

# *The child care worker*



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Cover Photograph: Some of the child care students at the Ethelbert Training Centre in Durban

Tydskrif van die  
Nasionale Vereniging van  
Kinderversorgers

**NACCW/NVK**



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## Wards of the State

Whatever trials and troubles 1991 is going to bring us, it seems that inexorably Value Added Tax (VAT) will be one of them. In 1989 the NACCW approached the Commissioner for Inland Revenue to seek an assurance that the exemption from GST currently enjoyed by children's homes would be retained under the VAT system. The Commissioner replied stating that at the time no Bill on VAT was yet available, but that the NACCW's representations on behalf of children's homes would be considered. Following on this exchange, dozens of children's homes made similar representations to the state. Now it seems that in terms of the published Bill children's homes will not be granted exemptions from VAT similar to the present GST provisions. (In this issue we publish for the information of readers an extract from a study and proposal prepared by KPMG Aiken & Peat for non-profit organisations like children's institutions.)

For many years now, capitation grants have not kept abreast of inflation, and this, together with moves towards "privatisation" in state welfare policy, has driven more and more children's homes out into the market place to compete against innumerable other fund-raising organisations for help from the private sector. As this competition grows in volume and sophistication (how *does* the little children's home on the corner compete with the nationals with their full-page

newspaper spreads and their TV commercials?) so all reach a point of diminishing returns for increased efforts. The popular metaphor tells us that the size of the cake remains the same, so the pieces get smaller. We see even very high-profile charities get into serious difficulties. How have the children's homes coped? Most did not need to be told to turn unnecessary lights off, to patch and pass down clothing, to limit travelling and to go for the cheap protein; South African institutions seem to have been doing that all their lives. As the subsidies flagged, there came stark choices between less food and fewer staff. The food couldn't be further reduced; the staff was — often to a point which made nonsense of all the smart talk of 'programming', the demands for better quality child care and the extension of services to families.

Back to 1991. Here comes VAT with no exemptions for children's homes. To put it in single syllables: All of us have cut costs to the bone; there is no more fat. If VAT is x%, then homes will have to cut their staff in direct proportion. This means we can do less and less for the children.

There is just one question we feel needs to be asked: **Whose children are these anyway?** Are they children whom the institutions have unilaterally identified as having some claim on the state? Not at all. These are children whom the state itself has found in need of care. These are children whom the state asks the institutions to care for. These children are wards of the state.

There are many and various good causes out there to which organisations and in-

dividuals commit their enthusiasms and their efforts. By registering these causes as welfare or fund raising organisations the state acknowledges the legitimacy of their aims and objectives, and, if approached, the state can decide whether or not to give assistance or make concessions to them. But the children whom the state has legally made its own wards are another story. The example one would wish to set in a civilised society is that one accepts responsibility for one's own children, and one does not move them from one deprived and inadequate situation to another. Children's homes should not pay VAT, or they should be charged at zero rate, or they should have the VAT that they pay returned to them.

## Questionnaires

Members received subscription invoices in the post recently (you *have* paid yours already?!) together with a Questionnaire on NACCW services. You are asked to take seriously this request to express your opinion, as it aids planning and ensures that the leadership and grassroots membership are seeing roughly eye-to-eye. Perhaps more important is the Questionnaire enclosed in this issue. Every few years the NACCW has been able to establish the prevailing salaries and service conditions in the child care profession, and has been able to recommend scales and advise child care workers and their employers accordingly. Please **DO** complete a Questionnaire, whatever your post in child care. Further copies, if needed, are available at all Regional Offices.

## National Association of Child Care Workers Nasionale Vereniging van Kinderversorgers

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-racial organisation which provides the professional training and infrastructure to improve standards of care and treatment for children in residential settings. Die Nasionale Vereniging van Kinderversorgers is 'n onafhanklike, nie-rassige organisasie wat professionele opleiding en infrastruktuur verskaf om versorging en behandeling standarde vir kinders in residensiële omgewings te verbeter.

**NACCW/NVK**

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*Language, status and communication:  
Eric Harper and Patrick Ntsimi report on a follow-up group  
for black youngsters in care*

## The Gift of Words

In a cross-cultural activity group for children in care, it became evident that the white and so-called coloured children of the group could express themselves with adequate language whilst the black children lived in a "speechless" world. (Harper, E. and Ntsime P., 1990) The speaking children formed a sub-group taking on the parenting role, while the black children became the dependants. The main purposes of the group broke down. In this impasse, despite their enthusiasm, the black children felt confused, frustrated and isolated. "Why do the speaking children stop coming to the group? Why do we once more find ourselves alienated?"

In planning a follow-up group with the black children, we took this impasse as our starting point, symbolised for us by the metaphor of the "empty mouth". The empty mouth signifies the primary challenge and task that birth demands of our existence. As Benvenuto (1989) puts it, "birth inaugurates the principle of separation" which "breaks the world and oneself into pieces". An emptiness, hollowness, felt as separation "not from another but from oneself ... a lack which amounts to saying a lack of oneself."

We as child care workers attempt to contain these images of fragmentation, and provide a 'good enough' environment which mirrors back the child's attempts at separation. This is a process of integration in which the experience of lack is survived through the gifts of words, symbols, images, and memories, which help structure the identification, internalisation and incorporation of a sense of "I".

In attempting to provide a consistent and safe environment for the follow-up group, planning went into group membership (age, sex, physical size, intellectual and other abilities, personality characteristics), and physical environment (size of group, spatial arrangements, communication networks, number and length of sessions, territoriality and personal space). Growth goals were established for each member, but the overall goals were —

- to help break through the "culture of silence" by giving the empty mouth "objects" to voice its desire;
- to empower and support the initiative of the group in defying the historical taboo against blacks knowing and expressing themselves and finding their own meaning;

- to facilitate the development of a mutual aid system.

### The real environment

The group met at a children's home, which being both geographically and symbolically in the middle of the township violence meant that the children found themselves 'stuck', never knowing what to expect. The children were forced to bear witness to the violence, a violence which visited our "safe environment" like an unwelcome guest. Uncertainty, anxiety, tension, acting out ... all these were intensified by the mood of "panic, fear and terror" — one unknown playing out against another unknown.

To release anxiety, build trust and to move the focus forward from the on-going contracting and clarification of group purpose, games were used. The aim here was to enhance the group's capacity to problem-solve and make decisions.

To address latent feelings, group members were encouraged to draw pictures of how they felt. Once the individual had labelled his/her drawing, the group as a whole would then free-associate images they attached to that label. A list of key words linked to these generated themes emerged. For example, a face with no eye expression, a thin mouth with lots of teeth received the label "laughing" and the following associations: "see funny things, laughs at others, hide feelings, stooge, scared, frightened, drugs, dagga, worried, angry, hurt."

The words became alive, united and connected, but this was not enough. Individual children wanted ownership over the construction of the words and began to test out and explore ways to make this possible. As this took on a competitive form, so each task of conflict resolution brought greater levels of group development, insight (new conflict) and initiative. Conflict resolution tasks arose in new and unexpected areas.

### Vignette

A dominant member in the group draws a face with huge eyes and a disfigured nose. She then tells us in Xhosa that the facilitators are like psychologists and the children like guinea pigs. The group responds in Xhosa, and the white facilitator finds himself amidst "black sounds". The group refuses to speak white language and demands that the

bond between the white and black facilitators be broken. We (the facilitators) refuse the request and sit the anger out. Out of the anger words emerge "all children have right to talk about another people ... children have right to solve our problem ... our people have right to sit down with children of Africa ... we don't like *fighting* to our black people and our parent ... when was child I want to new ray *life* whats going on ... and my feed Black ... I am hungry ..."

