

FROM STRAITS TO OPTIMISM: Education in the Americas

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- UNEQUAL SCHOOLS, UNEQUAL CHANCES: THE CHALLENGE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE AMERICAS.* Edited by Fernando Reimers. (Cambridge, MA: The David Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies, Harvard University, 2000. Pp. 464. \$24.95 paper.)
- CHILDREN'S WORK, SCHOOLING AND WELFARE IN LATIN AMERICA.* By David Post. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002. Pp. 284. \$38.00 paper.)
- SCHOOLING FOR SUCCESS: PREVENTING REPETITION AND DROPOUT IN LATIN AMERICAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.* Edited by Laura Randall and Joan B. Anderson. (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999. Pp. 338. \$78.95 cloth, \$35.95 paper.)
- DISTANT ALLIANCES: PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Regina Cortina and Nelly P. Stromquist. (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2000. Pp. 316. \$95.00 cloth.)
- WE ARE ALL EQUAL: STUDENT CULTURE AND IDENTITY AT A MEXICAN SECONDARY SCHOOL, 1988-1998.* By Bradley A. U. Levinson. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. 432. \$84.95 cloth, \$25.95 paper.)
- EDUCATION IN THE NEW LATINO DIASPORA: POLICY AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY.* Edited by Stanton Worthan, Enrique G. Murillo Jr., and Edmund T. Hamann. (Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, 2002. Pp. 264. \$82.95 cloth, \$30.00 paper.)
- IMAGINING TEACHERS: RETHINKING GENDER DYNAMICS IN TEACHER EDUCATION.* By Gustavo E. Fischman. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000. Pp. 211. \$85.00 cloth, \$27.00 paper.)
- REINVENTING PAULO FREIRE: A PEDAGOGY OF LOVE.* By Antonia Darder. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002. Pp. 274. \$85.00 cloth, \$27.00 paper.)

The debates around education have not changed in nature since the early twentieth century but their emphasis has. At the outset,

education was the promise of progress for a nation, a tool individuals should use to increase their well-being, a means to elevate in society and mitigate poverty. In 1920 José Vasconcelos, the legendary first Secretary of Public Education in Mexico, ascertained that there were two main problems in the country: misery and ignorance, the former a consequence of the latter. Education for all would solve those afflictions and would unite the nation by its culture, not by force, authority, or the power of the state.

However, the sorry situation all over Latin America stood in acute contrast to the buoyant optimism on education. Only when the failure of the state to deliver educational and other social services began to be evident, did social scientists start to question the validity of the educationalist argument. In the United States and Europe, the controversies over schooling in the 1970s were between the defenders of the educational ideal of progress and happiness and those radicals who claimed that instruction and training were tools for social control, reproducing inequalities in the economy and in society. The works of Pierre Bourdieu, Martin Carnoy, and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, and Marxist thinkers, like Louis Althusser, became popular among scholars, teachers, and political activists in Latin America.¹

In contrast to this radical approach was the consensus view of education based on a structural-functional paradigm. This approach encompassed a notion of function as a link between (relatively) stable structural categories of social life; any processes or conditions that did not contribute to the existence and evolution of society were dysfunctional. The principal emphasis of this perspective was on stability of the society, as well as the social integration and effectiveness of the social system. Underlying these emphases was an explicit assumption of the universal ordering of such conditions and human nature.² The role of education in this framework was to “socialize” children into adult life, instilling the norms of behavior and shaping personalities to make them accept the demands of the social order.

Reproductionist approaches, although convincing in many of their contentions, were irrelevant for the masses of workers and peasants,

1. See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977); Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: David McKay, 1974); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); and Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: New Left Review Press, 1971), 127–87.

2. Although based on many antecedents, the classic citation for this approach is Talcott Parsons, *Structure and Processes in Modern Societies* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960).

who demanded more education and further opportunities for their offspring to attend school as a mechanism to move up the social ladder. Although the radical approach is seldom used, it is common to encounter studies that resonate with the main topics of this orientation, also known as the *political economy perspective*: poverty, low quality, irrelevance of educational contents, and poor finance to school systems that bring above all, social inequality. Discrimination in gender, ethnicity, social class, and locality mark the delivery of education, according to many scholars. Although, few scholars subscribe to the structural-functionalist view, some of its assumptions still shape what is done in practical research. Additionally, the earlier optimism that education, through quality teaching and learning, alleviates poverty still remains.

