Introduction

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New York City's public school system is firmly committed to a policy of equality in education for all children, regardless of their ethnic background. This study is concerned with establishing how successfully this policy is translated into practice, in particular with regard to Negro, other non-white and Puerto Rican children.

The policy of equality in education is anchored both in democratic values and in self-interest. The democratic values in equal public education for all have been reaffirmed by the decision of the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, which outlawed segregation as incompatible with equality. A glance at the economic and social needs of the community demonstrates the self-interest in equally good education for all. The rapidly changing economy of the country and the human and social problems which New York City faces make it abundantly clear that we cannot afford educationally underprivileged minority groups: the requirement for unskilled labor is diminishing; and the relations of inadequate education to crime and other forms of social pathology are becoming more and more obvious.

Everyone familiar with New York City and the living conditions of Negroes and Puerto Ricans will immediately realize the enormous difficulties confronting the implementation of the Board of Education's policy.

Three powerful facts obstruct an easy transition from policy to practice:

1. The City's pattern of residential segregation.
   New York City's schools are neighborhood schools. To the extent that the City's residential areas are segregated, schools must necessarily reflect this pattern.

2. Prejudice against ethnic groups among some of the City's population.
   Some parents find surreptitious ways and means of evading the Board of Education's policy of desegregation, and thus intensify the consequences of residential segregation. In the fringe areas where neighborhoods of different ethnic composition touch, community pressure is occasionally brought to bear on the school system against a full and equal share for all in available educational facilities.

3. The social and economic conditions under which ethnic minority groups live.
   To the extent that Negroes and Puerto Ricans are compelled to live in over crowded and often dilapidated neighborhoods, their children will attend schools which share many of the physical characteristics of the area in which they are located. To the extent that Negroes and Puerto Ricans are denied full social and economic equality of opportunity, they will be in much greater need for educational help than the majority group.

It is this last point which raises a question of interpretation of the phrase "equality of educational opportunity." According to one interpretation, the phrase means the allocation of equal quality and quantity of educational facilities and resources to each group. According to another interpretation

the phrase means the allocation of educational efforts in such a way as to be commensurate with the special needs of each ethnic group. The point could be argued on a philosophical basis. Here we shall not argue for one or the other position. This report is concerned with presenting some of the facts which must form the basis for policy decisions and community action, whatever the interpretation of "equality of educational opportunity" may be.

These facts were assembled with the intention of presenting existing conditions in the school system rather than in an effort to investigate causes and motivations, let alone to distribute praise or blame. The ultimate purpose of the study is to provide a basis for all persons of good will who are concerned with the school situation to bring about improvements, where such are indicated.

In Part 1 two types of schools will be compared with each other: schools which owing to their location are attended predominantly by white children not born in Puerto Rico (Group A schools, as we shall call them from here on) and schools which for the same reason are attended predominantly by Negro and Puerto Rican children (Group B schools). Throughout this report it must be kept in mind that the two groups present contrasts not only in ethnic composition but also in the financial background of the children who attend them.

The comparison will take account of a variety of factors, including age, size and utilization of school buildings, equipment and facilities, teachers, finances, and intelligence and achievement levels.

Part 11 deals with zoning principles and practices in the City's schools.

Three sources of information were tapped: statistics provided by the Board of Education; questionnaire data supplied by school principals; and data from personal interviews conducted with all Assistant Superintendents in the City and with a sample of school principals.

Throughout the study only elementary schools (kindergarten through sixth grade) and junior high schools (seventh through ninth grade) were used. High schools which are to a much lesser extent neighborhood schools and which present a variety of special problems were omitted. They deserve a full study in their own right, designed to discover the conditions under which these schools which need not reflect residential segregation become ethnically mixed and the conditions under which they nevertheless tend toward segregation.

Here we are exclusively concerned with the impact of residential segregation on the quality of education in neighborhood schools.

Summary

1. The major findings of Part 1 are summarized below. To facilitate the comparison, items which indicate that Group A schools are in a better position than Group B schools are marked with an asterisk in the first and second column; the first referring to the comparison between elementary, the second to the comparison between junior high schools.

El. JHS Achievement (continued)	Elementary Schools Group A	Elementary Schools Group B	Junior High Schools Group A	Junior High Schools Group B
Average arithmetic test scores per school				
* sixth grade	6.4	4.8	-	-
* eighth grade	-	-	8.7	6.0
Average reading test scores (third grade) per school with				
0% free lunch	3.8	-	-	-
1-2% free lunch	3.8	-	-	-
3% free lunch	3.5	-	-	-
5% or more free lunch	3.3	-	-	-
11-32% free lunch	-	2.6	-	-
33-89% free lunch	-	2.3	-	-

This, then, is the overall picture: the quality of educational facilities in Group B schools is inferior although less markedly so on the junior high school level to that in Group A schools. Group B schools are older. Fewer of them are fireproof. Though they are larger, they provide less space per child, indoors and outdoors --- in other words they are overcrowded. Group B schools are less well equipped than Group A schools; they have less experienced faculties; expenditures per child are lower in Group B schools. Achievement scores are lower in Group B schools.

How can these differences have arisen? Deliberate discrimination on the part of the Board of Education can be ruled out as a factor, even if one or another individual in as large-scale an organizational set-up as our public school system may feel inclined to discriminate. But the articulate policy of the Board against discrimination together with the judgment of many different experts who know the school system well make it impossible to account for the picture in such terms. Many of the school principals and assistant superintendents volunteered their deep conviction to that effect.

