

## The Integrative Factor in Continuity

THE concept of continuity is as simple as the origin and development of a life, but it is as difficult as the people who want to control that life. The movement of a growing organism is onward and upward toward life fulfillment. It picks up something from the surrounding environment to convert into its own energy system for its own unending change. It depends upon outside people to guide it in selecting and utilizing the outside materials. The problem of continuity arises when such persons believe they have a mission or a mandate to *control* the selection and conversion or to determine what that life shall become. Resistance by the life to such external authority underlies much individual and social illness. Parents and educators have great responsibility in producing and removing such disorders.

The word *continuity* usually has two meanings, both supported by experiential evidence. The first is that, in the evolutionary process, human life is a creative emergent from simpler and earlier forms of life. The second is that, through its own rhythmic cycle, each human life moves toward self-maturity while maintaining internal and external wholeness, or integration, at each successive level of development. The life movement never ceases, the search for the integrative quality never ends.

From primordial life each person receives great gifts. The most important is the process by which he creates himself from conception to birth to physical maturity, from intrauterine interaction to mature selfhood. This single life process is basic in all growing and learning. It is the way in which each

new life self-selects, intakes and converts the outside environment into materials for its own development. When this process stops, life ceases. When it is thwarted or unduly restricted, the person develops defense mechanisms to preserve the life but arrest its own development.

Due to greater flexibility in his constellation of genes and to his more differentiated nervous system, man has more capacity for self-development than life which is lower on the emergent scale. He has recorded and transmitted the results of his behavior or his interactions with the surrounding world. A baby is born into this culture organized into institutions. From this great resource he must self-select materials and convert them into his meanings by his life process in order to develop toward integrative maturity. In this way the culture becomes continuous with his embryonic environment in helping him achieve selfhood. And the control in and of his life process rests with him. It does not reside in the external environment which can only furnish or deny him the necessary self-nutrients.

This first meaning of continuity as emergent life development can be adequately met when parents and educators recognize, understand, accept and use in all relations with children and adults the biological process which each inherits. Although life will continue when adults ignore or deny this process, children in this situation, nevertheless, will be unable to discover, release and develop their potential capacity and consequently will arrest their development on some lower level.

The second meaning of continuity refers generally to growth through experience or learning, both of which are behaviors arising from ceaseless selective interaction with the external environment. Each child is constantly selecting something from experience. What is valuable to him he accepts and incorporates into his growing self. What he believes to be of little value, he rejects or eliminates. Through his life process extended upward into conscious learning, he creates himself. Experiences are never neutral, they differ only in quality. Some help him become more adequate while others even rob him of his existing stability. But through the years the enduring life process continues regardless of the self effect of the experience, for the primary purpose of all life is to preserve life. When preservation and maturity conflict due to an intolerable environment the former always prevails.

### Changes Needed

Since children must use the outside environment for their development, the educational problem becomes clear and simple. It is to help them self-select and convert the organized culture into their meanings for their continued growth toward self maturity. This seems to imply three very important educational changes:

First, the subject matter of the subjects, which constitute the curriculum, must be variable. All children want to communicate with others. They want to know about the world in which they live. They will differentiate the skills necessary to social adjustment and group living. They always create meanings out of their various experiences. They struggle to understand themselves, their behavior and that of others. They have the life energy and the purpose. They

want guidance which recognizes them as individuals who cannot receive and return in overt behavior the same learnings at the same time with the same results. So children must plan cooperatively with teachers the activities in which they will all engage and must be allowed freedom to select and accept from these according to their rhythmic cycle of development.

Second, subjects must be taught by the life process of the children. This is found in free form only in embryonic life since outside adults are unable to tamper with it. In brief the new life expands, differentiates and integrates internally and externally. It is outgoing, intaking, converting and assimilating to build new structure and behavior. Normal learning has the same basic relationship in the environment. It is used more or less by every child depending upon how well he understands it. Through subjects the teacher should help each child see how he learns and help him raise his process to the level of deliberative understanding and acceptance. For this is his surest guarantee of continued development after formal education ceases.

Third, all administrative procedures should be reevaluated and accepted or eliminated according to how well they support the foregoing concepts of continuity. Since school administration never originated for this purpose many devices used for other ends are open to question. Ability grouping, promotional practices, yearly subject requirements, emphasis on academic achievement, reporting to parents, authoritarian teaching, scholarship awards, external discipline as a means of learning, preferences for certain subjects such as science and mathematics or foreign languages—these and many others should be studied for their internal effects upon growing

selves and their contribution to continued self understanding both of learners and teachers.

These words are written under the assumption that laymen and educators want to improve the educational opportunities of children. Learners at all levels have struggled to do this under adverse conditions. The impetus must come from the interested adults. The crucial issue is in the direction and a program to support it. The movement toward mature

people through activities that help them develop integrative continuity by their life process seems to offer more fruitful possibilities for the future than regression to earlier purposes and practices. The hope is not for today but for always. The hope becomes a reality not through words, but through deeds.

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## Cooperative Action for Curriculum Improvement

ASCD members have had several reports recently on CAPCI—the organization's program adopted in Seattle last March, to focus and intensify our leadership activities for curriculum improvement. Although some aspects of the program are still in the planning stages, enough interest and activity may already be discerned to justify some predictions of possible outcomes. From our knowledge of the aspirations of those who have planned and participated in the program to date, the following "hunches" are suggested as to directions in which CAPCI may move in the next few years.

*State, regional, and local units will develop varied projects directly related to the central purpose of curriculum improvement.* The "Curriculum News" column of *Educational Leadership* and the *News Exchange* have cited many of the conferences and other activities of ASCD units this year planned in relation to CAPCI. In most cases these activities have been related to one of the three problem areas proposed for emphasis in Seattle: reaching toward a balanced curriculum, providing for individual differences, and evaluation of learning. Such comprehensive and continuing concerns

of ASCD members may be expected to stay in the forefront of the programs of ASCD units.

At the Cincinnati meeting unit presidents and other representatives will have opportunity to share their experiences of the past year and their plans for the future. We may expect increasing interest in: the organization of local ASCD units in metropolitan areas and colleges; state unit meetings of three or more days in length; action programs in state units involving cooperation with other organizations, organization of area conferences and institutes within states, stimulation and perhaps sponsorship of research, and preparation of state ASCD publications, and interchange of personnel and programs between state units.

*State, regional, and local ASCD units will also study their roles in relation to other state groups working for curriculum improvement.* In some states the ASCD group may become a sounding board, or another channel of communication, or a liaison agency, as well as an action group. The unique, cross-sectional membership of ASCD makes such functions possible and highly effective.

ASCD units may also cooperate with

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