacher quality.

Recommendations —

- Future studies need to address a number of methodological and measurement issues and should take into consideration the new availability of data under NCLB, the role of collective bargaining in other countries, and the effects of the increasing centralization of educational policy and financing.
- Both educational reformers critical of collective bargaining agreements and teacher's union advocates should recognize that reforms will require a balanced approach that takes into consideration both the need for structural change and the legitimate concerns of teachers.
- Given the inconclusive nature of existing research on the effects of collective bargaining agreements, policymakers should be advised to move cautiously, looking for areas of common agreement rather than engaging in ideological battles.

To read this Education Policy Brief, go to:
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