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SOCL320-01

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Reflection

This semester, I had the opportunity to take Sociology of Education as a Perspectives course in the Civitae curriculum. Over the course of the semester, our class studied the institution of public education in society: its structure, funding, and most significantly, the factors that influence the inequalities of the system. To conclude the semester and apply what we learned, we collaborated to compose an annotated bibliography detailing numerous strategies proposed to confront and tackle prevalent inequalities in public education. After reviewing our section’s Collaborative Annotated Bibliography, I was able to review a number of proposed strategies that I believe would be effective in reducing inequality in public education.

Our class successfully composed a list of 25 studies and approaches regarding educational inequalities in modern-day society. Among the substantial solutions proposed by my peers, I found a few to be most effective. For one, I believe an effective approach would be one for self-improving schools presented by Hargreaves in the Oxford Review of Education. This suggestion would entail giving more power to localities when it comes to public education. Although states and cities/counties maintain the bulk of the control already, this approach would give even more authority to communities at the local level. The self-improving schools approach would be effective because communities and schools themselves know their own needs more than policymakers who are located in their states’ capital city - and who knows exactly how far that may be from constituents’ neighborhoods and schools. Self-improving schools give communities the opportunity to attend to their own individual needs and priorities. In this setting, schools and communities would ideally collaborate to utilize funding and [school] resources more independently in order to aid struggling families and students (Hargreaves). One solution proposed in our collaborative annotated bibliography that I found resonated most deeply with me as the most effective approach was inclusive pedagogy (Florian). Inclusion and multicultural education are just two components that contribute to an effective, dynamic classroom; inclusive pedagogy prompts educators to maintain an accessible, equitable, and supportive learning environment for all students in their care. When students feel included, encouraged, and engaged despite their individual needs or abilities, they will feel more motivated to participate and do well. This solution, although broad, is the most realistic and most attainable strategy in the attempt to reducing inequalities among students in schools. This solution also places a lot of pressure on teachers in schools to bridge the gap; however, teachers’ expectations and actions heavily contribute to student success and outcomes - both short-term and long-term. Personally, I have ambitions of implementing inclusive pedagogy into my future classroom in order to effectively teach diverse groups of students; if other rising teachers have similar goals, hopefully this strategy can (and will) positively impact future generations of students.

As an aspiring educator, I feel that I have benefitted greatly from the course content and application of SOCL-320. The Collaborative Annotated Bibliography, among lectures and other assignments, was a great opportunity to apply and express not only what I have learned throughout this course, but also information from other education courses. By extensively exploring inequalities in public education and strategies to remedy those inequalities, my peers and I have identified tools and solutions that have the potential to improve conditions in a vital institution in society.