Each individual shares his/her "tale", along with feelings about being in a children's home, hopes and dreams ... The words are given as a gift, spoken in a language all can understand. The withdrawn boy who curled into a ball (asleep) in the beginning, the same child who narrowly escaped with his life when caught in the cross-fire of violence, talks. His tale is filled with pain and tears. It is a tale each member of the group knows well: The story of a family who lose their jobs, get evicted, then lose their self-respect, dignity, hope — and finally their children. The isolated girl who wears clothes which hang from her body as if there is no awareness of the space that surrounds her body makes choking, vomiting, crying, screaming sounds. "What is it, will she choke, what will we be able to understand, will it be enough?" She tells the group she wants to be a doctor. The isolated and withdrawn children, as a voice ("naughty children"), let it be known that they will *NOT BE KEEP QUIET*.

### Conflicts, paradoxes, ambiguities

The attempts at ownership over their words create pleasure ("jouissance"). The group decides on the performance of a musical play with traditional, spiritual, 'gumboot' and modern music. The result is a unique personal rhythm, an expression of the conflicts, paradoxes and ambiguities which constitute their (black) struggle.

Filled with this joy the group decides it wants to talk about sex. Regression takes place, conflict re-emerges. The facilitators

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offer age-appropriate white sex education — and the children again find themselves lost, wanting, fearing, silent. The conflict is acted out in the lack of trust towards other members. "I love the other children but I cannot trust them." The words "love without trust"; the feeling "anger without trust" — or just the feeling "anger". The group takes ownership over their anger and in the process they tell each other what the other does that makes them angry.

Origin, sex, drive, ... It is these drives (love and hate) which need to be reintegrated into the damaged psyche. Drives which are to be linked to the taboo against sexual education in black culture, the association of sex with enforced birth control programmes, the mix of black and white patriarchal ideology, the taboo against the joy of the birth of the black child.

Violence affects children, but what this means is unknown. Further, we have discovered that it is to be found in unexpected areas. Motlatji Letsebe informs us that young children have been at the forefront of the struggle; that the political crises, coupled with the raving 'culture of violence' that has taken its toll in the 90's, has meant that many black children have not had adequate access to basic and vital human resources with the result that fundamental facets of human existence become distorted.

**Evaluation**

Were it not for the credibility of the principal of the children's home in the surrounding township, for the principal's capacity to contain our fears, this group would not have taken place. Whilst the group could, in *Euro-centric* terms, be said to have been successful, this would be telling a half-truth. It is bizarre to reflect that there is nobody to contain the children and staff of the home in this way. Who hears their fears when they lie at night under the beds with the children when the gunfire starts?

Child care cannot be studied in isolation from the wider socio-political context. The nature of child care needs to be the subject of an ongoing debate. We have heard many opinions about child care in the new South Africa. However, it is one reality to debate a situation from the outside, and quite another reality to live it from the inside.

For child care to be made relevant and 'domesticated', we need to learn to fit theory into the situation and not to force the situation into the theoretical and political constraints.

In the last session the withdrawn child initiated the farewell with the words "We are pleased but all crying inside." Another: "I feel full, it feel good to be full". Alas, these words are hollow within present context. A brutal, violent and unknown reality undermines whatever ways we try to transcend this reality.

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**The Forgotten Children**

They came and they're still coming.  
Within this ready made discourse.  
Trapped, disowned, disarmed and disempowered,  
disembowelled creatures with unfathomable strengths.  
Striving to be heard.  
Moving, shaking, kicking and crying all night long  
Until their dawn makes no meaning at all.

The trembling voice of this little earth struggles and strains;  
terrors and tortures within these terrains that touch our hearts.  
But we never solve this mystery.  
Even history fails  
For we're die hards.

They came — and when 'thy kingdom comes'  
to make friends with thy breast that feeds —  
our wishes and dreams vanish like misty weather.

Whether in Crossroads or Cape Town it matters not.  
The bet, the stake, the dream, the hope —  
Is this a big mistake?  
To treat this being as a toy,  
A puppy dog, the master's pony —  
That never decides 'cause its not meant to decide,  
Only to break it into a small microcosm,  
To deny its full potential.

This poverty-stricken mistake of birth.  
Newcomers, foreigners, objects with no identity.  
Losers, real losers like their forefathers gold diggers,  
Street beggars.

At every street corner  
You beg and you plea  
But deep inside I know  
It's a quest for freedom recognition, caring, love.  
What have you done to deserve this?

Your Child Care Act keeps telling me

to provide my own stitch  
For this aimless and hopeless pitch.  
How can I stitch?  
If you don't treat this baby like a full moon?  
For when it shines only as half moon to you  
Dark, Black, Dirty  
Their cry can be heard echoing miles away  
Sounding like Miles Davis  
Blowing his horn  
Like a unicorn in uniform  
Born with one horn  
Running for its life making a very large commotion  
An "I" in slow motion.

No more  
Dismantle no more  
Abandon no more  
Neglect no more  
Ignore no more  
For if we lose ourselves  
We'll lose our text  
Never say  
If and only if  
Better say  
Never and never again.

Children, the forgotten children  
Our struggle, their struggle  
All have hands to reach  
I mean a voice  
I hope a voice  
Act now.

— Patrick Ntsime



Summaries of two more presentations by Child Care Workers at the Skills Workshop held in Cape Town at the end of 1990

## Thinking about Education and Communication



### — An Alternative Educational Project

Coleridge Daniels  
Leliebloem Hous, Belgravia

In our country it is sometimes suggested that those people who are poor and uneducated choose to be that way. Those who subscribe to this view quote statistics to prove that the South African government has done everything in its power to help with poverty and education programmes, but the gap between the poor and the rich remains the same.

One does not have to look for the destruction this view has left. It is evident in the number of young people who walk the streets looking for ways and means to survive.

When push comes to shove, everything boils down to whether or not we are willing to listen. Have you ever placed a stethoscope on the abdomen of a pregnant woman and listened to the heartbeat of an unborn child and asked yourself,

what is that child trying to tell me? Have you ever listened to the prattle of one to five year old children and asked yourself what is going on in their little minds as they pass through the experiences and crises of childhood? Have you ever listened to the suppressed anger and anguish of adolescents and asked yourself, how did it all start in the first place? Because I am involved in both early childhood and adolescent programmes, let me tell you what I hear and what I feel. I hear the children asking: Why did you ignore me when I was too small to talk or to walk or to express myself; why did you wait until now when I am wreaking vengeance on myself, my family and the world around me to come up and say "How can I help you?" And for myself, as I struggle with the adolescents we work with, I want to ask: Why didn't someone give them to us in their earlier childhood when building self-esteem and helping them come to terms with insecurity would have been infinitely easier and a hundred times less costly?

Today in our country millions of people, ordinary people, are standing up and telling

those who dominated them for generations: "We have had enough. We want a say in how our lives should be lived." Isn't it time we include parents, communities and the children themselves in this moment of freedom, so that together, listening to each other, we may move with hope and confidence into the third millennium?

### Educational and Career Guidance

After careful assessment it was noted that many of our children are going through a great deal of frustration and humiliation in the area of their education and job preparedness. They have become weary of the fact that they are too old for the standards that they are in. A team consisting of the principal of the institution, a social worker, a child care worker, an educational officer and others directly involved with the children on a daily basis attempted to assess and define problems. Family backgrounds were on the whole very unstable and children were living in very poor conditions.

In addition, most of these children suffered a great deal of abuse which had serious effects, amongst other things, on their academic progress.

### Strategies

It was decided that we should offer workshops and group work in order to make the young people aware of the implications of not having the needed skills and education, and to eradicate negative attitudes towards life in general. Alternative strategies included a socio-economic development programme requiring the total commitment by those involved so that at the end of the day we would have successfully met these needs of the children so that they would be able to take up their rightful place in society.

### Goals and plan of action

The programme's goals would be to boost self-esteem, affirm self-worth and to inculcate correct attitudes in those who have been psychologically battered by an irrelevant educational system, and to meet the immediate and long-term needs. Objectives would be to successfully implement a three-stage multiple choice plan over a period of twelve months.

