

Citizens prefer teachers and administrators to take the hit during economic crisis

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With schools around the world looking into various cost-cutting measures in the midst of the COVID-10 pandemic, new research from Binghamton University, State University of New York reveals that citizens prefer teachers and administrative staff to be at the frontline of school spending cuts during times of economic crisis.

Komla Dzigbede, assistant professor of public administration at Binghamton University, examined public attitudes toward [school](#) budget cuts during the Great Recession (2008-2009), a [time](#) when many state governments cut back on public education spending and [school districts](#) responded with different cost-cutting strategies to ease budget stress while maintaining [educational goals](#).

"During times of major economic crises, school districts must make critical cost-cutting decisions, even as they face constraints on raising additional revenues," said Dzigbede. "As school districts weigh alternate cost-cutting strategies in times of crises—whether to cut spending on salaries, instruction or support services—citizens, in turn, worry about the impacts school budget cuts would have on educational quality in the local community. How does the public perceive the impact of different forms of school spending cuts on educational quality during times of major economic crises? What factors influence those perceptions? And what insights can school district managers and education policymakers gain from citizens' perceptions to inform critical decision-making in times of major crises?"

Dzigbede's findings indicate that during times of serious crises, citizens tend to view canceling after-school activities and reducing funds for instructional materials as having more harmful impacts on educational quality than cutting teachers' pay, cutting teachers' training or cutting administrative staff positions.

Additionally, Dzigbede found that gender, age, income, party identification and political ideology are significant determinants of [public attitudes](#) toward different forms of school spending cuts. Women, [younger people](#), lower-income earners and less-conservative people differ from other demographics in their attitudes toward different cost-cutting strategies.

These research findings offer practical insights for school district administration, management, and policy, said Dzigbede.

"When making critical decisions about cost-cutting strategies in times of major crises, school district managers and education policymakers need to know the socio-demographic, economic and ideological preferences of citizens and take these into account in managerial decision making to promote responsive, participatory and accountable governance," said Dzigbede.

More information: Komla D. Dzigbede, Determinants of public attitudes towards school budget cuts during the Great Recession, *Educational Studies* (2020). [DOI: 10.1080/03055698.2020.1793298](https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1793298)

Provided by Binghamton University

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