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BOOK REVIEWS

Grotberg, Edith H., : *Institutional Responsibilities for Early Childhood Education*. From *Early Childhood Education*. (pp.317-338) National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, 1972. The University of Chicago Press.

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Grotberg discussed in her introduction to the chapter causes of institutional upheaval in relation to early childhood education in the last half of the 1960's. Massive federal legislation accounted for a large part of the upheaval, with problems of poverty, inequality of educational opportunity, ethnicity, racism, and demands of women's liberation groups for day care being other contributing factors.

The author suggests that most institutions can be assessed for the effectiveness and appropriateness of their early education programs in the light of two basic criteria:

- (a) concern for the whole child, and
- (b) parent involvement.

The first criterion is generally accepted; the second is controversial.

Grotberg supports the view that parents must be involved in decisions affecting their children, and that their role in influencing early development must be recognized. Research on minority, ethnic and lower socio-economic groups indicates clearly the importance of the parents in the early learning of children. The author then examines recommended institutional models and assesses the models against the two basic criteria stated above.

Also presented is evidence of:

- (a) the problems inherent in such participation,
- (b) the impact of parent participation on institutions other than the ones in which parents are directly involved, and
- (c) the effect of their participation on child development.

- i. *The School Model* is posited on a State Department of Education assuming leadership responsibility for early childhood education, focusing sharply on the assumed needs of children reared in poverty. Pre-school and primary education, provision of clothing, meals and medical examinations (following recognition of the fact that disease and malnutrition impinge on the learning behaviour of children), coordination of community and social services relevant to child welfare and day care services are the responsibility of the State Education Department. Parent involvement is limited to membership of local committees.

Assessment - this model is concerned with the total development of children, but parents are ignored as educational agents, targets for adult education, contributors to policy or participants in program development and implementation.

2. *Coordination Child Development Models*

- (a) Regional - concerned with total development programs for children at a state level, with powers of recommendation for training and legislation. The flow from state to local organization would be open, flexible and aware of local needs and differences.
- (b) Local - similar to above but confined to localities.

The emphasis of this model is on achieving coordination of services through an administrative structure.

Assessment - this model is committed to the total child and his development. Parental role or value is not recognized.

3. *Advocacy Models*

- (a) Mental health model (recommended but not active). One such model recommends a national structure comprising the president of the United States authorized by Congress to appoint a National Advisory Council for children, which would be responsible for long-range planning, policy making, and programming for the provision of service and manpower. Public advocacy functions would be provided at a state level through a child development agency and at a local level through a child development council. Advocacy bodies would

include professionals, laymen and consumers.

- (b) Welfare model. Assumption of responsibility for protecting families and children in crisis by social workers.

The advocacy model posits that someone, some institution, or some professional group must intercede for children because of societal and familial limitations and incompetences.

Assessment - concerned with the total child but provision is not made to use parents as change agents or critical persons in the development of their own children.

- 4. *The Kibbutz Model* emphasizes group rearing and education of children with minimal contact with parents.

Assessment - the Kibbutz model discourages individuation in favour of group identity. It discourages close friendships and attachments to parents. Parents do not contribute to the education of their children.

- 5. *The Business Model*. Performance contracting is the major kind of business model being explored at various government levels. There are three of these:

- (a) day care services,
- (b) entire elementary school models, with guaranteed performance,
- (c) special skills model - companies to employ special techniques to improve the basic skills of reading and mathematics.

Assessment - the business model is not concerned with the whole child. Parents are not involved.

Grotberg then discusses the *Roles of Parents*. It has been traditional for parents not to be involved in the public school system. In 1964 the Head Start institution was created requiring:

- (a) a comprehensive program of health, nutrition, education, social and community service, and
- (b) mandatory parent involvement at all levels of program development and participation.

A significant part of the motivation and justification for involving parents in their children's education is that such involvement helps them to provide a more adequate educational environment especially in homes disadvantaged by racial discrimination and poverty. Civil rightists seek increased control of the school because of the lack of relationship between school educational experiences and the local cultural needs and experiences. The success of "Head Start" relied on making other institutions more sensitive to the needs of the poor. "Follow-Through" was essential and inevitable. Head Start attempted involvement of the poor at decision-making levels, employment of local persons in para-professional occupations, emphasis on the particular needs of the poor and of minorities and more sensitive health practices and institutions. There is evidence that parent involvement in Head Start led to parent involvement in other institutions.

Parents as Educators. Parents are able to develop skills contributory to the education of their children. Three to five year old disadvantaged children were affected impressively and positively by watching "Sesame Street", a television program for pre-school low-income children. The children whose parents watched and discussed the program with them learned the most.

Other studies with positive results come from parent training programs, involving tutorial training and classroom management. The problem of consistency of attendance of parents in programs for adult education has been persistent. Programs where parents are more actively involved in the classroom situations are more successful, but again attendance can be a problem.

"Training parents in their homes in conjunction with group experiences at a centre has resulted in increasing the holding power of the program as well as in significant changes in child growth."
p.334.

Home visits by staff members are made monthly to check the progress of mother and child.

Pressure for *Day Care* comes from women's liberation groups and the federal government. However, day care does not envisage parent involvement nor does current discussion relate to the concept of comprehensive programs for the whole child. Hence

day care falls short of the two criteria of a comprehensive program and parent involvement.

Grotberg concludes that Head Start is the only model which meets both criteria, while most of the models provide some valuable ideas concerning administrative organization, locus of responsibility, philosophy of services and/or relevant program components. Models being considered for adaptation should be concerned with the total child, parent involvement and the needs of the particular group.

Educators of young Aboriginal Australians should consider Grotberg's conclusions, as these would be highly relevant to the local situation.

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Lippman, L., : *Words or Blows : Racial Attitudes in Australia*. Penguin, 1973. (pp.216 - paperback; \$1.55)

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Referring to C.D. Rowley's three volumed *Aboriginal Policy and Practice* Lorna Lippman characterizes the work as "notable for its compassion and insight" (p.37). Lippman brings to her own more limited but equally effective study a similar humanity. Or should one say sense of justice? The book is divided into two parts. The first section is designed to place her sociological survey of four country towns (Part II of the book) into the broader setting of Australian race relations. It consists mainly of a careful collation of material from books and speeches which demonstrates fairly conclusively that Australia was and still is a racist country. The cruder manifestations are gone (hunting parties, poisoning, blatant detestation) but the more subtle forms linger on. Indeed as Lippman shows in Chaper Five (*Racism and the Extreme Right*) the forms are not always so subtle.(p.58). Merely recognizing the fact is not enough; in fact mere recognition could be quite harmful. If we all accept guilt, argues Lippman, no one is responsible; if all are prejudiced no one is to blame. (p.14).

For this reason the writer focuses on specific aspects of race relations in four country towns in South East Australia. The survey is important in that it carefully delineates "the interaction of black and white citizens in their daily life", (p.73) and