*First stage: An adolescent development programme over a three-and-a-half month period for five half-days per week.*

Curriculum would include:

- Self awareness
- Health & sex education
- Drama, dance and music
- Public speaking
- Drug prevention

*Second stage: Choosing a career*  
Curriculum to include:

- Literacy programme
- Recreational workshop
- Production skills
- Domestic skills

# Let the Children Play

I sat for nearly three hours in the park near our home last Tuesday. It was a bright clear day and the children from the neighbourhood who had been forced inside for almost two weeks by the freezing weather ran about on the cold ground excited to again be in touch with the world outside.

Across from the bench on which I sat, a high metal sheet has been erected at an angle which some of the children attempted to climb. The little ones longed to climb as the bigger ones did. Clearly unable to manage the ascent, the feelings of one child could be sensed as he looked up into the sun and quivered, then bolted away as though either this one activity was too perplexing or because another idea had struck him. Back to the swings he ran, and in an instant he was sailing up and back by pulling hard on the metal chain just as the downward motion of the swing began. All the while he yelled, "Look how I can push myself! Look at me pushing myself!"

## Autonomy and competence

I was struck while watching these children how a sense of autonomy and competence were precious commodities for them. To master a particular action, like swinging or pushing oneself on the merry-go-round, actions that had once required the assistance of an adult, brought sensuous and hard-earned gratification. The word "doing" crossed my mind. How important it was for these children to be able to *do* things with their bodies or minds, or merely with another person.

There was much more to observe among these handsome two-, three-, and four-year old children. Some for example, spent an enormous amount of time talking. Even when no-one was around to listen, they jabbered on, practising their words and learning new combinations. They were communicating with themselves. Through their use of language, they were staying in touch with their private worlds, worlds they might not yet be able to speak about, but only speak to. And they were, in a fashion I continually noticed, using language and work to construct bridges between the world they saw about them and the world that had begun to form inside them.

## The meaning of laughter

We hear children laugh too, and this is a more complicated phenomenon than we might think, for we love the sounds of children giggling among themselves yet stay away from interpretations of it. But laughter at this age means so many wonderful things in addition to its

presence as a sign of pure delight. It means a sense of inner happiness. A child who cannot laugh frightens us, I think.

Something else about the children's laughter: To look at the world and have things strike you as funny implies cognitive maturation and, ultimately, understanding. Incongruity, foolishness, shame, audacity, comedy and ritual are but a few of the concepts that the child must comprehend, if only intuitively, if something is to strike him as funny. Tickling, of course, will do it. So will certain tragic acts. But imagine what it required in the form of psychological and cognitive development for a child to laugh at the sight or sound of something.

## Play as a medium

Play is more than an activity. It is a forerunner of work and creativity. It is a medium through which people mature and cultures are made richer, if not healthy. Through play, children come to learn their connections with the past and with the present world of their comrades and elders. Play is their own product, self-initiated and moulded according to criteria children themselves establish and impose. Allow a child to play and one permits her to experience the necessity of both individual action and social control. One permits her, moreover, to experience the meaning of choice and from this the inevitable limitations set by any society, any culture, and indeed by any persons for him- or herself.

## Imagination

Imagination and autonomy, I think, best captures what the children revealed in the park. Their capacity for imagination was practically limitless. They could become anything or anyone; they could be creators of worlds that have never existed, children living free of any temporal order or spatial constraints. This means that someday, they might conceive of and bring forth notions or products or inventions that no-one before them has even dreamed of. No culture survives without these products of imagination, eventually to be transformed by adult intelligence and adult need. Play is, indeed, the very basis of learning. It is a basis which in no way precludes teachers, but which instead, prepares for the entrance into the child's life of teachers and ultimately the wisdom of other human beings.

*Extract from an article by Thomas J. Cottle for UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)*



## Salaries and Service Conditions of Child Care Staff ANONYMOUS

All who work with children in a professional capacity in residential child care settings are asked to complete the questionnaire, the purpose of which is to gather information on the current career status of child care staff, and to establish the present levels of salaries and service benefits for the information child care workers and of employing agencies who are seeking guidelines on salary scales and employment conditions.

### INSTRUCTIONS

In the questionnaire you are asked simply to *tick the box* (✓) which most closely describes you and your post in your organisation. If you find that you cannot fit into any of the categories, leave the boxes blank. You may make any comment in the space alongside each question. Please attempt to answer all questions. You do not need to give your name or address: no respondent will be identified.

Please do **NOT** complete more than one questionnaire. If you have already submitted a questionnaire, please do not complete another one. Thank you for your co-operation.

### 1. YOUR POST

Your post in the organisation

- Child care assistant, care aide, trainee, intern
- Child care worker, care officer, houseparent
- Senior child care worker, child care supervisor, senior care officer
- Social worker
- Programme manager, chief care officer, department head
- Vice-principal, senior social worker, programme director
- Principal, chief social worker, director, head

How long have you been in *this post*?

- 0 to 1 years
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- longer than 10 years

Was your *previous* post also in child care?

- Yes
- No

Is your present employer

- A state organisation (e.g. place of safety, child care school)
- A private sector organisation (e.g. church or welfare organisation)

Please tick these items *only if they are applied to your present appointment*

- An Employment Contract setting out terms of employment
- A Disciplinary Code for staff members
- Clear Grievance Procedures
- An Oath of Confidentiality

Indicate your gross salary (that is your full salary before any deductions for tax, UIF, pension fund, etc)

- Less than R500 per month
- R500 to R750 per month
- R750 to R1000 per month
- R1000 to R1500 per month
- R1500 to R2000 per month
- R2000 to R2500 per month
- R2500 to R3000 per month
- R3000 to 3500 per month
- R3500 to R4000 per month
- Over R4000 per month



- Is your salary notch based on  a specific salary scale  
 annual decisions by management/employers
- Are your salary increases based on  staff evaluations, merit awards, etc  
 automatic annual increments
- Is your post considered to be  full-time  part-time
- If your post is part-time, please indicate the number of hours worked per week  Less than 5 hours  
 5 to 10 hours  
 10 to 15 hours  
 15 to 20 hours  
 20 to 30 hours  
 More than 30 hours
- If your post is full-time, please indicate the number of hours worked per week  Less than 45 hours (Include only specific *on-duty* hours  
 45 to 50 hours e.g. Exclude free times such as  
 50 to 55 hours mornings off)  
 55 to 60 hours  
 More than 60 hours
- Full-time posts: On average, how many days off do you have *per month*?  One to three  
 four to six  
 seven to nine  
 ten or more
- How much annual leave do you have?  Less than 3 weeks  
 3 to 4 weeks  
 More than 4 weeks

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## 2. YOUR JOB

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- Do you have a clear Job Description setting out what is expected of you?  Yes  
 No
- Size of group you generally work with  Fewer than 5 children  
 5 to 8 children  
 9 to 12 children  
 13 to 18 children  
 More than 18 children
- On average is your group of children  easy to work with, relatively undemanding  
 moderately difficult to work with, fairly demanding  
 very difficult to work with, highly demanding
- Do you have supervision (a *regular* time with a senior to review your tasks and your own professional growth)?  Never  
 On an *ad hoc* basis, occasionally, only when asked for  
 Regularly every 3 to 4 weeks  
 Regularly every week or fortnight
- How supported by seniors do you feel?  Not very well supported  
 Reasonably well supported  
 Very well supported



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**3. SERVICE BENEFITS AND CONDITIONS**

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- Do you receive an annual bonus?  Yes  No
- Is this bonus usually  A 13th cheque  
 Some other form of bonus
- If you receive a bonus, is it  Given each year, automatically  
 Dependent upon satisfactory service evaluation
- Does your employer enrol you in a medical aid scheme?  Yes  
 No
- Does your employer enrol you in a pension scheme or provident fund?  Yes  
 No
- Is your post  A resident post  
 A non-resident post
- If resident, is accommodation provided  For the worker only  
 For the worker and his/her family
- If resident, is your accommodation  a single bed space, e.g. part of a dormitory  
 a single bed-room without private bathroom  
 a bed-room or bed-sitter with private bathroom  
 a self-contained flat/flatlet or house
- If resident, is accommodation provided  Free of charge  
 At nominal or reduced rates  
 At market rates
- How many meals a day are provided  None  
 One  
 More than one
- Are such meals provided  For the worker alone  
 For the worker and his/her family
- Are such meals provided  Free of charge  
 At nominal or reduced rate  
 At market rates

