



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

*BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION PROJECTS

Readers, we are sure, will be interested in the following summaries of projects sponsored by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The projects show how the Foundation has responded to educational needs in a variety of countries and cultures. There is now a realization that to consider the young child in isolation from his family and community does not make sense, if longer-term educational gains are to be achieved. Hence many of the projects seek to help schools acknowledge the importance of parents in the education of their children; endeavour to make schools and communities more responsive to each other; and encourage communities to help themselves.

BELGIUM:

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

This project has as its central preoccupation the notion that the early environment of the child is a powerful determinant of its future. Therefore preparing young parents to assist in the education of their children should considerably enhance their capacity to benefit from the educational opportunities available to them. The project is seeking to develop a pedagogical method for family, school and community. This is done first, through analysing family relationships so as to identify different styles of upbringing and translating these into pedagogical terms; second, by devising means of teaching young parents about children and about children's needs and the ways in which these can be satisfied; third, by running specially designed courses for potential future parents and by training social and community workers to act as parent educators, thus disseminating the experiences gained.

The project is to be implemented in two industrial regions of southern Belgium, Mons-Borinage and La Louvière-Morlanwelz. Thus it will reach communities with different social backgrounds, but each with large populations in the disadvantaged, low-income groups and with substantial numbers of immigrant families.

*Reproduced with permission from *Newsletter*, Special Issue, Summer, 1978. Bernard van Leer Foundation, Postbox 85905, 2508CP, The Hague, Netherlands.

The preparatory survey of parental attitudes is currently (early 1978) being carried out. The results of the survey will determine the shape of the educational program to be drawn up, aimed at bringing about the development of new attitudes towards education.

BOTSWANA:

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL LEAVERS

Vocational training in various crafts and trades (brigades) has been established to provide unemployed primary school leavers with a wide range of usable skills. The training brigades combine production with training so that where possible returns from productive activities cover training costs. Thereafter the brigades assist their former trainees to find employment or promote self-employment. Thus what is sought is a widely applicable training model for depressed rural areas.

The first training programs were concerned with construction, market-gardening and textiles. Other activities such as carpentry, tannery, horticulture, pottery, car maintenance and repair, printing, farming and food processing have now been added. Non-vocational courses were included to strengthen the general educational background and commitment of trainees. Special attention is given to equipping the trainees with the skills and motivation to work independently if no paid employment is available. Small producer co-operatives have therefore been established within the overall structure, to increase the ability of ex-trainees to support and sustain each other.

A recent addition to the program has been the provision of care and play opportunities for the young children of the members of the brigades and co-operatives, as well as training para-professionals in child care and parent education.

(See Van Rensburg's book, *The Serowe Brigades - Alternative Education in Botswana*. Macmillan Education, London, 1978).

COLOMBIA:

LA PLAYA - 'ATENCIÓN INTEGRAL DEL NIÑO'

An experimental Early Childhood Centre has been established in La Playa, a Creole fishing village lying on the north of the Caribbean port of Barranquilla. The Centre is one component of a total village and family development program. It is to draw up a curriculum, reflective of the local culture, to serve as a model

for northern Colombia. It will be staffed mainly by parents and young people from the area and will be used as a training laboratory for University students. The village development program is designed to look at the problems both of the individual and of the community and will be carried out by the scientific, technical and social affairs departments of the University.

Within the Early Childhood Centre, priority has been given to determining how the health and diet of the children can be improved. A guide book on child care and upbringing is being prepared for the use of mothers and the staff of the Centre. Manuals on cognitive, linguistic and motor development produced by the Centre describe and illustrate activities suitable for the young children. Children's songs and stories are being collected for use by the mothers both in the Centre and at home. Through a variety of extra-curricular activities, the attention of the parents is being drawn to the Centre, to its efforts to meet children's needs and to the importance of the role they play in the lives of their own children. Provision for young people includes an employment registry, scholarships in pre-school education and recreation facilities.

COLOMBIA:

CHOCÓ HOME LEARNING AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

Located in four small communities in the isolated state of Chocho on Colombia's Pacific coast, this project aims to foster the development of young children by reinforcing their parents' role as educators. Through a local order of missionaries, the Sisters of Santa Theresa, parents are taught ways in which the child's intellectual, social and motor learning can be stimulated. The basic medium of intervention is a set of toys which has been developed by the LIDE team. As the program develops, these toys will be adapted to reinforce concepts inherent in the culture. By handling these toys themselves, parents become familiar with their use and purpose. As their skills, understanding and self-confidence increase, they will be taught how to make other sets of toys, using whatever natural products can be obtained from the forests and beaches between which they live.

