

The Challenge

Confusion reigns supreme in the field of teacher education for the plural cultural environment that is America. The schools are in turmoil in most places that are required to integrate diverse pupil populations into a common educational experience. Legal mandates and social pressures along with counter-offensives have made many schools that serve Afro-American children and other children of color places that resemble battlegrounds. Frequently numerical balance has been achieved among various cultural groups. However, our nation is far from the stated ideal of equality of educational opportunity for all its citizens. In fact our historical pre-occupation with superficial remedies to the problems of racism and injustice in the schools has left us in a position where the general idea of equality of educational opportunity has been poorly and incompletely conceptualized. Integration in schools was originally seen as a means for achieving equality of educational opportunity, not as the end of equality of educational opportunity. We have not been prepared to describe what happens at the end of the bus ride. Whatever that may be, the success or failure of efforts will fall ultimately upon the main point of contact for the student, the front line teacher.

A look at the general qualifications of teachers for meeting the challenge of teaching

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for a plural cultural world leaves much to be desired. There are major deficits among the teaching professionals who serve America's children. Among the areas where these deficits occur are the following.

1. A failure to understand the discipline or subject that they teach from a plural cultural perspective.
2. A failure to be aware of available resources for the remedy of this situation. (resource people, print and non-print media, ethnic bookstores, successful programs for visitation, etc.)
3. A failure to develop appropriate skills for communication across ethnic or cultural groups.
4. A failure to master assessment tools or procedures in order to develop accurate information about students
5. A failure to understand ones own cultural perspective and history as only one among many and opposed to "the norm."
6. A failure to understand linguistic variability.
7. A failure to develop dependable sources of feedback for self-evaluation.

8. a failure to sense that anything is amiss.

It is also true that the institutions to which we would normally turn for help in the solution of the problem (teacher education institutions) are themselves a part of the problem. Repeated in their daily practices are the same deficits that we see in the public schools. If they are to become a part of the solution to the problem of racism and injustice in education, they must develop new capabilities and resources. Among them are the following

1. A thorough and total curriculum review in order to ~~determine~~ change the curricula to reflect a plural cultural perspective. (This is to include both professional and content courses)
2. A change in staffing patterns in order to reflect the diversity which is America and the range of multicultural problem solving talents which are required
3. An updating of curriculum resources to reflect a plural cultural perspective
4. An ~~admission~~ admissions program to guarantee the multicultural mix among our nations' teaching

cadre.

5. A pattern of field placement which guarantees that multicultural teaching competencies be demonstrated.

Something also must be said about the forces affecting teacher education. These forces include, among others, the following.

1. Licensure procedures and standards
2. Accreditation procedures and standards
3. Standardized admissions or Proficiency Examinations
4. Research, Development, and dissemination activity in teacher education
5. Guidelines for legislation in teacher education

~~It is~~ You are charged, then, to examine ^{points} the above, ~~and to~~ in addition to such other related points as you may deem necessary, ~~in order to~~ and to specify a rationale for remedy, goals for action, strategies for achievement, and an agenda for ~~the~~ action.