Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education:
Why school is the enemy to urban students…and what to do about it

Schooling vs. Education

Shujaa (1993) articulates a conceptual distinction between schooling and education that is useful in trying to understand how our Marion County public schools can make a curriculum work for its students, families, and communities.

SCHOOLING implies a tie to the social order and nation-state. Schooling is a process intended to maintain the *status quo*. In America, it suggests an educational institution--representing the dominant European-based middle-class culture--that seeks to assimilate groups such as poor and so-called minorities.

Schooling seeks to transfer the core (facts) knowledge of the American culture to students so they will share a common background, basic vocabulary, skills, history, etc., and will enable them to negotiate with/within "the system." This is the main purpose of institutions of learning in all cultures from tribal to complex. This is the norm. Advocates of a common American basic knowledge have made a point when they assert that too many students leave school without the common background and knowledge of the main culture—which is necessary to be successful in it. This makes sense.

EDUCATION, on the other hand, *involves learning that transmits the cultural uniqueness of non-dominant groups to the next generation.* Here institutions of learning transmit from one generation to the next, knowledge of values, esthetics, spiritual beliefs and all other things that give a culture its uniqueness when compared to the dominant culture.

The Problem: *Local and state curriculum, by definition, represent schooling because it intends to pass on the common knowledge of the dominant culture. Although it is the responsibility of a school to pass on a common knowledge, many poor and minority students reject schooling because of its assimilation tendencies.*

This begs the question: Is not the purpose of our Marion County public schools to pass on the/a common culture not (a) specific culture(s)? In the past when Horace Mann dreamed of all children/youth attending common schools that transmitted the common knowledge via a common curriculum. This was the way the United States could "Americanize" all the immigrants coming to America. This melting pot idea was a good one in theory because it stood in opposition to school systems in other countries that educated only a select few.

Yet, over time, schools did not advance the academic and status interests of the poor and minorities. Today, numbers of at-risk students dis-affected in their relationship with schools (www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/06/07/480957031/the-civil-rights-problem-in-u-s-schools-10-new-numbers) resist and reject education--even to their own detriment!

Schooling vs Education is not just an African America issue

Native-Americans continue to have these same issues with the public schools that see education as assimilation. Remembering government boarding schools where Native children and youth had to cut their hair, could not speak their language or celebrate their culture's uniqueness (Mondale & Patton, 2001), contemporary Natives continue to resist assimilation by controlling their own schools and by providing their students with tribal knowledge as well as the majority's core/common knowledge.

Latin@ students often have to experience "subtractive schooling" (Valenzuela, 2010) where they give up their culture and language via "de-Mexicanization."

Working-class urban and rural white youth have also historically rejected school as a colonial imposition of middle class values and culture. The Grand Ole Opry (opera is mis-spelled/mis-pronounced on purpose) continues to be an example of "county" culture.

"When I was in high school in Indianapolis, some of my classmates from white working-class neighborhoods like mine in Fountain Square took pride in not giving in to school."

~ John Harris Loflin

Jeff Duncan-Andrade argues (Loflin, 2012) that urban students of all colors who identify with *global youth culture* (Hip Hop) are also asked by schools to trade their culture for the "higher culture" of the school in exchange for access to college. This reduces the life choices of students into a false binary, that of choosing between staying behind as a failure, and "getting out" as a success. Faced with the prospect of leaving their communities behind to be successful, many urban youth opt-out of school. They choose to retain an urban and cultural identity they perceive to be in conflict with the expectations of schools, even if the cost of that choice is school failure. Urban schools must begin to develop partnerships with communities providing students the chance to be successful while maintaining their identities as urban youth.

Finally, *American Catholics* and *Jews*, reacting to public schooling in the past, went on to create their own school system from Kindergarten to graduate school. They considered the public schools "protestant schools" and simply did not want to assimilate.

Limitations of general/standardized curriculum
This then becomes a weakness of a generalized curriculum: *Too much schooling, too little education*. Since a basic curriculum, by definition, does not transmit specific knowledge about specific cultures--even though it has incorporated more multi-cultural viewpoints and knowledge--if it were the only curriculum, this would subtly imply that other non-dominant cultures in America were somehow deficient. And, as is the case with the present traditional school and charter systems, students would reject it when forced to choose between school success/acting white and/or middle class and being who they are. This is not a choice our Marion County public schools need to require students to have to make; it's not their role.

A better solution is to advocate within the Latin@ Americans, African American, and working-class communities an alternative which *would foster both the education and schooling* of their young people. For example, Black Independent Schools (www.cibi.org) educate Black youth within the values of their own culture at the same time as they recognize the importance of developing skills valued by the majority community--which control the economy.

Segue: It is psychologically healthy for families, children, and youth of the non-dominant culture to reject public schooling if schooling means assimilation, if it means they are taught only the "Master Narrative" (https://feministteacher.com/2010/04/13/exposing-the-master-narrative-teaching-toni-morrisons-the-bluest-eye/) of American's dominant culture and not the uniquenesses of their culture. Families and students need not have to choose between a healthy self-concept and community and a diploma.

Suggested Solution: Form a standing committee
The committee would continually monitor our Indiana state curriculum and standards to make sure students are both *schooled* and *educated*. The group would be made up of parents and community members representing the students of non-dominant groups within the school. It would insure that a complementary curriculum (a sort of "core knowledge" of the non-dominant cultures represented in Marion County) would also be taught and transmitted not only to particular students, but to all students.

This group would also make sure the cultures of poor and minority students are respected, accepted and thoroughly understood, and used when teaching and/or explaining new ideas to students.

If the board, staff, and parents of our Marion County public schools want children to learn the common knowledge of the United States, they must also transmit the "common knowledge" of particular subgroups represented in classrooms—*or many families and students, as has been the case historically, will dropout because there is too much schooling, too little education.*

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