

# The **child care worker**

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Cover Picture: Jill Uris, from *Ireland: A Terrible Beauty*



## **NACCW**

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



Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives  
International Federation of Educative Communities (UNESCO)



Association Internationale des Educateurs de Jeunes Inadaptés  
International Association of Workers with Troubled Children

## EDUCATION

As we look forward to a new era in education here in South Africa, **Laurel Walters**, writing in the *Monitor*, observes some international trends

# World educators compare notes

In today's increasingly global economy, world leaders are placing a new emphasis on international benchmarking in education.

Successful education reform ideas are being shared across national boundaries. And traditionally insular approaches to educating students are gaining a more international perspective.

"Schooling is now being treated in strategic terms by governments that seek to re-structure or steer their economies," states a recent report on "International Education Comparisons" from the United States Department of Education.

Throughout the world, countries are realising that education is key to economic competitiveness. In turn, national policy-makers are working to reform their education systems and better prepare students for a more competitive world.

Some model programs include Germany, for its vocational education and apprenticeship programmes, and Japan, for its general emphasis on mathematics and science.

"A lot of the education reform in the future will be driven by economic pressures and the ability of corporate leaders to employ a work force that is diligent, productive, and inventive," says Robert Albright, chairman of the Council for International Activities at the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey.

More than ever, education officials are looking to emulate successful ideas from around the world.

"Much of the demand to study other systems is based on the concern of business leaders," Mr. Albright says. "I'm not so sure that educational leaders on their own would have come up with the notion of studying

other educational systems." At a July meeting of nine Asian-Pacific countries in Honolulu, education officials credited a long-term emphasis on education for helping fuel the booming economy in Southeast Asia. This focus has helped drive the region's 6 to 8 percent a year economic growth, says Karen Oppenheim Mason, of the East-West Centre in Hawaii.



Students in Korea which ranks highest in the world in science scores and second in maths.

Education is credited with contributing nearly a quarter of the increase in Korea's gross national product, says Wang Bok Kim, a South Korean Education Ministry official.

An increasing number of countries are participating in international achievement tests, such as the International Assessment of Education Progress, which places their students' performance within an international context.

"American educators are always looking over our shoulders so we can know where we are [in relation to other countries] and then can benchmark ourselves," says Philip Altbach, a professor of education at Boston College. "The same is true of many other countries," he adds. "The European Union countries now do a lot more comparison between their na-

tions." Even countries with successful education systems are looking for lessons from other national education programmes. In Japan, for example, there is a great deal of concern that Japanese students lack creativity when compared with Americans.

"There's a lot of wondering about why the Japanese never win the Nobel Prize," Professor Altbach says.

"The Japanese realise that their system is too rigid and requires too much rote learning." As a result, Japanese officials are now working to make the national education system more flexible and to promote creativity in students. "It's the opposite of what we're doing" in the US, says Harold Stevenson, author of "The Learning Gap," a book comparing US, Japanese, and Chinese education.

"We want more homework and more intensive study, and the Japanese are saying, 'We've overdone it.'"

For example, Japanese schools are no longer holding classes every Saturday while Americans are pushing for longer school days and academic years. "Perhaps education may be found in the middle course," somewhere between Japan's rote learning and the US's flexibility, says Yukihiko Hishimura, director-general of Japan's National Institute for Educational Research in Tokyo. Sharing education ideas is difficult, of course, since national education systems often have fundamental differences.

In several developed nations, for example, 90 percent or more of the student population is from a single ethnic and linguistic group. Such is the case in Japan, France, Korea, Ireland, and Scotland.

Countries such as the US, Australia, Spain, Canada, and Switzerland, on the other hand, have more diverse populations. Educators warn that cookie-cutter education reform is not practical. "You can get insights from other countries, but direct applications of educational innovations are not generally very successful," Altbach says. "It's difficult to incorporate what we learn [from other nations] because of drastic differences" in systems, Albright agrees.

"But some ideas can be shared and borrowed." ■

## Some Comparisons

### AVERAGE CLASS SIZE AND SCHOOL DAYS PER YEAR

	Class size	School days
Japan	38	210
Portugal	25	172
USA	23	178
Spain	29	188
Slovenia	25	190
Ireland	27	173
Scotland	24	191
England	22	192
Canada	25	188
Israel	32	215
France	25	174
Italy	21	204
Hungary	27	177
Ex. USSR	22	198
Switzerland	18	207
Taiwan	44	222
Korea	49	222
China	48	251

### THE TOP COUNTRIES IN SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS\*

Science	Maths
1. Korea	1. China
2. Taiwan	2. Korea
3. Switzerland	2. Taiwan
4. Hungary	4. Switzerland
5. Ex-USSR	5. Ex-USSR
6. Italy	6. Hungary
6. Israel	7. Italy
6. Slovenia	9. France
9. Canada	10. Israel
9. England	10. Canada
9. France	11. England
12. Scotland	11. Scotland
12. Spain	12. Ireland
14. China	14. Slovenia
14. USA	15. Spain
16. Ireland	15. USA
16. Portugal	17. Portugal

