Reflection #5

What is the meaning and purpose of education? Should schools have a compulsory law, and how is it enforced? What are some resources that help Hispanic women in their quest for a better education?

While reading the chapter on History of Education, I found the material to be confusing to some extent. By the end of the chapter I felt that I had read all these pages and I still did not have a clear idea to reflect upon or write about. After reading I took a break, and when I returned I tried to think of the real purpose of the reading, so I decided to take an intense look at the conclusion. As I read the first few sentences I felt a moment of clarity, where it stated “[a]s students of educational history, you may well be perplexed by the different interpretations of the history of U.S. education,” and “[h]ow is it possible … that given the same evidence historians reach such vastly different conclusions?” (Sadovnik, Cookson, and Semel p. 86). I suppose, it was explained when the conclusion informed us that there was not one unified theory, rather that the “foundations perspective is a lens for looking at these patterns” (Sadovnik, Cookson, and Semel p. 86).

I decision was to focus on the compulsory law, and equality of opportunity and ways to decrease inequality of results. The book informs us that “[o]ne of the great changes that has affected high school attendance is ‘whereas once it was altogether voluntary, … it is now, at least for those sixteen and under, compulsory and unselective” (Sadovnik, Cookson, and Semel p. 72). This sentence made me refer back to a question that has haunted me for many years about compulsory school laws in Puerto Rico. There were two things that even today stood out in my mind while growing up in a small town in Puerto Rico. One was always seeing young teenagers walking through town at all times of the day, and me wondering if they ever went to class, and
also in the town that I lived there were at least two young boys around the ages of 10-12 that I know had never gone to school. Thinking about these situations made me curious as to whether the compulsory law was ever enforced, so I decided to investigate when and if this law was established. I found the search exhausting, because there was no definite date that could answer my question. I was able to find the decree of 1880 that organized the primary education system, … [that made] compulsory attendance for children between the ages of six and nine” (Education: Brief history of education in Puerto Rico, n.d.). I was also able to find “Article 1.03 – Compulsory School attendance law for homeschooling students that stated “[s]chool attendance will be compulsory for all child between five (5) and twenty one (21) years of age, ” but, it never explained how the law would be enforced (Cabán, 2002). Even as a young child I knew education was important but many times I would ask myself just as many students ask now “why do I have to take these classes?” What is the purpose of school? I suppose Benjamin Franklin answer this question best when he said “I believed in the ability of people to better themselves” through education. For Franklin “students should pursue a course of study that allowed them mastery of process rather than rote learning” [and that] reading, writing, public speaking, and art as a means of understanding creative expression would be integral components of the curriculum” (Sadovnik, Cookson, and Semel p. 64).

As I read, I stopped at Education for women and African-Americans. After reading the first sentence “the role of a woman in Western society has been that of helpmate or homemaker to the male,” this sentence made a resonating sound in my head, as I have heard it many times from women and men in Puerto Rico, especially my mom and dad. Although my parents are very proud of me, education in Puerto Rico in the 40’s was very limited, and for women many parents believed that they did not need to learn math, they just needed to learn how to be
homemakers. Today however in Puerto Rico, education is a matter of high priority, where women and men are given the same equality of an education. One resource that I was able to find for Hispanic women that would help them succeed in education was the 100 Hispanic Women’s Young Latinas Leadership Institute (YYLI). This organization defines its mission as “inspiring Latinas ‘to maximize their strengths and potential, in order to become equal partners in an empowered world of equal opportunity with equal justice, recognition, respect and dignity” (Scholarships for Hispanic women, n.d.). Also another resource was the Collegescholarship.org that gives grants out to Latinos, Mexicans, and other Hispanic people to help pay for college.

Questions:

1. How has education become better over the years for minority students?

2. Do you believe that the US should be giving scholarships to Hispanic students in order to better themselves, or do you believe that Caucasians deserve these scholarships?
Reflection


Scholarships for Hispanic women. (n.d.). *Scholarships for Women*. Retrieved April 7, 2013, from webmaster@scholarshipsforwomen.net