INEQUALITIES AND FAILURE RESPONSE

When I first saw Fernando Reimers's book, *Unequal Schools, Unequal Chances: The Challenge of Equal Opportunity in the Americas*, I was tempted to put it away. The legion of praise from distinguished scholars, well-known policy-makers, top-level politicians, and even a Nobel Prize laureate made me feel they exaggerated its value. In addition, the title appeared to me as an axiom, as something that needs to be explained to trust its veracity. However, once I began to read the essays, I realized the significance and pertinence of many of them. Not surprisingly, because of the professionalism of the authors and discussants, the book develops new (and rescues old) themes for analysis and reflection.

The volume is a product of a seminar held in 1999 based on "Educational Opportunity and Policy in Latin America," a paper by Fernando Reimers, which turned into chapter 4 in the book.³ Although the paper is academic in nature and addresses questions on the inequality of opportunities, it is aimed at helping policy makers make more informed decisions.⁴ The paper proposes a consistent course to study those issues. The picture could not be more dramatic: social poverty is the cause and effect of reduced opportunities to attain basic schooling and beyond. Reimers contends that there is segregation of the poor. That is to

3. Reimers's book was published in Madrid, Spain, for Editorial La Muralla, under the title, *Distintas Escuelas, Diferentes Oportunidades*, in 2002.

4. Chapter 15 by Gary Orfield (Reimers 2000), seems inappropriate for this volume. It deals with equity and policies in the United States. The author argues that the essay is relevant to the themes of the book and suggests that it is so because of the influence and power of the United States and the diffusion of its innovations by international agencies and donors. Yet its analysis has nothing to do with Latin America. The commentary by Emily Hannun to the paper of Carlos Muñoz Izquierdo and Raquel Ahuja Sánchez is a brief summary.

say, children of indigent parents, if they attend school at all, attend schools of lower quality than those in urban middle-class settings, with poorly trained teachers. In addition, those parents cannot help their children either academically, because of low cultural capital, or financially, because they lack resources.

According to Reimers, there are five processes through which the social system reproduces itself and translates social inequalities into unequal educational opportunities in Latin America: 1) different access to educational levels exist for the poor and the non-poor; 2) the poor and the non-poor are treated differently in schools—the poor receive education of lower quality; 3) the segregation of schools implies that most students relate only with peers of similar social and cultural backgrounds; 4) the deficits on family cultural capital negatively impacts poor children; and 5) educational contents and processes are not specifically aimed at reducing inequality.

Reimers mirrors a reproductionist approach by asserting that schooling in Latin America is an *imperfect* reproduction of the social structures because some children of the poor beat the odds. For the radicals of the 1970s, this sort of reproduction would be perfect. It is part and parcel of the capitalist mode of production that needs to offer empirical examples of success to justify inequality and to sell the hope that through education, not class struggles, the poor can meet decent living standards. Yet, it echoes a consensus approach, arguing that schooling and better social programs, can resolve most difficulties due to poverty.

Reimers and his colleagues do an excellent job in portraying inequalities, policy failures, and social, gender, and ethnic discrimination, as well as providing examples of success and hope. Reimers himself idealizes the future possibilities of education—if governments will do as the authors recommend—with the case of Rosa, an imaginary girl who portrays the prototypical poor child of Latin America. Her present situation is limited, but her prospects, as well as those of her future children, may improve if policy makers, teachers, governments, and international agents do their work. As Reimers puts it: “This requires changing the odds currently working against poor children so that they may enjoy the same opportunities to learn, succeed, and attain social mobility.”⁵

Some chapters have a great deal of data and qualitative analyses to capture these inequalities. However, one reason why children abandon

5. Fernando Reimers, “Educational Opportunities and Policy in Latin America” in Fernando Reimers (ed.), *Unequal Schools, Unequal Chances: The Challenges to Equal Opportunity in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: The David Rockefeller Center Series on Latin American Studies, Harvard University, 2000), 100.

schools is because they have to work, either at home or in the labor market. Yet children's labor is not the center of their concerns. That is the strength of David Post's book, *Children's Work, Schooling, and Welfare in Latin America*.