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**4. PERSONAL DATA**

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- Sex  Male  Female
- Age  20 or younger  
 21 to 30  
 31 to 40  
 41 to 50  
 51 to 60  
 61 or older

**PERSONAL DATA (Continued)**

- Marital status  Never married  
 Married  
 Separated, divorced  
 Widow, widower

Dependent child/children stay with you?  Yes  No

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**5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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- Highest school standard passed  Standard 2 to 5  
 Standard 6  
 Standard 7 to 9  
 Standard 10 or Matriculation

- Other (non child care) education  Certificate up to N3 level  
 Post school certificate or diploma (Detail: )  
 Bachelors degree (Detail: )  
 Post-graduate degree (Detail: )

- Child care training already completed  Occasional short courses (Detail: )  
 Basic Qualification in Child Care (BQCC)  
 Other similar basic training qualification (Detail: )  
 National Higher Certificate (Technikon) course  
 Other (Detail: )

- Child care course presently enrolled for  Occasional short courses (Detail: )  
 Basic Qualification in Child Care (BQCC)  
 Other basic training qualification (Detail: )  
 Problem Profile Approach (PPA)  
 Diploma in Child Care Administration (DCCA)  
 National Higher Certificate (Technikon) course  
 Other (Detail: )

Do you have regular in-service training?  Yes  No

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**6. THE CAREER**

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- I consider the child care profession to be  full of stimulation and potential  
 reasonably satisfying and interesting  
 insufficiently fulfilling or rewarding

- I expect to remain in child care for  less than another year  
 another year or two  
 for the foreseeable future

*My personal view of the child care profession and career — aspects which I consider especially good or bad:*

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*Please return the completed Questionnaire to CHILD CARE SURVEY, P.O. Box 23199, Claremont 7735*

# Inter-staff relationships and productive conflict resolution

Marjorie Kostelnik

*Marjorie J. Kostelnik, Ph.D., is assistant professor in the Department of Family and Child Ecology and is currently the program supervisor for the Child Development Laboratories at Michigan State University.*

In every agency there are times when staff members fail to see eye-to-eye. The entrance of new employees to the group, proposals for changing familiar practices, competition for materials and physical space, contrasting interpretations of professional responsibilities, differences in philosophy or style, and the unintentional violation of implicit programme traditions all serve as potential sources of staff friction. In fact, discord among agency personnel poses a major problem for many child and youth care administrators.

Overwhelmingly, supervisors agree that when dissension mars staff interaction, programme morale is adversely affected and the quality of youth services is impaired (Szuch, 1988).

Conflict, in and of itself, need not be debilitating. Differences of opinion that are constructively expressed often contribute to the continued vitality of organisations (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). However, dysfunction will occur when such differences are ignored or when they permeate the workplace in the form of grumbling, lack of co-operation, gossip, snide remarks, silent brooding, absenteeism or high turnover. As an antidote to this dilemma, supervisors can teach staff members to bring their concerns out in the open using methods that neither harm the organisation nor inhibit employees' needs to express themselves freely.

A prerequisite to fruitful dialogue on areas of potential disagreement is an atmosphere in which open communication about concerns and differences is not only encouraged but required. If this has not already been established, development of such an atmosphere will be a long and laborious process; it will not take place overnight nor can administrators simply demand that it happen. Rather, supervisors must set into motion a series of gradual changes that will lead to the ultimate goal of more constructive interactions among staff members.

## Communicating with the Staff

The first step in developing candid, constructive methods of communication is for administrators themselves to model the behaviours they expect workers to use with one another. This requires providing feedback to each staff member on a regular

basis. Feedback is most effective when stated in positive rather than negative terms and when it describes some specific aspect of an individual's behaviour rather than his or her personality. In addition, employees benefit when feedback is given in both positive and negative situations so they have opportunities to assess their strengths as well as their weaknesses (Glickman, 1981). Most importantly, supervisors must express any concerns they have about a worker's performance directly to the person to whom it pertains. It is not realistic to expect agency personnel to confront one another about their differences if the supervisor's own approach relies on using the "grapevine" as a primary means of communication.

## Encouraging the staff to communicate with you

Since communication is a two-way process, many administrators find it beneficial to institute an open-door policy in which time is allocated for employees to approach them with ideas, concerns, or suggestions. However, it is not enough for workers simply to have access to the administrator. They must also be assured of receiving an impartial hearing regarding their perception of a situation (Ivancevich, Donnelly and Gibson, 1983). Supervisors demonstrate objectivity when they remain calm even when criticised, when they refrain from immediately evaluating an idea, when they listen carefully to the employee's point of view, and when they take the time to consider several options prior to adopting a particular line of action (Strauss and Sayles, 1980). Numerous studies show that even when the administrator reaches a conclusion that is contrary to workers' suggestions, workers are more willing to accept the decision if they feel their positions at least have been considered (Rothman, 1974). In addition, it is critical for staff members to be able to express themselves freely without the risk of ridicule, censure, or retribution. For this reason, the content of administrator and employee discussions should be kept strictly confidential.

Finally, it must be noted that not all staff members will be equally comfortable discussing their feelings or concerns in such an open manner. Certain individuals naturally may be timid or fear future vulnerability. In these cases, the administrator must make a special effort to interact with employees who are reluctant to take advantage of the open-door policy. Once workers have had opportunities to hear the supervisor give constructive feedback and to express their own reactions in the relative safety of the

administrator's office, the stage is set to encourage them to express their own concerns directly to one another.

## Facilitating inter-staff communication

The ability and willingness to confront fellow workers when problems first arise is at the heart of preventing or reducing inter-staff conflict. However, even practitioners who are able to state clearly their expectations to children and adolescents are frequently uncomfortable doing so with adults. Often gripes go underground because people feel insecure discussing their concerns with potential adversaries. It seems easier and safer to complain to other co-workers who may concur with a particular point of view than to risk a confrontation that may end up in failure, reprisal, or embarrassment. Simply modelling good communication skills will not necessarily lead to the adoption of those strategies by agency personnel. The administrator can, however, help employees learn particular skills that will enable them to communicate effectively with each other and thus ensure a more successful interaction. Covert means of communication will then become unnecessary. One excellent technique that contributes to this process is called a personal message.

## Personal Messages

Personal messages involve describing complaints in terms of one's own reactions to a situation (Kostelnik, Stein, Whiren, and Soderman, 1978). When workers use this strategy they avoid making inflammatory remarks to the person with whom they are dissatisfied. For instance, if one worker said to another: "You never follow through on the limits I set on my shift," the person to whom this is addressed will probably react defensively. Defensive reactions do not lead to problem resolutions. A personal message could be used to pinpoint the same problem in a less threatening way. An example would be: "I feel frustrated when I set a limit and come back the next day to find you didn't enforce it during the afternoon. It bothers me that we don't have more consistency throughout the day. I'd like to discuss some ways to make this situation more comfortable for me." Chances are the person who is coming on to the afternoon shift is also experiencing some frustrations. This personal message allows each worker to react to the problem (how to set consistent limits from one shift to the next) rather than to attempt to avoid or affix blame. While it may not be possible for the problem to be resolved at the exact moment it is expressed, the way is now clear to continue the discussion in a productive manner.

The guidelines for teaching workers to use personal messages are simple. First, each personal message should begin with the word "I" rather than "You". Second, workers should identify their own emotions in relation to the problem described. Finally, solutions should be viewed as a way to relieve the worker's feelings of anxiety, anger or discomfort rather than simply giving in to his



or her demands. In other words, the worker is saying, "a problem exists that is bothering me," rather than "you are making a problem for me."

