Discussion Questions

March 7

From Heck:

1) How have researchers sought to make policymaking more easy to analyze? [p. 55]
   "a number of different conceptual models and methods are used in investigating policy. Over the past several decades, one popular way of looking at the policymaking process has been to break it up into a number of different regular events or stages."

2) What is a ‘systems theory’ for explaining policymaking? [p58]
   • "Wirt and Kirst (1982, 1989), applied the systems framework extensively to explain how political demands were converted into educational policies at the state, federal and local levels. The framework represented an attempt to apply scientific theory about how systems are organized and operate to explain human behavior."

3) What are environmental conditions? [p. 62]
   • "Environmental variables are a first important source of influence on policy activity."
   • Any external pressure on the policymaking which impacts upon the process and influences the outcome.

4) What are belief systems? [p.63]
   • "Within a policy subsystem, individuals’ belief system (e.g. normative beliefs, core policy values, institutional rules), their perceptions of the policy situation, their policy goals, and strategies influence the nature of policy interactions and actions over time."
   • This includes "conventional wisdom" and ideological assumptions about schools.

5) What are governmental processes? [pp.63-64]
   • "The nature of the federalist system itself (with multiple levels, a decentralized structure, and divided responsibilities) favors the development of coalitions among governmental actors, special interests, and others who may work collectively over time to bring government attention to resolving a particular policy problem."
   • Anything that happens in government.

6) What are the four states in the policy development process? [pp. 66-72]
   • Problems, issues and agenda setting.
   • Formulating and enacting policy choices.
   • Policy implementation
   • The evaluation of policy outputs and outcomes.
Discussion Questions.....March 7.....p. 2

From Spring:

1) What are the basic arguments of the New York State funding lawsuit? [p.71]
   • New York State’s highest court ruled that New York City schools had not received their fair share of state support for education. The amount they are owed is more than the state can afford to pay. The governor is ignoring the issue until he leaves, leaving resolution to his successor.

2) What was the reaction of New Jersey voters to its’ Supreme Court mandate to make school funding equitable? [p. 71] Explain the process.
   • The voters of New Jersey voted out of office a significant number of the politicians who tried to respond to the mandate made by the NJ Supreme Court.
   • It stopped the process in its steps.

3) What is meant by human capital according to Theodore Schultz? [p.77]
   • “In the twentieth century, the major public benefit claimed for public schooling was the improvement of the workforce… the development of human capital.”
   • The worker is seen as a commodity like a building or machine whose valued can be improved through investment.

4) What was Horace Mann’s rationalization for funding public schools? [pp.76-79]
   • “The property of this Commonwealth is pledged for the education of all its youth, up to such point as will save them from poverty and vice and prepare them for the adequate performance of their social and civil duties.”

5) What was Theodore Schultz rationalization for funding public schools. [pp.76-79]
   • According to Theodore Schultz, who subscribes to Horace Mann’s view, “Education has become a major source of economic growth in winning the abundance that is said to be had by developing a modern agriculture and industry.”

6) How would you summarize the chart on page 78?
   • The more education one has (depending upon gender) the more money a person will make over their lifetime.

7) How would you summarize the chart on page 79?
   • Even allowing for differences in earning potential between the races and ethnic groups, the more education one has the more earning power that person will have over the course of their lifetime.

8) What did economist Milton Friedman say about vouchers and educational expenditures? [p.80]
“Economist Milton Friedman was one of the first to make the link between vouchers and ending inequality in educational expenditures.”

9) What were the arguments in the lawsuit known as Serravo v. Priest (1971)? [p.80]
   • "the California Supreme Court found that California’s method of financing schools was contributing to inequality of educational opportunity."
   • The lawyers sought to initiate a voucher system as a remedy for the inequities.

10) What were the arguments in the lawsuit known as Rodriguez v San Antonio School District (1973)? [p.81]
    • "the U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider the issue of school finance, declaring, ‘The consideration and initiation of fundamental reforms with respect to taxation and education are matters reserved for the legislative process of the various states.’"

11) In Ira Shore’s book Culture Wars: Schools and Society in the Conservative Restoration, 1969-1984, what conclusions were reached by the author? [p.84]
    • “Shore argues that business leaders in the early 1980s, while campaigning for state school reform, saw to it that increased taxes resulting from reforms would fall primarily on the shoulders of the poor and middle class.”

12) What has been the impact upon American public schools of the internationalization of the labor force? [pp.89-92]
   • Many low-skill jobs are moving abroad.
   • Increased immigration is giving higher-skilled jobs to talented immigrants.
   • Poor are left with no jobs and no training.