This is a book of academic excellence. Post convincingly argues that children are a lower priority for Latin American governments because they are easy to ignore politically. Although birth rates are declining, this trend is slower among the poor, thus increasing the proportion of children who live in poverty even when poverty rates drop. Poor children are not only discriminated against but are also victims of exploitation. For many of them it is practically impossible to attend school, and it is not a failure of the families, but of the model of development.⁶

Using sophisticated statistical analyses for the cases of Chile, Mexico, and Peru, Post provides a sad perspective of education for the poor in Latin America. He also discusses the educational and labor policies of these three countries in the 1990s, showing similar patterns of proposals and divergence in outcomes (e.g., Chile shows less failure). Although he shares some worries with Reimers and many of his colleagues, Post asserts that poverty is not the only cause of child labor, school dropouts, and low-quality education in Latin America. Even if the poverty-reduction programs worked well—which is far from the case—children would not inevitably become more educated. This requires a more concentrated focus on schooling and labor policies. Post cannot be called a radical, nonetheless, he empirically substantiates many radical arguments.

Laura Randall and Joan B. Anderson have put together a collection of papers dealing with educational programs that work for the poor, though imperfectly. Instead of complaining about the inequalities, *Schooling for Success: Preventing Repetition and Dropout in Latin American Primary Schools* provides the means to overcome them. In twenty-eight short chapters the authors delineate causes for dropout and their psychological consequences. Using the cases of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, scholars and decision makers describe and analyze reforms aiming at reducing repetition and dropouts: bettering school management basically through decentralization and devolution of highly centralized systems; improving the curriculum; upgrading teaching knowledge; and improving teacher salaries.

Although this volume includes a chapter on educational theory that discusses alternative approaches to teaching (such as the transmission and transaction models) that were absent in Reimers's and Post's books, the optimism of most of its authors is not educational, but economic. It seems that the only outcomes that count for success are those that have

6. The Post book was published in Spanish by the Fondo de Cultura Económica (Mexico) in the first quarter of 2003.

implications for development. The editors conclude that:

Increasing the quality of basic education, especially for the poor, is the most important investment that can be made toward expanding economic development and allowing countries to compete in a global environment. Improvements in education require both an increase in resources allotted to education and a more efficient use of those resources.⁷

Randall and Anderson, as well as most of the contributors in their book, accept the structuralist functionalist view that downplays notions of conflict and exploitation. True, some chapters criticize programs that fail because of poor policy implementation, but the overall goals of education to improve production should be maintained.

Nonetheless, the book is worth reading because it surveys a wide range of programs, such as *Fe y Alegría* of the Chilean Jesuits, the summer school programs in Brazil, the Mexican compensatory programs (with insufficient results, according to Muñoz Izquierdo in Reimers's book), as well as *The 900 Schools* and *The Learning is Sweet* programs of Chile. I have not seen any other book that describes so many positive experiences and such hope. Nevertheless, paraphrasing Post, there is no guarantee that quality education for all will inevitably reduce poverty and achieve economic development.

In these three books a clear political orientation is absent—most of the authors speak of policy design and policy delivering with few references to the issues of power and power relationships in education. Post analyzes the corporatism of Mexican politics overall, making reference to the military regimes in Chile, and the populist practices of Peru's elites, but does not go into the politics of education. In these books, teachers' unions and their political interests seldom appear; few authors mention union struggles for better salaries and labor conditions. Emilio Tenti's chapter in Randall and Anderson's book dedicates two paragraphs to comment on the teachers' unions in Argentina, but he refers to representation, not to their politicization. Regina Cortina's paper on Mexico, in the same book, dedicates two sentences to the powerful National Teachers Union (SNTE), the largest union in Latin America.⁸

7. Joan B. Anderson and Laura Randall, "Conclusion: Improving Basic Education in Latin America", in Joan B. Anderson and Laura Randall, *Schooling for Success: Preventing Repetition and Dropout in Latin American Primary Schools* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 311.

