



Integration... A Curricular Concern

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PROBLEMS of racial integration in public schools continue to command increasing attention in professional education writings. Attempts to ameliorate and eliminate racial imbalance in the schools are literally legion. Unfortunately, most of these plans provide only for desegregation of racially imbalanced schools, and, in themselves, cause no effective integration of educational experience for students in newly desegregated schools. In many instances, however, it has been erroneously assumed that desegregation efforts automatically provide an integrated educative experience for the students involved.

The main points to be considered here are:

1. Integration of information and learners is invariably a curriculum planning process;
2. Desegregation of racially imbalanced schools cannot be considered in itself as causing racial integration in schools;
3. Integration of learning for Negro students in racially balanced schools must be achieved through curriculum planning to communicate their experiential background with that of the white, middle-class orientation;
4. Failure to follow up desegregation with curricular integration will present a critical problem; and

5. Resources and means are available to begin organizing integration programs.

Curriculum Planning for Integration

Prior to the problem of racial balance, integration had important meaning for curriculum planning. Krug states the following:

Although the subject organization is the usual and to some people the inevitable pattern for classroom studies, it has been criticized. Those who do so contend that it results in the splitting up of human knowledge and skill into arbitrary segments and that the student who pursues it comes out with piecemeal education. Such criticisms have led to efforts to modify subject organization along the lines of "broad fields." The term "integration" is somewhat used to describe these efforts, although there are those who contend that true integration takes place in the learner rather than in the reorganization of content.¹

¹ Edward Krug, *Curriculum Planning*, Revised Edition. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957, p. 103.

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The concept of subject matter correlation^{2,3} suggests that integration of learning within learners best evolves when the organization of subject matter helps learners see the relevance of subject materials to each other and in relationship to their own environment. The development of homogeneous grouping and "track" programs for specific ability levels has required, on paper at least, the planning of special curricula for these diverse groups, including organization of subject matter, graded instructional materials, and differentiated instructional techniques. Wide gaps among groups of intellectually superior children, slow learners, and special class groups have long posed problems to curricular integration in the instructional program. Where efforts have succeeded, teachers have invariably organized programs to provide students from wide ability ranges the opportunity to compete and achieve individually. Thus an integration of learning has been achieved and for a range of students with widely varying backgrounds and capabilities.⁴

Desegregation and Integration

It is suggested here that integration as a curriculum planning procedure can likewise meet the needs of racial and social class integration in public schools today. There are differences between the situations described in the foregoing section and needs for racial integration in schools but these should properly be recognized as differences of degree and not of kind. Some planned improved educational experience must be developed as a second step after desegregation. This integration process must design

² Harold Albery. *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum*. Third Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. pp. 204-30.

³ Roland Faunce and Nelson Bossing. *Developing the Core Curriculum*. Second Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958.

⁴ Nelson Henry, editor. *The Integration of Educational Experiences*. Part III. The Fifty-seventh Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

curricular programs and opportunities for experiences which communicate to the cultural and experiential backgrounds of all students in that school. Failure to achieve this second step will cause impoverished students to once more be exposed to instructional programs as meaningless as those formerly experienced in segregated schools.

My own son attends an elementary school into which Negro children are bussed to combat *de facto* racial segregation. When the program began in September 1965, the Negro children would gather as a separate group in the school playground despite their age range from kindergarten through eighth grade. Through the autumn this condition changed with increasing evidences of white and Negro children playing together. By the end of the school year there was almost complete *social integration* through personal friendships. It has become common to see Negro and white children in "arm-around-each-other" buddy friendships. However, there has been no attempt to develop integrating curricular programs upon this base of social integration. Yet, many educators feel that total integration has thus been achieved. They have failed to see that development of new curricular programs in this encouraging social climate could build *educational integration* upon the foundation of desegregation and correction of racial imbalance.

Curriculum Planning for Racial Integration

If curriculum planning is to be successful in effecting educational integration, it must identify the basic problem which plagued education in segregated schools. The learner in that setting was isolated from the white, middle-class values and background upon which the curriculum was built. Because this isolation made the curriculum remote and meaningless, impoverished children, both black and white, had extreme difficulty in achieving the desired ends of learning in the curriculum. Research has

revealed that compensatory education designed to help students in segregated schools with heavy racial and social class imbalance is largely ineffective.^{5,6}

Planning integrating curricular programs requires a philosophical commitment. Such efforts must eventually develop teacher skills and perceptions through in-service education programs and must create instructional materials which will teach skills in terms of the environmental experiences of Negro and other impoverished children.