### Problem-solving Skills

Workers who are able to identify and express their emotions to another person have made a good start toward relieving the tension of inter-staff conflict. However, confrontation alone does not lead to resolution of the differences between individuals. They must go a step further and decide on a plan to prevent the problem from continuing and to avoid future difficulties. Workers' acquisition of basic problem-solving skills is necessary if such a plan is to be developed and carried out. Problem-solving consists of the following steps:

- defining a goal
- generating alternative solutions
- weighing the potential benefits
- developing a plan of action based on one or more of the suggested alternatives
- deciding on the strategies to be used to carry out the plan
- determining the means by which the plan will be evaluated
- implementing revisions as necessary.

Frequently, when workers approach the administrator with a problem, they expect him or her to take primary responsibility for its resolution. The administrator must shift this expectation to one of mutual problem-solving in which employees share in formulating the solution that is finally selected and carried out. In order to do this, administrators can help workers find their own solutions to problems rather than dictating particular answers themselves. Employees who are not used to this more non-directive approach may become frustrated at what they interpret as lack of decisiveness on the part of the administrator. It will take patient explanation and encouragement for many staff members to accept the process. There is clear evidence that workers ultimately value the opportunity to take responsibility for the decisions that affect their performance in the organisation (Rothman, 1974). One of the most effective ways to introduce problem-solving of the type just described is to present specific issues to be discussed by the staff as a whole. This is described as group problem-solving.

### Group Problem-Solving

Group problem-solving provides an excellent means for confronting and resolving operational issues such as sharing one gymnasium among five cottages, such as maintaining organised supply closets, or deciding what piece of equipment to buy for the playground next year. Youth care workers benefit when some portion of each regularly scheduled staff meeting is used for this purpose. First, they have an opportunity to practice each step of the problem-solving process. Second, workers feel a greater commitment to a plan in which they have some input. Finally, designation of an official time and place to discuss issues that relate

to organisational policies and responsibilities helps alleviate the need for workers to utilise the more covert strategies that characterise interstaff conflict. Group problem-solving is not difficult to initiate if the following ground rules are observed.

- All complaints should be phrased as personal messages.
- Problems submitted for group consideration should involve procedural or organisational



## The first step in developing candid, constructive methods of communication is for administrators themselves to model the behaviours they expect workers to use with one another

tional issues that affect more than one person. Inter-personal conflicts that revolve around differences in philosophy, personality, or intervention style should be taken up privately between the individuals involved.

- Everyone should have an opportunity to contribute to the final plan that is developed.
- Solutions that any one person vehemently opposes should be avoided. It is better to select a compromise about which everyone is a little less enthusiastic than to choose a plan some members find impossible to support.

### Techniques to Facilitate Group Problem-solving

It helps to remember that the success of group problem-solving is dependent upon each person feeling that his or her ideas have been heard. Communication is inhibited when a few people dominate the discussion to the point that others become observers rather than participants. It is the administrator's responsibility to elicit from each person, in turn, a reaction to the issue at hand or to a suggested alternative. In addition, direct statements such as, "If we adopted option 2, tell me how you think this would affect your current workload," foster more active participation than the general question, "what do you think?"

A round-robin gripe session<sup>1</sup> is a second

strategy that generates interest in and commitment to problem-solving in a group. In this procedure a time limit is set to identify problems. Individuals around the table have an opportunity, one at a time, to present an issue of concern to them. This may involve a major or minor irritation. The administrator summarises each concern and writes it down. No evaluation of the concern should be made. Lengthy explanations about possible causes are not necessary at this point nor are discussions of potential solutions. The purpose is to give all staff members the opportunity to get their gripes out into the open. This process continues as long as time permits.

At the end of the stated time period, problem-solving begins. Starting with the first concern, the group works its way through the list in order. In this manner each person knows his or her concern eventually will receive attention. The group does not move to the next item until some plan or action has been decided for the current issue under discussion. This plan may involve a solution, a compromise, or a strategy for gathering the information needed for discussion at a later date. Allocation or responsibility for specific aspects of the plan, including who will report its progress at the next meeting, is the final step before tackling the next concern. By the end of the meeting, if each item has not received attention, the administrator keeps the list for the group's next meeting and sets a specific date to cover this unfinished business. This type of forward planning is necessary so that staff members will know there is a definite timetable for dealing with issues of particular interest to them.

It also must be recognised that not everyone will be equally pleased with the approach that is finally selected by the group. A favourite idea or suggestion may have been revised in the spirit of compromise. While an individual may not oppose a plan strongly enough to veto it altogether, he or she may feel cheated in the bargaining process. When this happens, the administrator would do well to offer comfort by acknowledging the worker's willingness to try an idea on which he or she is not completely sold. Such acknowledgment goes a long way toward helping staff members accept solutions brought about by the group process. Finally, it is encouraging to note that when workers have an opportunity to practice problem-solving in a group, they frequently learn to transfer many of the strategies to working out their concerns with individual staff members.

### Personnel Policies

Once the preceding forms of interstaff communication have been addressed, personnel policies that reflect the interpersonal skills staff are expected to use can be put into place.

- Individuals experiencing an interpersonal conflict with another employee must bring it to the attention of that person prior to discussing the issue with any other staff mem-

ber or administrator.

• Problems related to programme operation should be submitted to group problem-solving.

When staff members approach the administrator with complaints, the first step is to determine whether the problem is an interpersonal one that should be addressed privately or one more suitable for discussion by the group. In the case of an interpersonal problem, the individual should be directed to bring it to the attention of the other parties involved. Concerns related to programme operation or management should be included on the agenda of the next staff meeting. Quick action in either case is imperative.

Occasionally, staff members will seek advice from the administrator about how to present their concerns constructively. This is an appropriate request. However, supervisors should refrain from expressing any opinions regarding the problem at this time. Instead, they should encourage the worker to pursue a solution to the best of his or her ability.

Compliance with these policies can be recorded as part of each staff member's yearly evaluation. Continued failure to discuss problems with other staff members or frequent use of covert methods to express dissatisfaction may serve as cause for probation or termination. Organisations that institute constructive problem-solving strategies and follow through on them, usually find that inter-staff conflict is reduced because agency personnel have an effective means for settling their differences.

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#### BOOKS

### *Essential Reading for South African Child Care Workers*

#### Competent Care — Competent Kids

Edited by Marcelle Biderman-Pam and Brian Gannon

Published by NACCW, Cape Town at R25.00 including GST from all Regional Offices or Publications Department

In the foreword to this book, a collection of papers delivered at the Seventh Biennial Conference of the NACCW in September 1989, the editors remind us of the socio-political context preceeding the conference. While much has happened since then to raise hopes for the future of our children, the sobering challenges of dealing with the legacy of apartheid have started to emerge more clearly. Conference presentations clearly fell short regarding some of these issues (e.g. homelessness and substitute care of children affected by violence in the townships); nevertheless, there is more than enough within the pages of this book to make it essential reading for all involved in child care in this country.

In her opening address to the conference, Helen Starke lays down some of the challenges facing child care in South Africa, and most of these have been directly or indirectly addressed in the papers which follow. Val Moss-Morris provides a practically useful framework for facilitating the competence and involvement of management committees in child care organisations. For those involved in organisational development there are important insights to be found in Di Levine's paper. She clarifies some of the reasons why confusion so often reigns in child care settings and points *inter alia* to the importance of strong middle management structures as part of a system, with clear lines of accountability. These and many other papers should give managers many ideas with which to enhance their own efficiency and that of their organisations.

#### State policy

There is much of direct relevance to planners and policy makers up to the highest level. There is a fairly detailed critique of the State's Committee of Inquiry into Child Mental Health Services. Incredibly, this committee consisted only of whites and it is to be hoped that the NACCW will work persuasively towards ensuring that Conference's

responses and recommendations will be heard and acted on. The Committee itself made many sound recommendations which will also need reinforcement if they are not to end up on the heap of decaying good intentions. Another paper cites some interesting and sobering "Lessons from Brazil", where support is often provided in the community rather than within the walls of institutions. The paper on Indigenisation of Human Services Practice by Cohen and Norman has crucial implications for child care practice in South Africa. Sadly this paper appears in a book where there is not a single paper by an African contributor.