8. There is a vacuum in the study of the politics of teachers' unions in Latin America. But see Maria Victoria Murillo "Recovering Political Dynamics: Teachers' Unions and the Decentralization of Education in Argentina and Mexico," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 31–57.

THE SCHOOL AND BEYOND

I do not remember who said that there was nothing worse in Latin America than being a woman, Indian, and poor—facing all types of discrimination. A fourth category can be added: to be a young woman. Even in the feminist discourse, girls and their circumstances are seldom treated at length. Social policies that favor women and girls in Latin America have emerged in some countries through the creation of commissions or institutions promoting equality among women and men. However, the road to equality is a long one, and education has to pave the way.

These are the topics that Cortina and Nelly P. Stromquist put forward in *Distant Alliances: Promoting Education for Girls and Women in Latin America*.⁹ The seventeen female and one male contributors are critical of the social exclusion that women and girls undergo in education all over Latin America, although they write proposals and recognize projects and innovations worthy of attention. Rigorous research, case studies, political reflections, the use of hard-to-find documents, as well as the first-hand experiences of some authors, support the arguments the book presents in favor of the gender perspective.

Although Cortina's essay deals with secondary education, the emphasis of the other authors is on basic schooling and non-formal education for women. They highlight concrete programs such as compensatory programs in Bolivia and the grants available to girls in Guatemala to help them succeed in school and in society. This book also analyzes several non-formal education programs that have had some success. Nevertheless, the editors criticize the lack of continuity, the short span of these programs, and the errors of conception. A few international agencies show good faith but, since they contract with governments and not with civil organizations, the authors say, many programs fall under the weight of bureaucratism. Cortina and Stromquist predict the demise of those programs when international funding ends. Overall, this book shows anger and optimism, as well as commitment and confidence for a better future for girls and women, but the authors are clear about the political and cultural barriers ahead.

The book by Bradley Levinson, *We are All Equal: Student Culture and Identity at a Mexican Secondary School, 1988–1998*, is of a different scope and methodological approach. Here neither reproduction nor consensus theories are present. Instead of educational systems, broad programs, comparative perspectives, and social actors, Levinson speaks about a

9. This book was published in Spanish as *Promoviendo la educación de mujeres y niñas en América Latina* (México, DF: Editorial Pax México, 2001).

single Mexican junior secondary school in the small provincial city of San Pablo. In his anthropological approach there are concrete protagonists, like Leticia, Isidro, Alberto, or Antonia. His intention also diverges from the other authors under review in the meaning of equality. Levinson is not interested in large-scale economic or social equity but in the kind of equality that teachers and students expect to achieve within the school. The author skillfully portrays how the school, through games of equality, creates and develops a local cultural identity that reduces ethnic and social differences.

The construction of games of equality is crucial for the adolescents of a Mexican *secundaria*. For Levinson, equality is something deep and complex that has historical roots. On the one hand, participation in group activities and festivities, and all types of competitions, is essential for the formation of an egalitarian culture. Solidarity among the peers of a single school group in one grade and in one school can develop through these games of equality. Yet Levinson does not forget to document the negative features of this identity, which discriminate against those who are different, especially students with individualist personalities.

Levinson offers his scholarly study in literary language; in fact, I read the book easily as a collection of short stories. Although the research was done in one school, its findings may be valid for thousands of schools in hundreds of cities. The chapter on the history of the Mexican *secundaria* since its creation in the 1920s shows that he is well versed in the relevant literature on Mexican education. Levinson provides an objective evaluation of Mexican politics from nationalist economic policies to a neoliberal economic model and its extensions to the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA). He covers the years of crisis (1982–89) and recovery (1990–94) to crisis again (1995–96) during the last two decades of the twentieth century. He shows how new businesses in San Pablo, especially restaurants and money exchange houses, shifted some expectations of youth, in particular migration to the United States. This highlights the issue that the education of children and adults in Latin America goes beyond the Rio Grande.

