



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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also be seen as a development of a sense of internationalism which is extremely relevant for the ecological crisis, where people everywhere must realize they are all children of "spaceship earth".

Unlike most social psychology viewpoints this book makes an attempt to get away from the broad generalizations of "society and groups" and brings the problem down to a personal level and hence emphasizes the importance of increasing self-awareness as a main criterion for prejudice elimination.

This book should have application not only for improving of understanding between different ethnic groups but also for improving relations between different class and social groups in society and make for a better understanding of all people who are in some way different from the average teacher's own norms and expectations.

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Schools Council Working Paper 27 : *Crossed with Adversity : The Education of Socially Disadvantaged Children in Secondary Schools*. Evans/Methuen Educational. London, 1970. 157pp.

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The Working Party was set up by the Schools Council in March, 1967 in order specifically to examine the problems involved in the education of socially handicapped students. Their terms of reference were as follows:

To consider the question of the secondary education of pupils who have been retarded by social or family background, with special reference to the possibility of compensatory education through the curriculum of the schools; to consider what kind of research and development work may be appropriate in this country (England) in the light of what is being done elsewhere; and in doing so, to have regard to the need to outline in terms of general principle the broad social and educational issues involved.

They identified several causes of social deprivation, including poverty, population migration due to lack of employment and the financial insecurity which exists in deteriorating areas. Deprived children tended to be distinguished by the following characteristics: they were poorly dressed, undernourished, often had low standards of personal cleanliness and little knowledge of right and wrong; they were underachievers, were backward in reading, behaved anti-socially, had poor records of attendance, poor health and a low level of cultural experience and were inhibited in their interests by financial difficulties.

As a result of their investigations, the Working Party advocates for the educators of *all* children three main aims which are designed to diminish the impact of social handicap. These aims are:

1. competence,
2. confidence,
3. cooperation.

Competence they visualize as being essentially social in character, preparing the child for his place in society by endowing him with the necessary skills of literacy, numeracy, social participation and oral communication. Confidence, as they perceive it, comprises both the child's self-esteem and his faith in his school. Cooperation is envisaged as being democratic, active participation in school life.

The Working Party asserts the need for teachers to receive special training in dealing with the problems of disadvantaged students and feels that all teachers must be made familiar with the results and implications of current research. The following findings were specifically mentioned as significant.

- (a) The influence of the home on educational attainment is three or four times as great as that of the school.
- (b) Home influence is mediated not so much by poverty or social class as by:
 - i. parental attitudes to education,
 - ii. the level of literacy in the home.

- (c) Environmental influences bear most heavily on:
 - i. the *younger* children, (particularly pre-school children)
 - ii. the *brightest* children.
- (d) Educational deficit is cumulative from preschool onwards.

In view of the significance of the home, the Working Party judges a change in parental attitudes - or in teachers' attitudes to parents - to offer the best hope of mitigating adverse home effects. They postulate the need for closer links with the community; out-of-school activities, excursions and visits by members of the public are suggested as methods of countering the cultural deficiencies to which deprived children are prone.

They refer to the theory advanced by Professor Bernstein that disadvantaged students operate a "restricted" code of language: one which is simple, direct and vivid yet without much scope for developing imaginative or scientific thinking. When they begin school these children are confronted with the use of an "elaborated" code, a flexible, complex, verbal code which promotes intellectual development. Unable to adjust to its use within the school, they fall progressively further behind. This linguistic deficiency is aggravated during early adolescence with the transition from concrete to conceptual thinking. Unable to cope, students leave school and seek employment.

As a counter measure, the Working Party suggests the need for the training of teachers in remedial reading and writing. Drama is viewed as an excellent method of promoting verbal fluency and self-confidence.

The most effective method of organization of the school is formulated as being flexible, lending itself to team-teaching, theme teaching and extra curricular activities, yet being centred around a simple consistent set of rules. The delegation of responsibility is seen as being an important method of improving attitudes and behaviour; and community service has been successfully used to inject a sense of purpose into school life.

The recommendations made by the Working Party are valuable ones for any teacher faced with the difficult task of educating

children from deprived backgrounds. Areas examined in the paper include the recognition of deprivation, investigations of current practice and an analysis of several case histories. Also considered are the organization of the curriculum, home-school relations, relations between the school and social services and recommendations for the training of teachers, both initially and during service.

Additional background materials are supplied in a number of appendices, which include a fairly comprehensive bibliography. Although the paper does not deal specifically with the problems of racial minorities, the book provides worthwhile reading for teachers of Aborigines, since the problems with which some are confronted derive as much from social deprivation as from racial sources.

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