Curriculum in the Education of the Deviate Child

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CURRICULUM IN THE EDUCATION OF THE DEVIADE CHILD.
by FLORENCE BEAMAN

CURRENT NOTES ABOUT CHILDREN CURRICULUM AND RESEARCH FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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CURRICULUM IN THE EDUCATION OF THE DEVIATE CHILD

Florence Beaman

Mothers for years have been lamenting the fact that "my Jimmy is so different from the rest of the family;" but educators made no provision for recognizing these differences in the human species until psychologists in their studies revealed the extent of variation. Even then only those children whose differences were most apparent to the observation of educators were segregated for special instruction: the blind and the deaf. It was not long, however, before the experiment of Itard in France laid the foundation for special treatment of mental deviates. At first most children were removed from regular groups and placed in special classes on the ground that their demands upon the time of the teacher prevented the normal child from functioning as he should. The ideals of special education have improved since the time of the establishment of special classes, both in the scope of the work and in the theory governing the methods. Children today are placed in special classes not merely because they are out of step and cluttering up the work of the regular class, but because in a special class it is hoped that these children will work out their problems under guidance and will become happy individuals. At best, child adjustment is the ultimate purpose in the numerous classes organized for all types of deviate children: the physically handicapped, including the crippled, the blind, the partial-sighted, the deaf, the hard-of-hearing, the anemic, the cardiac cases; mental or social problems including the mentally retarded, the delinquent and the behavior or personality problem.

Curricular material and methods in use in most classes established for deviate children even today closely approximate the work done in the regular classrooms for normal children. Such changes as have been made in curriculum are changes of deletion. For example, the content of the curricula in rooms for the mentally retarded consists of the essential fundamentals with the addition of handwork. The rooms for physically handicapped children emphasize the health aspect and include the routine work of the grades in the time remaining from physical care. Such insight as is brought to behavior problems of children comes from the clinical guidance furnished by psychologists, psychiatrists, and understanding social workers and teachers who make the child's adjustment an individual matter, a problem to be solved individually with adult guidance rather than by a carefully planned sequence of socializing experiences.

On the other hand some educators feel that the education of deviate children should have a wider social aspect. Education of all children has come to mean the provision for activities that will bring into play the maturing processes of children as they
naturally spring into being, and the establishment of an environment that will make the best use of each individual's abilities for the welfare of the group. It is so even with deviate children. For many reasons these children have failed to function normally within their own group and so have been denied the most important function of the new education: an outlook on life filled with a feeling of social security.

The new education which measures its success mainly in terms of community adjustment of its individuals must concentrate upon the principle of socialization as an important one in the education of deviate children.

The function of a program in socializing unadjusted children and the methods utilized in presenting experiences to them can be illustrated by a description of the progress of a special class established at The Little Red School House, New York City.

The class was established in the fall of 1933 to furnish an opportunity for those children who were not adjusting in the regular groups. Naturally the class had a wide variation in chronological and mental ages as well as in the nature of the problems. The usual membership varied from twenty to twenty-six pupils; the chronological ages varied from seven to twelve years; the mental ages from seven to sixteen years. The mental ability of the class was skewed sharply to the right.

The problems underlying unadjustment had their roots in social maladjustment. Few children were able to face their daily activities with a degree of independence. Here was a boy who could write a creditable book upon paleontology, but who was at a loss to know how to open a baked potato on his luncheon plate; there, a girl who could discuss the chemical elements, but who cried bitterly when confronted with the problem of donning her own snow suit. Again, a boy of nine who could write poetry showing a considerable appreciation of form and word beauty, but had the eating habits of a three-year-old; and another whose desire for social attention found outlet by throwing chairs. Each child had great potentialities not only from the intellectual but also from the social side, if the cause of maladjustment could be discovered and conduct adjusted.