### EDUCATION SPENDING AS A PERCENT OF GNP\*

China	2.2
Korea	3.9
Switzerland	4.6
Hungary	6.0
Italy	4.6
France	5.6
Israel	9.0
Canada	7.5
England	4.8
Scotland	4.8
Ireland	6.8
Slovenia	6.0
Spain	4.7
USA	5.4
Portugal	5.0
Japan	4.8

### NUMBER OF TEACHERS PER 1000 OF THE POPULATION AGED 15-64

World average	16
Developing countries	13
Developed countries	23

\* International Assessment of Education Progress (1992)

As the NACCW celebrates its Twentieth Anniversary (1975-1995), we look even further back to 1968 where we find the real origins of our Association in a surprisingly far-sighted report on child care services

# The Archbishop and the Children

An extraordinary document dating from 1968 reflects the earliest origins of the NACCW which celebrates its 20th anniversary as a national organisation this year.

The story starts with Robert Selby-Taylor who was Archbishop of Cape Town for ten years from 1964 to 1974. Educated at Harrow, Cambridge and Oxford, he had been consecrated Bishop of Northern Rhodesia at the tender age of 32, and from there was made Bishop of Pretoria and then Bishop of Grahamstown before coming to Cape Town.

## Priorities

The Archbishop was interviewed for the December 1994 issue of the newspaper of St George's Cathedral in Cape Town. He reflects: "As I went into various jobs I gave myself certain issues which I felt demanded attention. In Northern Rhodesia it was to produce a constitution for the Diocese. Our next priority became training for the Ministry, and we established a seminary in what is now Zambia." His priorities in Pretoria included the completion of the Cathedral, and a hard look at South African education, "which culminated in the establishment of St Alban's College," he recalls, a school which has gone on to become one of the leading institutions of its kind in this country.

## The child care priority

One of his first jobs as Metropolitan was to recognise the work being done by the Church's many institutions for children. As Archbishop he was *ex officio* Chairman or Visitor of the seven children's homes in Cape Town, and in 1968 he appointed a Committee to examine their work and

to suggest what improvements were needed. In addition to the care and education of the children, and the financial circumstances of the institutions, the Committee was asked "to examine the problem of staffing and to make recommendations with regard to the recruitment and training of staff."



Commemorating the twentieth year of the foundation of the NACCW: The logo is based on the Roman numerals XX and highlights the shared task of child care work in South Africa.

The Committee appointed were Hazel Borthwick (former Director of the Child Life Protection Society — later to become the Cape Town Child & Family Welfare Society), Harry Cooper (Administrator of St Michael's Home), John Currie (Psychiatrist, Groote Schuur Hospital), Christine Edlin (Diocesan Social Worker), Brian Gannon (Principal of St John's Hostel), Sr Heather (Matron of St Anne's Home), Robert Jeffery (Chaplain of Zonnebloem College) and John Scheepers (Jungian psychologist and recently retired Head of Johannesburg's Labour Department). In the introduction to their report the Committee made the point that each institution should be in a position to offer a variety of modes of care,

namely *substitute, alternative, supplementary and temporary* care. They made the point that the children's home has a responsibility to provide both care and treatment. They summarised their general goals by stating that "a children's home should:

1. Provide a staff of people appropriate to the number of children who will want to and be able to establish and maintain affective adult relationships with the children, and who will be trained to be able to understand their problems, interpret their behaviour, and participate in their treatment programme;
2. Provide the facilities which will enable the staff to carry out these responsibilities *fully* in a warm, homely and accepting environment; and
3. Make use, from the outset, of a programme of treatment for each child, starting with a reliable assessment of his history, personality make-up and capacity, and make full use of such consultant professional staff as may be necessary."

## Findings

Set against these surprisingly modern goals, the Committee investigated the physical facilities, the education and care, the staffing and the finance of the homes.

By modern standards, physical facilities were not good. Only two homes "could be classed as satisfactory, while all others were poor to shocking". Outdoor recreation space was generally good or at least had potential, but "the books which were found in the Homes were tatty, unselected, and on the whole a useless collection of throwaways"! All but one of the Homes had adequate kitchens and menus, though the dining

rooms were generally "not very homely". Furniture and equipment was not good, and with one exception, bathrooms and toilets "were generally unsatisfactory and antiquated, with poor plumbing, inadequate hot water supplies and badly planned facilities."

Similarly, the education and care programmes received very mixed comment. Programming, recreation, family contacts, medical and spiritual care were examined. Only one Home held staff meetings and had a system of progress reporting. A number of behavioural disturbances among the children were noted, and a frequent comment by the investigators was the need for staff to understand the nature and importance of the children's needs and problems.

## Staffing, finances

"The investigators felt that all of the staff teams described were barely adequate. All were only just coping with the basic work of supervision and administration, and a very earnest need was apparent for more staff on all fronts". For two of the homes, no financial figures at all were available. The others reflected a total monthly expenditure per child ranging from R15.64 to R38.80. In one home the figure for salaries and wages was as low as R2.99 per child per month, the highest R9.27. Similarly, food costs ranged between R4.30 and R11.81 per child per month.