What is encouraging is the number of papers by child care workers and houseparents. These range from papers identifying the challenges and contradictions which face child care workers, to papers describing programmes for target groups such as disturbed children, children in group homes, street children, and young adults in after care. Joy April's paper on an after care facility is one of the very few to explicitly expose the effects of structural violence on the life of a young man.

There is a comprehensive section on street children dealing with many of the challenges which street children present, and offering an interesting range of responses. Incidentally, Jane Keen's paper on female street children draws attention to the finding that violence has become an accepted and even positive part of life for many.

#### Families as partners

The section on programmes covers a wide range of topics, including AIDS, child abuse, social competence training and the peer management system. Ernie Nightingale's paper on a model for making families co-responsible partners in a short-term treatment plan is a refreshing break from the paternalistic and/or punitive practices of the past. Some aspects of this model would however have to be adjusted where extreme poverty is a very real reason for family breakdown.

The final section focuses on research. Bev Killian's contributions show the extreme value of findings from relatively simple research. Giles and Cockburn's paper provides an invaluable framework for evaluating programmes in a way which both involves the active participation of all staff and creates systematic linkages between the mission statement, objectives and goals, and the staff tasks of an organisation. This is a book which deserves to become a building block in the foundation for an equitable, unified and efficient child care structure in this country.

— Peter Powls



## A serious (sensible) proposal on VAT and charities



Children's homes will be regarded as associations not for gain, defined in Clause 1 of the Draft Bill on VAT as: Any association, or body, whether incorporated or not, which is carried on otherwise than for the purpose of profit or gain which is in terms of its memorandum or rules, required to utilise any property or income solely to further its aims, and which is prohibited from utilising any such funds to the benefit of any person, other than the payment in good faith of reasonable salary to an employee ... " With reference this definition, we are of the opinion that any organisation of a public character, whether it be a sporting club, social club, religious organisation, old age home, political organisation, formal or informal military organisation, educational institute, health centre, an orphanage, organisation for the preservation of fauna and flora, professional institute etc, which satisfies the abovementioned criteria, can be classed as an Association Not for Gain.

### Vendors and non-vendors

A vendor will pay tax on all taxable supplies made to him, commonly known as *input tax*, and will collect tax on taxable supplies made by him, known as *output tax*. The output tax so collected is then reduced by the amount of input tax paid and the net amount is payable to Inland Revenue. A non-vendor, on the other hand, will pay input tax on all taxable supplies made to it, but will not charge tax on any supplies made.

Some institutions such as old age homes, and institutions for the treatment of alcohol and drug abuse, will be making taxable supplies (services) for which they receive consideration, and will thus have to levy tax on their supplies, and can in turn claim back tax paid on inputs. Due to various services being taxed under VAT which are not taxed under sales tax, and cash flow problems that will arise from VAT, fees charged by such institutions will have to increase, even if only increased by the rate of VAT. This state of affairs will place an additional strain on such institutions, which are already most dependant on donations, not to mention the fact that old age home residents (monthly pensioners) will be charged with VAT. However institutions such as orphanages

and certain other organisations will even be worse off. Most of these organisations will not be registered as vendors and will thus not charge VAT on their services, but will get no relief for VAT paid on inputs. It merely implies that such institutions will have an increase in operating cost due to tax being paid on almost all expenses.

### Charitable Institutions

We therefore urge that a distinction be made between "charitable institution" and "association not for gain", and that special treatment be accorded to charitable institutions. Limited research on charitable institutions has revealed that additional taxes and administrative costs will severely limit their ability to operate effectively. It is also our belief that in a fast-growing and new South Africa, charitable services will be playing an important and vital role in upgrading various standards, and that additional taxes, which will inevitably lead to additional expenses, will be disastrous.

### Proposal

We propose that five minor adjustments are made to the Bill, which will place charitable institutions in the same situation as under the sales tax system. The proposed amendments are as follows:

1. *Insert a definition of "charitable institution"*. It is proposed that an additional definition is inserted in clause 1, which might read as follows: "Charitable Institution" means any institution or organisation of a public character which is carried on in RSA on a continuous and regular basis and which —  
(a) Carries on any activities consisting of the provision of food, meals, board and lodging, clothing, education or training or other necessities, comforts or amenities to aged or indigent persons, children or physically or mentally handicapped persons; or  
(b) Carries on activities whereby goods or services are provided for the prevention of cruelty to animals or the conservation of fauna flora.

Provided that such institution or organisation is carried on for a purpose otherwise than for making profit therefrom and is in terms of its memorandum of rules required to utilise any property or income solely on

the furtherance of its aims and objectives and is prohibited from transferring any portion thereof directly or indirectly in any manner whatsoever, so as to profit any person other than by way of the payment in good faith of a reasonable remuneration to any officer or employee of the institution or organisation, and upon the winding-up or liquidation of such institution or organisation, it will be obliged to transfer all its assets remaining after the satisfaction of its liabilities, to some other institution or organisation with objects similar to those of the aforesaid institution or organisation.

2. *Make voluntary registration to charities available on application*. An insertion after paragraph (3) of Clause of to the following paragraph: "Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (1), (2) and (3), every person who satisfies the Commissioner that he carries on a charitable institution, may apply to the Commissioner in the approved form for registration under this Act and provide the Commissioner with such further particulars as the Commissioner may require for the purpose of registering such person."

3. *Exclude Charities or "charitable institutions" from "Associations Not For Gain"*. "Association not for gain" means any religious institution of a public character or any other society, association or organisation, other than a charitable institution, whether incorporated or not if ...

4. *Levy tax on their supplies at a zero rate*. Insertion of the following paragraph in clause 11: "Notwithstanding any provisions in this Act, the supply by a charitable institution of such goods or services as contemplated in the definition of charitable institution, which is necessary for, and which is supplied in the course of furtherance of its charitable activities".

5. *Anti-avoidance provisions*. Anti-avoidance provisions may be legislated to, for example, deem any activities other than charitable activities carried on by charitable institutions, to be carried on by a separate person, and that separate registration would be required. Provision can also be made for such separate enterprise to have a separate system of accounting.

A further anti-avoidance provision might also be considered in order to prevent charities from misusing their status. This can, for example, be done by insertion of a paragraph in clause 72 of the Draft to the effect that such provisions will also be applicable to charities, and as a consequence, subject to clause 60 of the Draft. All the other anti-evasion provisions will be *mutatis mutandis* applicable to charities.

If the proposed amendments are made, charitable institutions will be placed in approximately the same situation as under the Sales Tax Act. Furthermore, we strongly believe that the proposed amendments will not cause major distortions in the VAT system and that such institutions will be getting the support they deserve.

*With acknowledgements for these constructive proposals to KPMG Aiken & Peat*



with disabilities who are living away from home under health and welfare legislation, and pre-school children who are cared for in nurseries and by child-minders.

Undoubtedly the Act of 1989 is partly a reaction to well-publicised child abuse tragedies, and legislation since the early 80's has been regarded as confusing, piecemeal, outdated and often unfair. This new British Act strives for a better balance between the need to protect children and the need to enable parents to challenge intervention into the upbringing of their children. In order to facilitate this process the concept of parental responsibility replaces the notion of parental rights.

Patel and Schmid (1989, 2) argue powerfully that in South Africa children's rights have been widely acknowledged because these self-same rights have been violated. It is notable that the children themselves have played an active role in the struggles of the 70's and 80's, and through their efforts, both the short and long term detrimental effects of apartheid have emerged as powerful foci of the struggle. As a consequence children's needs and rights are now being addressed as a primary concern and it is recognised that the "promotion" of children's issues will have to form part of the debate around post-apartheid policy.