The treatment of the children has to proceed under an individual study plan and under a group plan. Necessarily all information relating to the child's physical history, his developmental history, his mental and social tests, his family environment and history, and his classroom experiences previous to his entrance to the room have to be gathered and inspected for causal factors. The mother's cooperation is enlisted, and frequent interviews with the family are arranged. With the parents' cooperation a workable remedial plan is evolved emphasizing both the attitudes to be achieved ultimately and the immediate problems of adjustment confronting the child. The program for the child, however, is not entirely an individual one, for the child necessarily must take his place in the group. He cannot exist as a case to be placed in a file and manipulated at the will of an adult. His adjustment must take place within the group and proceed upon the basis of what may be termed a type of group therapy. The importance of clinical service should not be minimized, all help is used freely; but the main contribution to adjustment is made through group activities.
The phases through which the adjustment passes may be divided roughly into four parts: (1) a period in which relaxation is stressed, (2) a period of participation in simple group activities, (3) one of cooperation in more complex social experiences, and (4) a period during which variation in response is stressed. In the first period the child is released from all adult pressure and allowed to do as he pleases in the group. He is limited in certain aspects by the children only, for it is during this period he makes his adjustment to the children. The teacher uses this time to observe the child's reaction to material and to other children. The materials used are those which contribute sensory experiences and allow a great deal of liberty for the child to create in a rather objective medium. Naturally there is a great deal of confusion during this time and practically no objective evidence of accomplishment. It is a destructive phase, for the children are encouraged to be free in their handling and use of material placed in the room: wood, tools, crayons, paper, blocks, and all material which might stimulate a child's imagination and furnish an outlet for his creative energies. The motor response is particularly dominant during this period: often children run around the room until they are tired and then just sit. During this period they are left absolutely free to make such social adjustment as they can experience individually. The length of time required for this phase depends upon the group as a whole. A group composed entirely of new children takes longer for adjustment than a few new members in a group which has already become established.

Inevitably, as time goes on, there appear signs that social contact is desired: a few will gather in a corner to "just play;" in another corner will be found a few who want to give a play. They are beginning to want companionship in carrying out their activities. The program must now provide for "doing things together;" and in fact, during this second period, group activities dominate the curriculum almost to the exclusion of academic material and individual instruction. Since it is by experiencing, and only by experiencing, that the child can gain a sense of security in social relationships, activities must be sought which are simple enough to allow whole and satisfying participation. It takes little urging to swing the small groups into dramatics, excursions, games, and such activities. Material for folk games, folk dances, story telling, story playing and folk songs is available through several research projects on primitive social experiences. These simple traditional experiences, with trips and parties presented in a similar play spirit, are more satisfying to the immature child than the organized, highly integrated games of today.

The third period, during which the ability to work with minimum friction in a group is achieved, should emphasize more complex and integrated social experiences: social sciences growing directly out of the children's needs and environment. What the experiences are depends upon the type of group, the locality and the daily needs of the child. No one program can contain even suggestive material for more than one group. Each year's curriculum must be built upon the interests and needs of the children. An example may be cited in the recent year's program in which the children supplied some obvious needs of their every-day life. The class was divided into three groups, which shifted every twelve-weeks period, so that
each child gained the experiences of each phase of work. One group took charge of the food needs of the class. (The school serves lunch at noon.) At first they were mainly concerned with going to market and buying the food. Later, as they observed the costs, they began to be interested in comparative buying. They went to the large Washington Market, and from that visit their interest grew in the sources of food. Visits were made to a railway station, a freight depot, docks, etc. to observe the bringing of food into the city. The children were not satisfied with merely obtaining direct knowledge of the sources of food through trips, but suggested that we gain some information from books. At the same time when all of this study for sources of food was going on, they kept up a daily routine of assisting in the preparation of lunch, of making their own menus, buying their food and paying the weekly bills. As group organization progressed, the younger children in the group assumed the tasks of the actual doing connected with the project. One small group of boys feeling that they had to have some scientific knowledge of the food values before they made up their menus, withdrew to organize a science club in which they tested chemically the foods which they served each day. Another group of older children were most interested in keeping accounts. Each day they took the bills from the rack in the kitchen, computed their accounts, and paid the bills at the end of the week. The advantage of all these experiences was that each child had to participate each day in order to serve the lunch. Just before changing to another group, they suggested that since we were so short of material for studying foods, they should write and illustrate a book on what they had learned about providing the children of our room with lunch. This involved photography, revisiting places where they had gone on their trips, enlarging pictures, preparing the manuscript, and getting it ready for the printers; so that this group left a visible result of their experiences besides having gained the facility with which they managed lunch.

The second group cared for the room and supervised the repairs of the school. As the children often expressed it, they were running the school. A general mechanic was hired one day a week; and each week, as children received the report of repairs needed in the school, one or two children worked with him, painting walls, repairing plumbing and doing general odd jobs. It was necessary to call in the matron of the school to learn about cleaning agents and the type of cleaning she required. During one time, when the cook of the school was absent, a man was called in to clean the kitchen. The children worked with him, discussing philosophically the reasons for his unemployment and showed him how to do things according to their standards.