The points made by Levinson on migration to the United States are a link, though not an explicit one, with the book put together by Stanton Wortham, Enrique G. Murillo Jr., and Edmund T. Hamann, *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity*. This book has a specific radical tone, based in large part on postmodernist thinkers like Jurgen Habermas and, to a lesser extent, Michel Foucault, and on myriad anthropologists that have done work on Latino culture and identity, such as Henry Trueba and Concha Delgado-Gaytan. The book also re-assembles the intellectual worries of Levinson, such as identity, status, and community. Not surprisingly, Levinson wrote the foreword to the *New Latino Diaspora*.

The *New Latino Diaspora* is a construction that helps the editors and authors explore where Latinos are moving. They are concentrating in traditionally non-Latino Southern states, such as Georgia and North Carolina, which have had a culture and history of racial discrimination. Latinos are also moving to northern New England and other places where they are usually welcomed, not for their cultural differences, but for their labor. Based on ethnographic case studies, the authors illustrate how the mythology of the United States as being attractive and fair to immigrants is replaced by the reality of its being quite the opposite in its failure to welcome Latino newcomers. The authors analyze how the “pro-immigrant script” is commonly used in the New Latino Diaspora to classify Latinos. “In that script they are constructed like hard-working, loyal, religious, family-oriented, and willing to take work no one else wants” (7). This brings a sort of benevolent racism, i.e., one that alleges good intentions but whose actions have discriminatory effects. For instance, entrepreneurs and corporate managers benefit—as do their corporations—from the low paid and docile labor the newcomers provide.

These modes of exploitation and violence begin to mirror the internal differentiation of schools by language, nationality, race, and class so that discrimination against newcomers is the rule in most school districts in the New Latino Diaspora. Nonetheless, some school districts practice politics of accommodation, where new curriculum plans emerge to fit the needs of Latino newcomers. As two chapters of the book show, scholars and officials designed the Georgia Project with the Conasauga District of the Dalton Public Schools and the Universidad de Monterrey, a private Mexican institution, to create a binational coalition to respond to the educational and identity challenges brought by demographic changes. They recommend providing bilingual programs and Mexican teachers. Yet the introduction of a monolingual, phonetics-oriented direct instructional program strained the binational partnership. Thus the Latinos return to the status of being “objects of policy” rather than contributing to it.

The book has an impressive collection of essays dealing with the struggles of Latinos to shape a new identity or to reaffirm their values, culture, and ways of constructing knowledge. The authors also highlight the political maneuvers of Anglo-Americans who oppose immigrant laborers and who reproduce stereotypes against Latinos. The use of Habermas’s notion of “public sphere” serves to show how media and publicists mold public opinion against Latinos, Chicanos, or poor immigrants in general. It also highlights the resistance of newcomers striving to be a part of the local culture as they simultaneously contribute to changing it.

These books deserve credit for the contribution they make to our understanding of the identity of the Latin American women, Mexican

youth, and Latinos in the new frontiers, as well as for their refreshing perspectives in favor of a more equitable and democratic education for those who traditionally have been excluded in development and high-quality education.

TEACHERS AND LOVE

None of the books previously visited deal with the old humanist approach to education that involves human beings as the center of all efforts, with fully developed capabilities and potential, living in harmony with others and nature. Few seem interested in preparing human beings to perceive and sense the world with care, to educate children and youth to be happy, to enlighten them with the beauties of life, to enjoy the work of a painter or a symphony as José Vasconcelos claimed. There are few calls to go beyond the current concerns to prepare individuals for productive work and democratic citizenship or, at the most, to develop fully the cognitive potential of students. Nevertheless, there are exceptions.

The books by Gustavo E. Fischman, *Imagining Teachers: Rethinking Gender Dynamics in Teacher Education*, and Antonia Darder, *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*, recover considerable portions of that educational optimism. The first is centered on students of teacher education programs, and the second on pedagogical theory. Both deal with the dichotomy of education for control or for liberation. These two authors can be identified as radical humanists by the tone and topics of their works.

