Class #16: Charter Schools
Class Discussion Questions for October 22, 2013
Reading: Chubb & Moe; film: The Battle Over School Choice.

Because writing assignments are meant to prepare you for class discussions, you must post a draft question on the Moodle Forum for this date if you want your submission to count. After posting a draft, you must revise and resubmit your final response for a grade by the following Sunday night. In the case of questions posted below, the final draft of your question is due by the end of the day on Sunday, October 27. Include your name, the full question number, and the text of the question on both your draft and final submissions.

Discussion Questions

16-1. What constitutes the policy level and the organizational implementation level in schools and why is effective educational change blocked in the views of Chubb and Moe?

Chubb and Moe sharply contrast the operations and the activities of these two levels and they make an assertive argument about why arguments and discussions in the policy realm are not effective at changing school practices or school outcomes.

16-2. Why might the institutional changes Chubb and Moe believe must happen result in more effective schools?

Chubb and Moe tell us that reforming schools so that they can become effective requires institutional change. What is institutional change. E.g., what is an institution, what makes institutions difficult to change, and what is entailed in changing one? You ought to be thinking about “institution” as a general sociological concept or category, being mindful that this course is talking about one institution after another (the criminal justice system, the health care system, the religious system, etc.). Focusing on institution and thinking about what makes them strong and effective, on one hand, and what is involved in changing them, on the other, will be a major focus of our course moving forward. Your answer must be specific to schools and to the writing of Chubb and Moe but you also should keep the general theory of institutions in mind as you write.

16-3. Why do charter schools fit the conservative social policy model?

Chubb and Moe argue for a system based on private, nonprofit schools. Charter school laws allow such private schools to apply for charter school status in which case they would receive public funding although they also would have to develop a selection process that makes them available to all students (we will hear about charter school lotteries). The film The Battle Over School Choice explains the politics of charter schools and a film we’ll see later, Waiting for Superman, talks about the tension between public and private models and why some charter schools work well.