Some of the differences, as for example, the age of the school buildings, need no other explanation than a reference to the general character of residential minority neighborhoods. Others, such as the equipment of schools or the financial data, however, are clearly not a reflection of neighborhood deterioration.

As has already been indicated this study was concerned with finding facts. We did not attempt to collect the data needed for an explanation of these facts. Nevertheless, if we may be permitted to speculate, the only explanation we can suggest for the serious consideration of the entire school system on all levels and for the community at large lies in the possible difference of the level of aspiration of all concerned with either majority or minority schools. The Board of Education, as do the directorates of other large organizations, presumably depends on the information, requests and demands coming from its lower units. If the teachers and principals in Group B schools as well as the parents of Group B children have been affected in their aspirations by the generally low prestige of these strata of our population, it may well be that they exercise less pressure (through transmitting information, requests and demands) for consideration of

their schools than those who teach a population of higher prestige. Without such pressure they will as a rule not receive more than the letter of the law prescribes. Special consideration which mitigates the inevitable rigidity of every large-scale organization will not be forthcoming. Thus, the disadvantages under which the Group B schools labor can, perhaps, be regarded as an unintended and undesirable consequence of the differential status of the two groups in New York City, the latter is reflected in different levels of aspiration.

It is, indeed, plausible that such psychological factors are responsible for producing the situation in the school system which we have described. A principal of a Group B school, for example, mentioned that the overwhelming majority of the children under his care were not given breakfast at home. If this principal can produce a make-shift arrangement in the school's basement where free luncheons are served to the children, he will understandably feel more satisfied with what he has than a principal who has to send children used to a nicely laid table into a basement. Equally, a principal who cannot offer his teachers an adequate faculty room or a middle-class neighborhood, may press less hard for experienced teachers (who have earned a right to comfortable working conditions) than one whose facilities and neighborhood are of a higher standing.

On the assumption that this explanation has merit, it contains a great challenge to the Board of Education, to all Group B schools and to the community at large. For by the very act of making unintended consequences explicit - as this report has done in the factual picture it presents - they can no longer be called unintended. Even though there is nobody to blame, the facts speak for themselves and must be changed lest we be all suspected of approving them.

How can they be changed? There are essentially three routes to be taken:

1. Integration of schools so that the general level of aspiration for the majority groups should embrace all children in the City. This can be achieved in the long run only by closest cooperation with the City's Housing and Planning Authorities. Perhaps more immediately helpful would be a reconsideration of the strict neighborhood principle of school attendance.

2. The Board of Education can as a policy decision adopt an emergency plan to deal with the consequences of residential segregation for the quality of education of Group B children. As surely as the Board had not planned them deliberately, it cannot ignore them once they have been identified.

3. Those who work in Group B areas must raise their own level of expectations with regard to what they are entitled to. Voluntary organizations in the City have a large part to play in educating the adult population in this respect.

To be sure, all three routes - and they are, of course, not mutally exclusive- require money and effort. Both will be forthcoming on all levels only to the extent that it is clearly understood that the only intolerable burden on the entire community is to leave matters as they are now.

2. The major findings of Part II are:

Zoning in the New York City school system is governed by four major principles: to keep the way to school as short as possible; to avoid traffic hazards and inconveniences on the way to school; to avoid overcrowding of schools; and to interrupt as little as possible the school life of children through rezoning of areas. It is not a dominant goal to maintain or to prevent ethnic homogeneity in the school population through zoning.

Zoning is a highly complex task. The rapidly and continuously changing character of neighborhoods in New York City often makes it difficult, if not impossible, to comply with established zoning principles. In the task of balancing principles and reality, concern with the ethnic composition of the school population often gets lost.

Some Assistant Superintendents feel that this is in order. They consider it unjustified to zone schools with the aim of achieving a higher degree of ethnic integration. Others have aimed for better integration and have found ways and means of achieving this without violating other principles.

To take ethnic composition into consideration in the zoning of schools requires, of course, detailed information about local conditions in every district. A method was developed to ensure that such information is comprehensive. The method consists of three steps. In step one adjacent schools are identified which differ in the proportion of Group A children. We arbitrarily regarded a difference of 30% or more as justification for taking further steps. Step two consists of an inspection of maps so as to rule out adjacent schools separated by major traffic hazards or topographical barriers. In step three the local conditions of the remaining schools are scrutinized in all detail. This involves obtaining information on the ethnic composition of housing blocks in the boundary areas of the school zones which may be rezoned.

As to the current picture: the inspection of maps (step two) revealed that a large number of adjacent schools with differences in ethnic composition are actually separated by traffic hazards. Three cases were selected where maps did not reveal obvious obstacles to rezoning. The study of these cases indicated that the composition of the population in the blocks along the boundaries was such that a better distribution of ethnic groups could be obtained in two of them, while there appeared to be no possibility for obtaining better integration in the third one.

An application of this method to all doubtful cases of adjacent schools transcends the scope of this report, which aimed merely at demonstrating how the question of zoning and ethnic integration can be approached.

Whether or not this method will be applied in the future depends on a decision of principle by the school authorities. The question to be decided is: Is the ethnic integration of our schools to be left to chance or is it a deliberate policy to promote integration as a positive educational experience of which no child in the City should be deprived?