

EDUCATION FOR PLURALISM

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The Holocaust and the Curriculum

Should we teach our children about the Holocaust—the diabolical, fiendish, Hitlerian plan to destroy the Jewish people? If we want and need to teach the realities of life, then certainly the answer is yes.

Our children need to know that such things can happen in the twentieth century, in a period of our most advanced and enlightened civilization. In addition to the attempted genocide of six million Jews—men, women, and children—there was also systematic slaughter of millions of Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Russians, and others. The subject of genocide needs study and analysis, historical perspective, a profound understanding of human behavior, a searching consideration and reconsideration of human values, and applications to today's conduct, practice, and experience.

Yet the sad fact is that many teachers and many textbooks do not give much (some do not give any) attention to the Holocaust. This is even true of history and social studies teachers and textbooks. Very large numbers of students—at the elementary, secondary, and even college levels—know nothing more about the Nazis than that they were German leaders in World War II. This ignorance should be a cause for serious concern among American educators. Action should be taken in our educational programs to confront the following fundamental questions about the Holocaust:

- How could it happen?
- How did it happen?
- Could it happen again?

• Could it happen in the United States? (What about the treatment of black slaves, native American Indians, and Japanese Americans in World War II?)

In recent years a number of school systems have introduced instruction concerning the Holocaust in their formal curriculum. Some school systems are just now beginning to consider the best ways and means of teaching about these monstrous, unspeakable series of events.

Consider this thought: Would the whole concept of teaching about the Holocaust—and beyond to "man's inhumanity to man"—be a fitting and appropriate leadership role for ASCD to assume in our growing, evolving curriculum and in our growing, evolving pluralistic society? What do you think?

School Conditions and Race Relations

"What school factors are associated with both good race relations and academic achievement?" The Educational Testing Service sought an answer to this question, and organized and carried out a research study supported by the U.S. Office of Education.

An eight-page summary of the research results, entitled *School Conditions and Race Relations*, was issued in 1977.

A total of 166 schools were involved in the study. These schools are located in the southern, northern, and western parts of the United States. Some of the schools were desegregated recently; others have been desegregated for a longer period of time.

Achievement tests, questionnaires, site-visit interviews—all of

these techniques were used in obtaining the results.

There were two major conclusions: (a) That "there is clear evidence of overlap between good race relations among students and measurable characteristics of the faculty, administration, curriculum, training programs, and school policy"; and (b) That "some conditions associated with successful integration—especially teaching methods and practices—are susceptible to intervention and are controlled by school personnel."

The research report summary concludes with this thought: "Effective integrated education can be achieved by—and only by—the people in the schools."

Cultural Pluralism and Our Schools

The Winter 1978 issue of *Educational Research Quarterly* is a special edition devoted to cultural pluralism. Carlos J. Ovando, who served as guest editor, points out that this issue of the *Quarterly* deals with "some of the most critical areas surrounding the movement towards pluralistic education."

Following are listed a few of the contributors and their ideas:

Robert J. Havighurst: The "dominant Anglo-Americans have a necessary part in a constructively pluralist society." As one example, school textbooks "will require a good deal of revision."

Bernard Spolsky: A bilingual/bicultural educational system "has a better chance than any other of contributing to the development of the kind of post-modern blend on which survival depends."

Herbert Ginsberg: "If poor children do badly on some tests,

the likelihood is greater that there is a problem with the test than with the child."

Geneva Gay: "Educational success in a pluralistic classroom is as much a function of the understanding of how prior cultural conditioning of students and teachers influences response patterns to educational stimuli, as it is a function of intellectual capabilities and effective pedagogy."

Robert Arnove and Toby Strout: "Schooling in America is unlikely to meet the needs of minority groups, or to bring the minority and majority together on the basis of status equality, until such time as minority people can organize collectively to serve their interests."

Multiethnic Studies in Pennsylvania

A number of surveys have been made in recent years to determine the extent of multiethnic education. A survey of one state was reported in the April 1978 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*.

This report, which was prepared by David E. Washburn, reviews the situation in the state of Pennsylvania.

Following are some of the highlights of that report:

- Twenty-four percent of Pennsylvania's school systems have ethnic studies programs.
- Of those school systems that indicated that they have ethnic studies programs, 85 percent study blacks, 70 percent Native American Indians, 50 percent study Germans, and 50 percent study Japanese.

- A total of 74 different ethnic groups are studied in Pennsylvania's public schools.

- Most of the ethnic programs are of recent origin; only one is more than 10 years old.

- The heaviest concentration of ethnic studies comes in the last two years of high school.

- More than 84,000 public school students are involved in ethnic studies each year.

Washburn concludes that the needs are pressing. What needs? The needs for "schools that will practice the ideal of cultural pluralism and students who come to understand the ethnic experience in the United States through an integrated multidisciplinary/multiethnic approach to learning."

Women and Minorities in Textbooks

At the 1974 ASCD Annual Conference, a resolution was adopted that recommended to the ASCD membership that textbooks and other learning materials considered for purchase and use should be evaluated for full, fair, accurate, and balanced treatment of women and minority groups. The resolution included a list of 20 specific criterial standards that should be used in the process.

These criteria have received a great deal of attention and use. Thousands of copies have been requested by school systems and colleges across the country, and numerous reprints have been authorized.

Publishers have also reacted most positively. Indeed, representatives of the Association of Ameri-

can Publishers have expressed to ASCD representatives their full support for the 1974 ASCD resolution, including the specific criteria.

These 20 criteria or guidelines continue to receive wide interest and support. The most recent uses were made by: (a) The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in the state superintendent's report on minority role stereotyping; (b) The Maryland State Department of Education in a resource book on career education; (c) Educational Research Service, Inc. in a publication that deals with procedures for selection of textbooks and other instructional materials; and (d) The Bilingual/Bicultural Education Department at Weber State College in Ogden, Utah.

Does the action by publishers mean that educators no longer find it necessary to apply the ASCD-adopted criteria for evaluating textbooks and other learning materials? *Absolutely not!* Educators must continue to be vigilant. Each and every textbook must be carefully examined and analyzed. Some new textbooks and other learning materials meet the required standards and are acceptable; some new materials do *not* meet the standards and should be rejected.

Educators must always demand that learning materials used by their students meet the highest standards, both in subject area content and in their treatment of women and minority groups. About this we are clear: sexism and racism do not belong in our schools—not in the textbooks, not in the curriculum, not in personnel policies, not in school-community relations, not in any dimension of school or community life. [E]

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