## Recommendations

This part of the report demonstrated some very positive and creative thinking. For example: "A major point which emerged was that children's homes are tending to lose sight of the natural family of which the child is a member. Not enough is done to help the child to maintain the links and relationships with his family — a family to which he is more than likely going to return when he leaves the Home." Also: "By no means enough attention is being paid to the pre-leaving stage. The committee made the very strong point that not only *advice*, but *experience* of aspects of life should be made available, for example, respon-



***“As I went into various jobs I gave myself certain issues which I felt demanded attention.”***

sibility for buying household goods, personal requirements and clothing.”

Yet again: “The Committee felt that an appraisal of the qualifications of members of management committees should be made ... members of committees should accept the responsibility for learning more about modern trends in child care so as to be able to speak not only in terms of expenditure, but also in terms of needs.”

### **Staffing**

The Committee had to resolve the problems of staff roles. “Firstly it was emphasised that where the child had any contact with parents, the staff should not expect or try to be accepted as ‘replacement parents’ which would only serve to confuse the child. However at the same time it was felt that the atmosphere of a home should be maintained.” There was much discussion of the foundations of a child care profession: “It needs to be set on the same standard as, say, the teaching profession which has its own appeal, conditions of service and its own ‘image’ ... At present

staffing is a hit-and-miss affair which jeopardises the whole service.”

It was emphasised again that staff should be appropriate to the number of children, be able to create an affective environment for the children, be able to participate in the child’s treatment, understand his needs and problems and be able to observe and interpret his behaviour.

“All this,” the Committee concluded, “implies some basic training.”

Another need was recognised: “There exists, for instance, at the moment, a great need for social workers whose duties would involve admissions screening, family rehabilitation work, after care, and liaison between children and consultant professional staff. The Committee actually went further in that they proposed that psychiatric social workers be employed, since they would have greater insight into the particular problems being worked at.”

### **A child care association**

The report concluded with two important recommendations. The first was that the Church should have a continuing advisory committee regarding its welfare works. But the second was the spark which led eventually to the establishment of the first professional associations for child care workers: “It was felt that some good would come of an association of child care workers in each centre, and a committee consisting possibly of heads of Homes meeting to discuss common problems and arranging seminars for staff.” There was some discussion as to how this might be implemented, but the report concluded: “Whatever happens, it is felt essential that liaison between various child care projects operating in any area be established and maintained.”

\* \* \*

In 1991 Robert Selby-Taylor was honoured at a Solemn High Mass in St George’s Cathedral in Cape Town, celebrating his fifty years as a bishop.

As we celebrate our own anniversary this year, it is good for

us to remember that as a result of his Committee of Enquiry, and initially under the auspices of the Anglican Church, the first meetings of an Association of Child Care Workers were to be held in Cape Town in 1968. The Association was soon to lose its link with the Church

and identified fully with the child care service as a whole. Further Associations of Child Care Workers (ACCW) in Natal and the Transvaal followed, and in October 1975 it was these three Associations which amalgamated to form the National Association of Child Care Workers. ■

### **Looking BACK**

## **At our First Conference**

*Mr F.E. Vermaak, the Chief Social Welfare Officer of Cape Town, welcomed delegates to the NACCW’s first ever Biennial Conference held in Cape Town in 1977.*

He remembered that Mr F.P. Pieterse (Head of the Child Care Division of the then Department of Social Welfare and Pensions), had expressed high hopes of the NACCW, and that he trusted the association to make a constructive contribution to the follow-up work flowing from that conference.

“I have seen evidence that such a contribution is indeed being made by the NACCW, and the scope of this conference starting this morning, the first of its kind in this country, is a clear demonstration of this contribution.”

Mr Vermaak saw an encouraging advance in child care work in South Africa at a number of levels:

**Academic:** Increasing activity between the field and universities, not only in the child care course run at UCT but also in the NACCW’s input into social work courses.

**Professional:** Good exchange between child care and other fields, in that many social workers and teachers were members.

**Administrative:** There had been strong representation from all three regions of the NACCW in official research, planning and training initiatives.

### **Child care workers**

“Fourthly, and perhaps really the most important, at the level of child care workers

themselves there are notable advances. Child care workers are becoming more informed about the nature of their work, and more skilled in their approach to their tasks.” He found significant the high enrolment on child care training courses. “From this it is clear that child care workers are wanting to know more about their work and are wanting to provide a better service, and this enthusiasm is bearing fruit, for university supervisors working with students in children’s home placements here in Cape Town report considerable improvements in the quality of care being provided.”

### **Management**

“But I have one worry ... With the awareness and progress I have outlined at so many levels, I am concerned that this is not being sufficiently shared in by management committees. It is, of course, the management committees who bear the ultimate responsibility for each and every institution, yet they seem, on the whole, to be too uninvolved in the growth and enthusiasm I am talking about. On this conference you have 25 principals, 37 child care workers and 15 social workers, but only four committee members.

This is a pity. It is the management committees who ultimately decided on the appointment of staff, on the type of staff and the qualifications to look for, who must decide on the salaries and working conditions for staff, and who must decide on the overall policy of the institutions — and yet they will not be in any position to make qualified decisions about these matters if they are not in on the discussion — at all levels. ■