

War versus Education: Obama's promise for Educational Funding is Double-speak

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Education in America desperately needs funding, and Obama, despite his words, will not solve the problem.

In a speech at Ann Arbor, Michigan, Obama proposed to increase the Perkins loan program from \$1 billion to \$8 billion, create a \$1 billion grant competition, and a \$55 million competition. Obama promised to make the pricing of school more transparent and to cap student loan payments at 10% of a student's monthly income after graduation.

In theory, these things sound good and Obama was understandably met with large rounds of applause. In reality though, they will create more problems than they will do good.

The most significant promise is the \$7 billion dollars in more student loans. America is in the biggest credit bubble since the Roaring 20s, leading to this most inequality in decades, and more loans are not going to help the problem, regardless of the seemingly favourable terms.

The \$1 billion dollars in grants, assuming there are 17.5 million students enrolled in post-secondary education in the US, equals \$57.14 per post-secondary student. Let's take a low estimate that the average yearly tuition at an American college is \$10,000 (many colleges charge much more), then Obama's grant promises to cover 0.57% of the cost of one year of American college. In this context, the \$55 million competition is not even worth mentioning. Funding in the form a competition is a very obvious example of promoting the needs of a few over the needs of many.

The grant funding is a token to please ignorant voters, while avoiding making the needed ethical commitment to deal with one of America's most pressing problems.

Obviously this is not how the grants will actually be distributed, and some real students could benefit from receiving grants because they will receive hundreds or thousands of dollars, providing of course this funding actually makes it to students. Something is better than nothing, but the discrepancy between the amount of loan funding (which is a financial product made profitable by interest) and the grant funding shows the administration's priorities.

No mention is made of financial support for the primary and secondary schools in America that teach over 60 million students every year, and have a much bigger effect on people's overall education than college because people generally attend for at least 12 years. If they do not attend the full term, then it is the only formal schooling they will likely receive in their lifetimes.

Obama's real priorities are revealed later in the speech. Obama lists "things that will help us in the long term" as first "student loans and grants" and second as "a strong military." First loans, then token grants that students will not have any chance of receiving if they are the product of a primary and secondary education lacking in funding. Then war.

Obama references war a second time in this speech, which is supposedly about education, saying: "We're successful because we have an outstanding military — that costs money."

Obama also carefully defers all responsibility for major problems onto congress. He says . "Congress needs to stop giving taxpayer dollars to an oil industry that's never been more profitable" and "Congress needs to do more. They need to stop the interest rates on student loans from doubling this July."

Interest rates are set to double because of the expiration of a 50% interest rate cut on July 1, 2012. If Obama really cared about student loan interest rates he could write, or have someone else write, a proposal to extend the rate cut or to institute an even lower rate cut when this one expires or immediately. If he really cared about stopping subsidies for oil companies he would have that legislation preventing or removing subsidies written as well. Same things goes for the taxation of ultra-rich Americans. Obama talks tough about affordability, but his actions are meek.

The US president cannot directly propose legislation, but he can draft it and give it to a member of congress to propose. He chooses not to. He also has power to veto bills, like the NDAA, SOPA, and ACTA, but he chooses not to. Instead he defers the vote by pushing back the date so that the issue loses the public's attention and passes more easily.

So why is Obama not doing the things he could do to improve issues he says he cares about? Because he is a war-monger or a puppet used to pump the military. He makes token gestures towards education but actually intends to put students into more debt (\$7 billion in loans versus \$1.055 billion in direct funding) contributing to the education crisis and to America's worsening military-industrial complex. He serves other people who want to see education perpetuate the current system of inequality and militarism, through token gifts without actually doing the things he could be doing to solve the root problems.

Wake up America. Your government is drafting students to help build the next generation of robot drones. Obama's proposed military budget cuts are a double-speak sham in the same genre as his promises on education, see sources below. With the Federal Reserve accused of giving \$16 trillion in shadow loans to financial companies, are we really going to expect that no military organizations are receiving funding on the side?

Obama sounds good when he talks, but his actions (and his lack of action on many issues) speak volumes. If Americans fail to protest and demand change now, the crisis will be much worse when a new president is voted in in November.

Sources:

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