The end goals of educational programs for the impoverished will be much the same as programs in middle class environments. However, the jump from beginning to end in the environment of poverty is far too broad for the majority of learners to comprehend and accept. The end objectives are so far removed from the learner's experience and so abstract from his own environment that he rejects them because of their remoteness and because he cannot see how he can ever achieve them. To counteract this, new sets of vital and immediate objectives, objectives which are so concrete that you "can taste them" must be developed to provide a continuum for the learner to reach toward the end objectives of a better life for himself.⁷

Failure to work at this problem has resulted in curriculum voids such as the following:

The poverty-stricken child needs to learn to read but not initially to read about a middle-class world in which he cannot even fantasy himself. His own environmental needs to read are critically important to the point of life and death but are typically not noticed by the school. This child needs to learn to read and understand the meaning of "danger" and "poison" on cans of rat poison, "pure" and "safe" on other containers. Other things to be read and understood include signs on condemned buildings with words and expressions like "condemned," "under razing,"

⁵ Kenneth B. Clark. *Dark Ghetto*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965.

⁶ A. Harry Passow. *Education in Depressed Areas*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1965.

⁷ Dorothy Rosenbaum and Conrad Toepfer, Jr. *Curriculum Planning and School Psychology: The Coordinated Approach*. Buffalo, New York: Hermon Press, 1966. p. 136.

"structure not safe," "symptoms of rabies are"; but the reading materials used in class talk about a boy, a girl and their dog and their environment in all-Caucasian suburbia.⁸

Unless such approaches develop, the gains in learning for former ghetto school children will be limited to mere social acculturation through their associations with a predominance of white, middle-class classmates.

Dilemma of Desegregation Without Curricular Integration

In racially imbalanced schools, the Negro student was exposed to a curriculum with learning situations geared to white, middle-class race experience. While such experiences were often non-intelligible and rejected, the Negro student still had the security of his own culture. In schools where integrating curricular programs do not develop upon the correction of racial imbalance, he will still be as isolated from the curriculum as he was in ghetto schools. In the desegregated setting, however, the majority of his classmates will understand the white, middle-class orientation of the curriculum because *they* are white. This may well provide the Negro student with increased cultural insecurity.

Thus, curricular isolation of students will continue in racially desegregated schools but now with the pernicious danger of mistaking racial desegregation for racial integration. If the curriculum in desegregated schools is not planned to integrate the life experience of both Negro and white students, supporters of racial segregation who preach Negro inferiority may falsely seem correct. Continuation of desegregation-only programs could facilitate such a catastrophic misconception.

Resources and Means To Solve the Problem

Organization of both preservice and graduate teacher education sequences to de-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

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velop teacher awarenesses as well as planning and teaching skills must be a primary step. Likewise, needs for in-service programs which focus on similar teacher skills in actual school settings rate high priority. Despite cuts in federal government support, federal monies still offer promising resources to underwrite such beginning efforts.

In theory and practice, curriculum planning offers succinct means for actualizing effective integration programs in schools. Such efforts must identify and organize appropriate instructional objectives, content, materials, methods, and evaluating devices for improved learning experiences to follow the correction of racial imbalance. Two recent innovations seem to hold broad promise for integrating curricular patterns. The non-graded school offers a flexibility which could well accommodate the wide ranges of student background and ability in desegregated schools in designing improved learning experiences. The importance of individualizing instruction for all students recommends the computer-based resource unit concept⁹ as a succinct means to integrate educational experiences in desegregated schools. Curriculum planning in desegregated schools must interrelate the facets of classroom experience, special services, and cocurricular activities in creating a new and vital all-school program which will facilitate curricular integration in its most specific applications.

The five points considered herein point to this single need and fact. Whatever is developed for those students in racially desegregated classrooms *must* be definitively different from present and existing curricular programs. To provide students more of that which was a meaningless failure in racially imbalanced schools will be tragically myopic. Furthermore, it will candidly indicate that the problem of racial integration in schools has either not been recognized and defined or that we do not know how, or care, to deal with it effectively! □

⁹ Robert S. Harnack. "Resource Units and the Computer." *The High School Journal* 51(3): 126-31; December 1967.

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