Fischman's book is an outstanding piece of research using the tools of what he calls visual anthropology, that is, the application of images to construct and reconstruct the ideas the students have of teacher education programs, of themselves, and their teachers. He also discusses the students' dreams, morals, enthusiasm, loves and passions, but also their shortcomings and fears. Fischman bases his empirical analysis on the teachers' colleges of Buenos Aires as well as data on U.S. teachers. But what he finds is applicable to many other settings: before entering teacher education programs, students are filled with fervor, high purpose, and a sense of hope. Even those who may not dream of changing the world or effecting vast social transformation still desire to make a contribution in spite of poor working conditions, low social status, and the inherent difficulties of the profession. However, after entering these programs, their aspirations are soon replaced by skepticism.

Using images and drawings, Fischman clarifies the gender dynamics of the teaching profession and the reproduction of *machismo* by the attitudes and practices of the teachers of those programs. He notes the ideas of male dominance in administrative positions and the ideology

of the female teachers as a second mother. Yet he also identifies modes of resistance and challenges to such beliefs. Through his interpretative methodology, Fischman shows how the “women-teacher caring” and the “male-teacher discipline” stereotypes reinforce the instructional regime of teacher education programs. Against this mythology, he proposes the committed and laughing teacher.

Fischman claims that laughter can defy gender dynamics, power relations, and modes of control of those schools. If the students make mockery, *carnavalizing*, in Fischman words, of formalism, they can undermine the existing teaching practice. It is the first time that I have read that laughing can be subversive in education, and it is a convincing point. Schools do not have to be models of discipline, but can be sites of learning, living, and caring.

Antonia Darder is radical in two senses: in her critique of capitalism, globalization, and the modes of exploitation, and in her proposals. Based on Paulo Freire and his U.S. followers, she contemplates the conscious critical teacher as a revolutionary, not a reformist. What education needs is transformation, not merely reforms. The critical praxis of teachers should be reflected in the classroom by making students discuss social issues, such as segregation by race or class, and other issues related to power and economics. The critical teacher should help students to be liberated, while liberating himself or herself as well.

Darder recommends using personal history to teach and learn, to struggle, and to reinvent everyday practices. The revolutionary praxis—the alliance between theory and practice—of teachers should be based on their pedagogy so as to permit them to unveil the social contradictions that betray their visions of economic and political democracy, social justice, human rights—in a word, liberation. The nature of such a practice comprises an act of love. Teaching is love. Pedagogy is love—love for the world and people; without love, the process of dialogue—critical to Freirean pedagogy—could not exist and thus could not help the oppressed to be liberated. Love gives teachers the faith and strength to carry on and reinvent their praxis, and helps students to be integral human beings by “problematizing” their reality. Love also allows teachers to act in the classroom with passion and reason, and to engage with the students in collective work. A teacher who cares is a teacher who loves: this is the main message of Darder’s book.

DESUETUDE

The educational literature on Latin American and on Latinos in the United States is growing exponentially, increasing our knowledge of the problems and the difficulties, more than providing the solutions. It seems the more that governments, nongovernmental organizations, and

teachers do, the further we are from reaching acceptable standards of education, especially for the poor. Many people still see education as the solution to all of society's ills. The diagnostics put forward by these books relate the traditional and new afflictions in inequality (the most important), low quality, poorly-trained and badly-paid teachers, shortcomings in management, and few innovations, along with discrimination by race, gender and class, exploitation, and segregation.¹⁰

Reviewing these books shows that the battle between structural functionalism—albeit with most of its preferred language absent—and the political economy perspective is still present. However, it seems that the antagonistic and vociferous debates of the 1970s are gone.

One can look with sympathy and solidarity at some proposals made by the authors: improving schooling for the poor, reducing the causes that force children to work, empowering women, introducing innovations, using critical pedagogy, as well as showing care and love for the students. But all of these will not suffice. Looking back, it seems that we have solved one main problem envisaged by Vasconcelos—misery. Now we call it extreme poverty because that is the politically correct term. The burden of ignorance still challenges our consciousness and life.

10. Incidentally, one of the proposals often put forward is to decentralize education. I am skeptical of this move. My own research on education decentralization in Mexico, leads me to conclude that in so doing central governments, in fact, decentralize management and some degrees of authority, but centralize power.