

What Approaches to Curriculum and Learning?

Panel IIA

Planning for the educationally disadvantaged, according to Dr. Irvamae Applegate, dean of education, St. Cloud State College, and president, National Education Association, "must not be thought of in terms of projects, but must be on a continuous basis if our premise is correct that these children are having problems because of lacks in their environment outside the school. At this point," she continued, "it appears to me that we are not encouraging long-range planning nor a coordinated or total attack on the problems of the educationally disadvantaged children." She also noted she was "very disturbed by the emphasis on such terms as 'imaginative thinking' and 'innovation.' Far too many people have interpreted this to mean gimmick and there has grown up a vocabulary of magic words thought by many to be the 'Open Sesame' to getting project approval, not only under Title I of Public Law 89-10 but under other titles of the act, as well as other acts."

Panel IIIA

In the opening presentation, A. Harry Passow, chairman, Committee on Urban Education, Columbia University, identified some patterns that have emerged in educating the disadvantaged. He called them promising provided their substance as well as their form is adopted. Among those he mentioned were—

- Preschool and early childhood education aimed at compensating for deficits, especially those dealing with language and concepts.
- Remedial programs in the basic skills (which have far less chance of success, said the participants, than preventive or compensatory programs).
- Individual or small group programs using professional teachers, paraprofessionals, or volunteers. (Often the most dramatic changes come in the teachers or volunteers themselves, which may be one reason these programs are always termed successful.)
- Broad exploration of the curricular values in those parts of a student's life outside the classroom.
- Special programs to develop teaching materials.
- Staff changes, including adding specialized personnel and redeployment of present staff.

- Special guidance and counseling for students and parents.
- Reorganization of the school day and the school year, coupled with better school-community relations.
- Preservice and inservice teacher training programs centered around strategies of working with the disadvantaged.
- Techniques and procedures for correcting racial balance.

Too often, pieces of such programs have been tried, with little effort made to fit the pieces together into a total program. Also, these programs have begun to bring to light a variety of gaps and lags in education, according to Dr. Passow.

Some of the gaps and lags:

- In the absence of any sociological or psychological theory of understanding the deprived, concentration has been on isolated factors rather than on their interaction.
- Although few studies have been made and little is known about the effectiveness of early intervention programs, the tendency has been to put all our eggs in the preschool basket.
- Our knowledge of parent education is based almost entirely on what we know about the middle-class home.
- The relation of nonintellectual factors, such as parental pressure, is not known.
- There is no knowledge of how lower class children use language for educational development.
- There are no guides for the teacher in either the selection or evaluation of books and other materials.
- Little is known about class size or about appropriate ways to prepare those who will teach the disadvantaged.

Repeatedly, the participants brought up examples of teaching or of Title I projects that illustrate the tendency toward the safe and sterile. One such example was called the Ming Dynasty approach. During the 1965 Cleveland riot, a social studies teacher was trying to interest her class in a lesson on the Ming Dynasty. The class, understandably, was more interested in the riot just outside the windows of the classroom. In a determined effort to stick to her guns, the teacher finally resorted to lowering the shades, thus successfully avoid-