**Future policies**

According to Patel and Schmid (1989, 2) the present South African system is built on the twin pillars of racial differentiation and privatisation. Consequently the child care services provided for the white minority rival those in first world countries while for the majority of the population the services remain inadequate and inappropriate. Currently, child care services are provided through a mixed economy which includes the state, voluntary organisations, churches, commercial organisations and the community.

The contributions of the individual and family are crucial ingredients for this type of arrangement and in recognition of this the National Family Programme of the Republic of South Africa has been established. The broad aim of this programme appears to be to promote marriage and family life through direct work and by equipping individual with the necessary skills to manage the stress of living in a society in crisis. A danger is that such a programme can have the effect of helping the individual to adapt to the system rather than empowering the individual to play an active role in challenging and changing an oppressive apartheid system which assaults family life. The link, for instance, between the employment system (which for black people entails geographic separation) and the disruption and disintegration of the traditional extended family, has been well documented. Richter (1988) estimates that single parenthood and disrupted family life characterises between one-third and one-half of all black families.

Patel and Schmid (1989) recognise that child care policy is embroiled in the complex task of resolving questions about state's responsibility towards children and conflict about notions of parental, family and community rights and responsibilities. They recommend that a comprehensive and integrated child and family policy has to incorporate the protection and promotion of the welfare of both the child and the family.

To avoid confusion around implementation important key messages have to be spelt out clearly and these include:

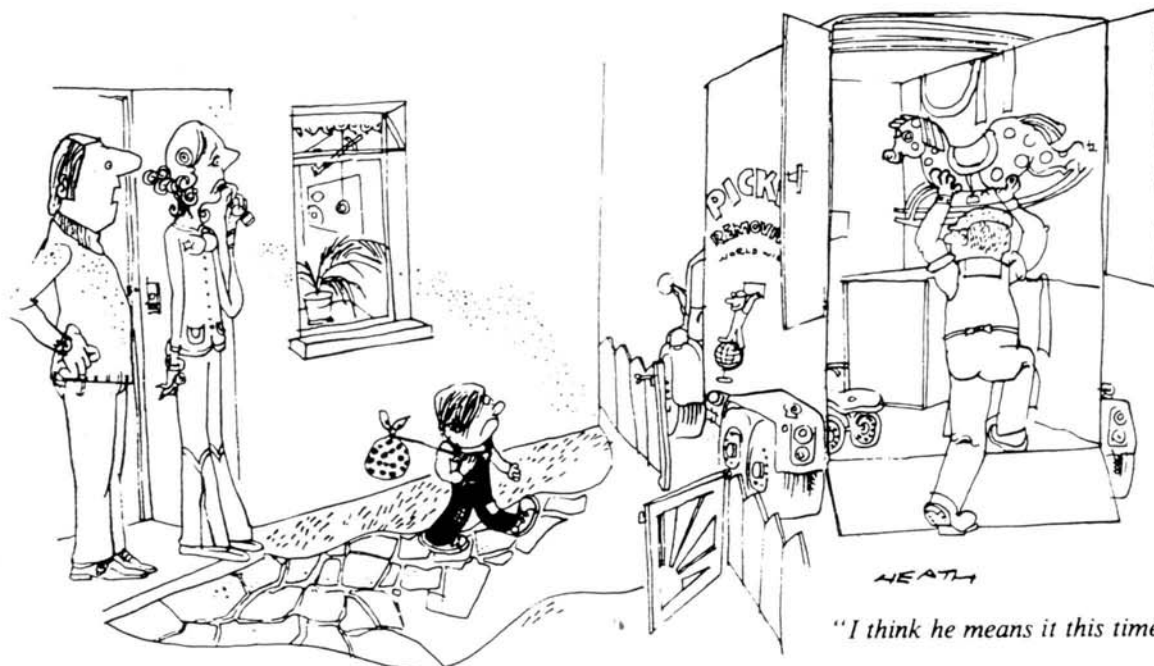
- The creation of partnerships between the state, parents and organisations.
- When parental responsibility is shared between a number of people, then the creation of partnerships becomes imperative. This exercise takes time and requires skill in negotiation, but it is a necessary part of good practice.

**... it is recognised that the promotion of children's issues will have to form part of the debate around post-apartheid policy**

- The development of a non-racial pattern of service delivery. If organisations are to respond to people in an acceptable and creative way then attention has to be given to the development of equal opportunity and positive action programmes.
  - Accountability to service users through the development of a mandatory complaints procedure which has an independent element.
  - Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the system through a procedure which ascertains the views of children, parents and other significant people in the child's life and to give those views consideration. This kind of consultation could facilitate the development of a consumer led service.
- For all this to happen resources, training, expertise and above all goodwill and the spirit of co-operation have to be built.

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## Five Years Ago

For readers who weren't around then, this regular feature remembers items from the pages of this journal — this month five years ago

February 1986

"Care" has to be a *doing word* and not just a soppy *attitude* claimed the Editorial. "Caring" should never be an excuse for *not* doing something more. Just as the verb *to teach* suggested a structured set of goals, methods, media, curricula and progress evaluations, so the verb *to care* needs structure, and to be clearly defined as to its goals, tasks, methods and evaluation. "We do a disservice to our profession — and a greater disservice to our clients — if we run away from these things into vague conceptions of 'care'".

**Reneé van der Merwe** het die STEP-TEEN opleidingskursus beskryf wat hom ten doel stel om ouers te help om meer realistiese, effektiewe en genotvolle maniere aan te leer om die verhouding tussen hulself en die ontwikkelende jong volwassene in die gesin te verbeter. Daar word erken dat al die STEP-beginsels nie honderd persent toepasbaar in die kindershuis is nie: bv. dit is nie altyd moontlik om aandagsoekende gedrag te ignoreer nie; die vorm en struktuur van die gesinsvergadering moet verander word; daar is gevind dat die gebruik van 'n ek-boodskap nie altyd so suksesvol is waar die liefdesband wat tussen ouer en kind bestaan glad nie teenwoordig is nie.

**Dina Hatchuel**, writing from her ILEX year in America, described a weekend orientation camp for new staff members at her agency. The camp was not only the occasion for a basic introduction in the theory of child care, but included the experiential learning associated with separation from family and friends, and living in a cottage with 10 to 15 others with limited privacy and having to share in communal living chores.

Educational tutors at the Oranjia Children's Home had complained of the lack of motivation in the children in their groups. **Sharon Bacher** described a workshop run for this staff sector at which they could work at better understanding this concept. The consensus was that motivation was a need-related energy which activated one to purposeful energy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was discussed in this context, and the following working points emerged for subsequent practice: helping people to

know what they want; setting attainable goals; exposing children to successful and inspiring people; encouragement; positive expectations (self-fulfilling prophecies); and the use of evaluation and feed-back.

One aspect of the dilemma of being a child care worker (following on the theme of the 1985 Biennial Conference) was discussed by a working group. No room for the discussion, but here is the intriguing problem posed: "I am a child care worker in my mid-twenties. I love my job and have worked hard at gaining experience and qualifications. But as a young adult I have normal personal, social, sexual and recreational needs, and quite apart from the lack of time and privacy (and money!) with which to pursue these, I seem in any case to be expected *NOT* to have such needs as a child care worker. I find I am splitting off the ME who is the children's home employee working with children and the ME who is the growing and developing person."

**Adolesensie en Dwelmmiddels** was die tweede van 'n reeks artikels oor dwelmmisbruik wat met toestemming van SANRA gepubliseer is. Uittreksels: Dit is normaal vir die adolessent om die waardes wat hy as kind geleer het te bevraagteken en te kritiseer. Adolessente is besonder sensetief oor dubbele standaarde en het min geduld met wat hulle as skynheiligheid beskou. Die belangrikste manier waarop ouers adolessente kan help, is deur betekenisvolle en lonende verhoudings met geduld aan die gang te hou.