The third group took charge of the textile needs of the school. They made and took care of towels, bath mats, table linen, curtains and such things. Each day they were responsible after lunch for laundering the table doilies, during which time they learned the best methods of laundering and of removing stains. They became very much interested in the development of silk and of artificial textile products. They obtained silkworm eggs and took care of them until they spun cocoons. They went through the process of unreeeling the silk from the cocoons and actually experienced the labor which goes into the manufacture of real silk. Each group amplified the knowledge obtained through actual experience by reading
material. Unfortunately this reading material was rather scarce, and we had to depend upon manufacturers themselves for facts about the different occupations.

By their working together during this third period individual disposition and behavior are molded in the group. Less satisfactory responses in behavior are inhibited in the group because the activity is impeded and not because personal disfavor regulates conduct. Gradually there emerges, in spite of much back-sliding, an individual who takes his part because he feels he belongs to an acting group. This feeling of cooperation cannot be accomplished in a day: it grows over a long period of time.

The fourth stage of social adjustment demands that the individual not only take his place within the group, but that also through his individual capacities, he develop not only himself but his contribution to the group. Several children in their maladjustment had retarded standards in reading and writing, spelling and arithmetic. It was not thought wise to emphasize the development of individual capacities until the child had thoroughly achieved social adjustment. After such a program as described for the third stage, in which individual capacities are only slightly emphasized, the child should be ready now to do more individual creative work without having to withdraw from social participation. He begins to feel the need of satisfying some of his own mental desires, of extending his knowledge as his inquiring mind dictates, he wants to read, to paint, to write, to make things. He needs the skills to satisfy these ends. It is easy now to widen the horizon of his responses; to open up various avenues whereby he can satisfy his needs. For the first time he can set his own routine and feel above it. During the fourth period, then, emphasis upon social response is continued, but is elaborated by providing individual instruction in academic subjects at each child’s level. The child is also given opportunities for creative expression not necessarily related to the group project but undertaken, it may be, just for pleasure. An example of what goes on in the daily program during the stage when individual instruction is provided for, may be noted in the last of the appended charts. This program was built upon three mental levels usually found in an eight-year-old group. The first column emphasizes activities of interest to children of six- and seven-year-old mental age; the second column, those for children who are accelerated in mental age beyond the eight-year-old level or possibly nine- to twelve-year-old mental age. The composition of a group is based mainly on a hypothetical normal graph, and the I.Q. levels can never be used adequately for placing an individual in an activity program. They are used merely as an indication of what might be done to keep the interests of the children who deviate widely in mental age but who remain in the same group. In other words, the curriculum for socially deviate children must consist of realistic material within the interests of the mental age group. At first it should be definitely objective and concrete, varied by academic material as soon as the child has achieved good social adjustment.

The foregoing program should make it possible for children to be alive and alert to their present environment. After social adjustment has passed well through the fourth stage, the child should be ready to return to his own age group and, with some supervision, to make adequate
adjustment within that group. He has achieved in some small measure security of social relationships, the ability to work and play with others, and the ability to vary his responses as the situation demands. This does not mean that his adjustment is complete. Far from it; but he is prepared for most situations in which a child normally belongs. Several children who have passed through this program have made excellent social adjustment in their own groups.

Florence Beaman, who for the past three years has directed the group for the unadjusted child at the Little Red School House, 196 Bleecker Street, New York City, has had wide experience in Chicago working with deviate children and planning their curriculum.
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM

Period of Social Adjustment

This period is characterized as one in which the pupil's interest is centered upon himself. He is not usually capable of working and playing spontaneously with other children. He is more concerned with objects and their manipulation to his own ends than he is with personalities.

Characteristics:

(a) Inactivity
(b) Emotional disturbances (individual)
(c) Random and unpurposeful activity
(d) Discord in group life
(e) Manipulation of objects
(f) Unfinished products

Teacher Activity

1. Observation of individual as case study
2. Provision for rich environment experiences
3. Direction and development of individual activity

Pupil Activity

1. Sensory-motor experience
2. Free play
3. Individual, immature efforts at manipulation of environment

Materials

Materials which contribute to sensory experience:

1. Color (Cards Crayon Kuresco (Paints Easels Brushes (Large sheets of paper
2. Weight (Scales--1 lb., 2 lb., (5 lb. weights (Weighted bean bags
3. Size & (Blocks shape (Puzzles
4. Auditory (Tone Drum (Victrola--music
5. Motor co- (Balls Yarn Wood ordination (Nails Saws Planes (Looms Apparatus
6. Table games used in individual play although equally susceptible to group play
7. Toys--marbles, train erectors, etc.
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM (2)

Period of Social Adjustment

There is in this period a growing feeling and desire to combine spontaneously in small groups for play or concerted project.