The educational program will be complemented by a health, nutrition and sanitation program. Parents will be shown how they can irrigate their lands; purify their water; provide clean, dry playing spaces for their children; assemble and make available to everyone local knowledge on first-aid procedures; improve the health and nutrition of the people of the area; and promote their economic

well-being through systematising the collection and marketing of fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, all of which are abundant in the area. Initial training of a group of ten nuns has already been completed; basic socio-economic data on the area, the families and the children collected; and work with the parents in all four villages has begun.

NIGERIA

INTEGRATED EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (IED)

The project, as designed, sought to demonstrate the general idea that education, to be effective in the severely deprived rural areas of the Third World, should concern itself with the integration of a series of inter-related problems among which are: skills training and job creation; communication of progressive ideas in agriculture; health; nutrition; the care of the family. The initial strategy was to develop various learning models around such themes, ultimately bringing all these models together in one special rural location.

Because of operational circumstances, the project has proceeded furthest with vocational training for young people, together with the application of 'relevant technology' to the production and employment problems of the rural areas. Four training centres have been developed, two in the original Plateau State, one each in Benue and Kano. In addition, several subsidiary training and production workshops have been set up by former trainees. These have now contributed greatly to the ways in which Nigeria's needs for skilled manpower might be fulfilled and to how the survival of the villages might be brought about.

The project is effectively at the end of its first phase. A unique and viable training model has been evolved. This is of particular interest to the Nigerian and other authorities faced with a growing number of unemployed school leavers. An appraisal is in progress as to how the training model may be diversified in accordance with the original project objectives.

UNITED KINGDOM

EXPERIMENTAL PARENT AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The project has sought to develop and improve links between school, home and community; to demonstrate to mothers that they are the primary educators of their own children; and to show that parents make a vital contribution to their children's educational development throughout childhood and adolescence.

The team began working from the comprehensive school in Netherley, a large housing estate on the outskirts of Liverpool, but later moved to their own centre in a maisonette provided by the Local Authority. Initially they trained local mothers to visit other families with pre-school children. They were provided with appropriate educational toys, books and materials selected from a resource package, which were used in a play session with the mother and child. As the confidence of these educational visitors has grown, they have developed a wider advisory role, and now provide support for other families in their own street or block of flats.

Local schools have welcomed the increased awareness among parents of their children's needs and have responded to the parents' desire to be more involved in the educational process. Equally, there is a growing realisation among parents that there is much they can do, through community action, to improve the general, and the specifically educational environment in which their children are growing up.

Thus the work of Home Link has diversified into a range of activities in response to demands by local mothers.

UNITED KINGDOM

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRE-SCHOOL/PARENT EDUCATION UNIT

The high-rise block of flats in which the project will be set up provides homes for a large number of young families. One of these flats is to be converted into an educational centre specifically geared to meet the needs of pre-school children and their mothers. In so doing, the project seeks to demonstrate that pre-school education and child-care of a high standard are compatible with a low-cost model of this kind and that it can be easily replicated elsewhere. In the initial stages, the centre will be staffed by two qualified nursery teachers and two trained nursery assistants. However, it is of crucial importance to the success of the project that, from the beginning, mothers participate actively in the work of the centre. They will be given some basic, on the job training after which they will gradually take over the roles of the nursery assistants. Ultimately it is the intention that parents themselves will become fully responsible for running the centre.

The project is established under the auspices of the Local Education Authority and already methods of liaison with local primary schools are being worked out. Indeed this aspect of the project is

considered to be an integral and vital element of the whole scheme. Of equal importance are links with local secondary schools, which will be created by providing opportunities for youngsters to become involved in the daily activities of the centre, as well as in courses on parenthood, citizenship and adult life which it will run. The project is in an advanced stage of planning.

.....

NOTICES:

READING IN THE YEAR OF THE CHILD

FIFTH AUSTRALIAN READING CONFERENCE

PERTH

AUGUST 25 - 28 1979

For further information contact Mrs J. Marr, Welshpool Reading Centre, Division Street, Welshpool, W.A. 6106.
Or - The Australian Reading Association Representative in your state.

.....

SECOND PACIFIC RIM CONFERENCE
ON CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

MELBOURNE STATE COLLEGE

3 - 7 September 1979

For further information contact Brian Davies or Stella Lees,
Melbourne State College, 757 Swanston Street, Carlton Vic. 3053
Phone 3418615