February 1986 was a very full issue! **Peter Harper** reviewed Whittaker's book *Caring for Troubled Children*, "... very readable and should prove a valuable investment for child care workers at every level — from front line workers to the backroom boys!" A Cape Technikon student contributed a paper on *After Care*, making the point that "The responsibility of a children's home towards a child does not cease when he is released on licence." Finally, **Dr Jeannie Roberts** wrote on *Groupwork in the Institution*, quoting Maier's point that in groupwork "the worker can introduce experience that might, in part, compensate for three inherent features on institutional living: anonymity, standardisation and authoritarianism."

## A Day Off

Child care workers value their time off-duty very much, and an extra day off is a special luxury, when you can get it. But don't push your luck ...

**"So you want the day off? Let's take a look at what you are asking for:**

**There are 365 days per year available for work. There are 52 weeks a year, and already you take two days off each week — leaving 261 days available for work. Since you spend 16 hours each day away from work, you have used up another 170 days, leaving us only 91 days available for work. You spend 30 minutes each day on your coffee breaks — which accounts for 23 days, leaving only 68 days left for work. With your one-hour lunch break each day, you use up another 46 days, leaving only 22 days for work. You normally spend two days a year on sick leave, so that leaves us only 20 days for work. We have five public holidays every year, so your working time is down to 15 days. Then we generously give you 14 days vacation each year, which leaves you only one day available for work — and I'll be ... if you're going to take that day off!!"**



# Newsbriefs

## BORDER

### Activities

The Region runs in-service training sessions every Monday from 8:45 to 11:00 am which are open to all children's homes in the region. During the first quarter the group will be dealing with Assertiveness Training. On the last Monday of the month training will be followed by a Regional Meeting of NACCW. The Child Care Worker Forum meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at different venues. There will be two weekend training sessions in 1991. Port Elizabeth group will attend one of these. Dates are to be set later.

## WESTERN CAPE

### Training Strategy

On 24 January the Regional Director presented the new training strategy to a group of principals and senior staff members. It was gratifying to meet new people and to have the feedback from colleagues in special education settings. After lively debate it was agreed to meet for a workshop to explore the feasibility of a practicum and how one would standardise minimum standards. Marie MacDonald, Merle Allsopp and Edwin Lindoor will run this workshop on 6 March at Marsh Memorial Home. The meeting congratulated the NACCW on the educational strategy.

### Forum

The first meeting of the year was held on 31 January. Harold

Malgas chaired the meeting assisted by Joy April. At the recent Skills Workshop it emerged that there was a need to assist children who didn't cope academically and proposed that they be provided with enrichment courses in practical skills and crafts. On 6 February there was a social gathering at Boys Town, Belhar. It was good to have the child care workers from Marsh Memorial Homes, the Dominican School and Holy Cross in attendance as well.

### Child Care Schools

National Chairman Ashley Theron and Vivien Lewis met with Mr Burger from the Department of Education and Culture in the House of Representatives and senior staff from Porter, Ottery, Atlantis and Faure schools to evaluate BQCC Module 1, which was presented to a group of 28 child care officers in 1990. The reports were all very enthusiastic and the schools indicated that staff had benefited greatly and were keen to continue. It was decided to run four workshops for senior and chief child care officers as well as BQCC Modules 2 and 3 before July. Schools also indicated that they may invite the NACCW to run workshops for their teaching staff.

### New Place of Safety

Siyakhathala Place of Safety in Koelenhof was officially opened on 13 February by the Minister of Housing, Works and Welfare in the House of Assembly, Mr D.J. de Beer. After the ceremony the Senior Social Worker, Mrs Steenveld, said

their experience gained while on the NACCW's PPA program had been used to great benefit when training the staff. We wish them the very best in their very important work with youth in the Western Cape.

### Congratulations

Clea Duval (Oranjia Children's Home) is to marry Paul Brislin. Congratulations to both and all the very best for the future.

## NATAL

### BQCC Course

Dates have been circularised to all Principals. Please make a note though that BQCC 1 commences on 10 April at St. Philomena's. Do contact the Regional office if you have any queries.

### Regional Meetings

These got off to an excellent start with a Workshop on 25 January at Lakehaven Children's Home. A wonderful turn out of members at the meeting to identify priority issues for Natal for the coming year. The first six priorities emerged as: Integration; the profession of Child Care Practitioners, Health Issues, (Aids etc), Training, Children's Rights, Communication and liaison. These issues and others are to be looked at in the next meeting with a view to establishing a sense of direction for Natal for the year. A fascinating year ahead.

### Comings and Goings

The beginning of a new year inevitably brings with it some new faces and some goodbyes. A special welcome to Mr. Bower the new Principal of Durban Children's Home and to Mandy Goble who returns to work there as a Social Worker after the birth of her baby. To any other newcomers, it will be

good to get to know you through the Regional Meetings and the courses we offer. To Rita Muller, a fond farewell after five years of input at Wylie House. We shall miss your questioning mind.

### Goodbye and Thank you

To Ros Halkett on transfer with her husband to Johannesburg, happy landings.

### Staff meet in Johannesburg

The Regional staff attend a national staff meeting in Johannesburg from 11 to 17th March. Please leave any messages with Stella our Regional Secretary. What an asset Stella has been.

## TRANSVAAL

### Kimberley Training

For the first time child care staff in the Kimberley area will be offered the opportunity to attend training. In a new venture for the NACCW, a number of staff in Kimberley have been trained to offer the BQCC. In support of their efforts the Transvaal Regional Director, Di Levine and Kathy Beukes visited Kimberley to run the first session of Module 1. Other tasks included a discussion on the new NACCW training strategy, running a social workers' group and offering consultation to three affiliated organisations, the Mimosa Place of Safety, the Galeshewe Place of Detention and the Kestell Children's Home. Folks in Kimberley feel very isolated and complain of a lack of professional stimulation. The interest of the NACCW is much appreciated. It was particularly good to bring people together, establish new relationships and to make new friends. Hopefully we will have the opportunity to work together with Kimberley child care people on many occasions in the future.

## March Diary

### WESTERN CAPE

- 05 08:30 Regional Executive Regional Offices
- 06 08:30 PPA Group 1 Regional Offices
- 07 08:30 Editorial Board Meeting Regional Offices
- 19 09:00 Regional General Meeting Holy Cross Home
- 20 08:30 PPA Group 2 Regional Offices
- 27 09:00 Social Workers Group Friedrich Schweizer

### NATAL

- 05 09:00 BQCC 3 St. Philomena's
- 09:00 BQCC 4 Mary Cook Children's Home Pietermaritzburg (Zulu)
- 06 09:00 Principals Meeting "Loosening up Child Care" Malvern Offices

- 08 09:00 Regional Executive Meeting Malvern Offices, NACCW
- 12 09:00 BQCC 3 St. Philomena's
- 09:00 BQCC 4 Pietermaritzburg
- 15 09:00 Social Workers Group
- 09:00 Venue to be advised
- 15 09:00 Child Care Worker Forum. Workshop - Coping with stress. Venue: Phone Anne Pierre on 284187
- 19 09:00 BQCC 3 St. Philomena's
- 09:00 BQCC 4 Pietermaritzburg
- 21 09:00 PPA St. Theresa's
- 22 09:00 Regional Meeting Venue to be advised

### TRANSVAAL

- 04 09:15 BQCC 3 Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis Pretoria
- 05 09:00 Introduction to the START programme for Directors and Senior Staff

- 06 09:00 BQCC 3 T M I Johannesburg
- 09:00 BQCC 3 Norman House East Rand
- 07 09:30 Regional Executive Committee NACCW offices
- 11 09:15 BQCC 3 Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis Pretoria
- 12 09:00 Administrators' (Directors') Support Group Escom Club House Jhb Childrens Home
- 13 09:00 BQCC 3 T M I Johannesburg
- 09:00 BQCC 3 Norman House East Rand
- 18 09:15 BQCC 3 Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis Pretoria
- 20 09:00 BQCC 3 T M I
- 09:00 BQCC 3 Norman House East Rand
- 25 09:15 BQCC 3 Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis

FOR FURTHER PARTICULARS OF NACCW ACTIVITIES CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL OFFICE