Characteristics

(a) Interest in other children
(b) Seeking help in work and company in play
(c) Growing command of individual outbursts as satisfaction of group life grows
(d) More purposeful activity and inspiration to complete work for use

Pupil Activity

1. Participation in activities introduced by teacher which further skills developed during period one, but utilized in group activities.
2. Participation in all types of simple social experiences found of value in developing group response.

Teacher Activity

1. Adjustment as member of group
2. Leader in introducing developing and socializing material

Materials

Socializing experiences:
1. Rhythmic work
2. Folk games
3. Folk dances
4. Group games
5. Story telling
6. Story playing
7. Folk songs
8. Sense games
9. Group hand projects
10. Parties
11. Trips, excursions
Period of Social Adjustment

A growing integration of all life around him makes possible the combination of group activities and academic situations which can be unified in concrete experience.

Characteristics:

(a) Ability to combine for group work in unified concrete situations
(b) Individual seeking for knowledge and experiences to answer problems
(c) Attempt to utilize individual experiences to satisfy group project.

Teacher Activity

1. Leader and director of projects
2. Organization of activities which are concrete in experience which integrate group and academic experience.

Pupil Activity

1. Furtherance of socializing experiences through unification of activities in relative importance.
2. Enrichment of meanings by experiencing academic work in concrete situation.

Materials

1. Dramatics
2. Social science
3. Reading
4. Handwork projects
5. Problems in arithmetical situations
### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF CURRICULUM (4)

#### Period of Social Adjustment

The period during which the child is capable of assuming individual responsibility within the group, thereby furthering his own ends in relation to the activity of the group.

(a) Group control with more or less recognized leaders

(b) Program or routine more apparent

(c) Child becomes more responsible for conduct and learning

(d) Realized to some degree need of practice in fundamentals

(e) Begins to set own tasks in projects

#### Teacher Activity

1. Director of group
2. Motivator of projects
3. Inspirational contacts with pupils
4. Check and director of work on development of skills

#### Pupil Activity

1. Continuance of experience of group 3
2. Individual development of skills and tools which will make him more serviceable to group
3. Group activity in routine program

#### Materials

1. Continuance of 3
2. Introduction of symbols or abstract material in:
   - Spelling
   - Reading mechanics
   - Arithmetic fundamentals
   - Writing
SUGGESTIVE DAILY PLAN
(Food Project)

1. Composition of group of 30 children (approximate)
   - 1%--below 70 I.Q. or 6 yrs mentality
   - 5%-- " 80 I.Q. " 7 " 
   - 14%-- " 90 I.Q. " 8 " 
   - 60%--between 90--110 or 8--8:9 "
   - 14%-- " 110--120 " 9 yrs "
   - 5%-- " 120--130 " 10 " 
   - 1%--above 130 I.Q. " 12 " 

2. Social Tendencies
   a. Ability to combine in small groups for work
   b. Ability to practice tools of learning to facilitate activity
   c. Urge to complete work for use
   d. Responsible for repetition and drill

3. Activities for 3 levels

| : 6--7 yr old mentality: Average 8 yr mentality: 9--12 yr old mentality |
|---|---|---|
| 9:00--9:15 | Assembly | Assembly | Assembly |
| 9:15--10:00 | Rhythms | Rhythms | Rhythms |
| 10:00--11:30 | Trip to dairy plant | Trip to dairy plant | Trip to dairy plant |
|  | (Emphasize personal work element in discussion) | (Emphasize process of care of milk) | (Emphasize laboratory contribution) |
| 11:30--12:00 | Preparation of table for lunch (pouring of milk) | Library reading on the source and supply of milk | Test for milk properties and study of bacteria life under microscope |
| 12:00--12:30 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 12:30--1:00 | Story telling | Washing dishes | Care and storage of milk in ice box experiment with cold and its effect on milk |
| 1:00--2:00 | Individual instruction: in mechanics of reading and arithmetic |
|  | 1. chart printing of dairy visit with illustrations by children |
|  | 2. actual experience with filling ½ pint, pint, quart milk jars |
|  | 3. cost of milk |
| 2:00--3:00 | Individual play | Group games | Group games |
|  | 1. check on informational reading on source of milk, self-directed. |
|  | 2. ordering of milk for next day; costs |
|  | 3. preparations of menus and amounts of milk required |
|  | 4. foods prepared from milk |
|  | 5. making of butter and cottage cheese; |
|  | 1. creative poems |
|  | 2. creative stories |
|  | 3. creative art |
|  | 4. individual records of projects in testing milk |
|  | 5. budgets--proportion of milk necessary |
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