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ABSTRACT

This report on teacher competence in the field of early childhood education is divided into six sections. The first section outlines the rationale for the study and defines its particular thrust. The main intention of the survey is to describe and define the tasks and requisite skills of early childhood teachers in supporting families in the care and education of their children. Part two details the issues most relevant to a definition of teacher competence: (1) the purpose of early childhood programs, (2) the environments of center-based programs, (3) the roles of the teacher, and (4) a review of the nature and quality of research into teacher behavior. The third section details the methods of observation of teachers, the criteria upon which opinions were based and analysis of teacher behaviors in not only classroom situations but also in interaction with parents. The tasks and competence of the early childhood teacher are discussed in detail in the fourth section. These are divided into three major catagories: (1) design and implementation of program -- ability to relate the use of time, space and activities to the developmental levels, learning abilities, and individual characteristics of children; (2) personal competence -- ability to serve as an effective model of behavior for children and other adults; (3) interpersonal competence -- ability to facilitate the child's mastery and satisfaction in interactions with physical environment, peers and adults. In section five the implications of the survey are discussed, and section six contains recommendations for improvement in the field. (JD)

SUMMARY OF THE

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

TASK FORCE REPORT

ON

TEACHER COMPETENCE

Fall, 1976

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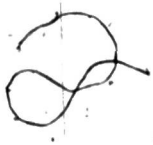
SUMMARY REPORT

The following is a summary of the Report presented by the Early Childhood Services Task Force to its Steering Committee on June 28, 1976.



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Our purpose in this report is to describe and define the tasks and requisite skills of early childhood teachers in supporting and assisting families in the care and education of their children. Our concern is with all young children, including children with handicaps and those living in disadvantaged areas.

Traditionally, the person working with children in a learning environment has been referred to as a teacher. Acknowledging that the home and community have a tremendous impact upon the young child, and that the provision of short, isolated educational programs is not the most effective means to contribute to the child's full development, we are looking at a new kind of teacher. We are concerned with a teacher who will avoid further separating children from their families; a person who can design a program for young children that will reinvolve and strengthen families as the primary and proper agent for the development of children.

We are concerned not only with the need to educate minds but with the need to provide children, so far as lies in our power, with the conditions that will most favour their development into confident, competent, sensitive persons. Throughout the years that concern us, children are developing in interaction with a widening environment. What is the best that the early childhood teacher can provide for them in this environment?

To answer this question, we began with a broad survey of studies relating teacher and parent behaviours to the development of competence in young children. We started from the premise that all children have certain developmental needs and that most children will learn best in certain kinds of environments which have been designed to meet their needs for nurturance and stimulation. A review of the literature supplied us with a clearer definition of the child's needs and expanded our awareness of the studies being undertaken on the most effective ways of providing for and working with young children in a variety of situations. We were interested in those studies concerned with adult-child interaction, observational techniques, advantageous physical environments, expanding roles for early childhood personnel, and investigations of general child development and of special needs. We concentrated primarily on the interrelatedness of specific teacher behaviours and child outcomes. Related to this important consideration was a review of the kinds of programs which have been developed, and a discussion of the nature of the different roles the teacher may assume in these programs.

We then conducted a province-wide interview survey of teachers and coordinators in early childhood programs, and parents of children in these programs, in order to find out from them the purposes of their programs and how they believe these purposes can best be met. Our main interest was in the competence, reflected by these beliefs, that would be needed to fulfill the goals of early childhood programs in Alberta.

Using the general descriptions of teacher behaviour and measurements criteria obtained from the literature, and the concerns which were expressed during the interview survey, we constructed a set of guidelines for the observation of teacher behaviour in existing early childhood programs. The purpose of the observation study was to obtain information on the effectiveness and interrelationships of particular behaviours and the contexts in which these behaviours can occur, in order to develop a more accurate conceptualization and description of early childhood teacher competence.

While our investigation was concentrated primarily on programs for five to six year old children, the guidelines for teacher competence presented in the report are easily adaptable to programs for older children, with greater revision needed for infant and toddler programs. They are also applicable to-day-care personnel, as will be discussed in Chapter V of this summary.

Chapter II

SUMMARY: THE SURVEYS

LITERATURE SURVEY

From a broad survey of the literature on child development and early childhood education, the issues most relevant to a definition of teacher competence were selected for inclusion in the report. These issues are: 1) the purpose of early childhood programs, 2) the environments of centre-based programs, 3) the roles of the teacher, and 4) a review of the nature and quality of research into teacher behaviour. The following is a brief discussion of the conclusions reached from the literature survey of these issues.

Programs for Young Children

The ultimate importance of the child's early experiences with his family and in his community as well as in any specific programs has been well defended. However, the paucity of sound research, particularly longitudinal studies to assess the effectiveness of programs for young children and the appropriateness of goals, is a gap in the knowledge base of educators.

Much of the past and current research in early childhood education concerns the environments - physical and interpersonal - of the programs for young children. The basic design of many studies into the effectiveness of different kinds of programs involves a consideration of the relationship between observed teachers' behaviours which are thought to promote or inhibit development and learning and the changed behaviours of the children measured on pre and post tests.

It is evident that teachers' behaviours influence children's behaviours. Such evidence provides the rationale for any study of teacher competence in early childhood education. It is also presumed that goals are related to needs, and that effective programs will reflect progress towards these goals and a satisfaction of the child's and society's needs. It is understood that many variables affect the ultimate success of any program. But it appears that the teachers themselves are the crucial element.

The Needs of Young Children

Children at various stages of development have a number of salient physical, social, and psychological needs. Many of their requirements for healthy development are well-known to professionals and to others concerned with child development and learning. It was possible, from the literature, to summarize those needs considered to be particularly relevant to the child from about four to seven years, as follows:

1. nutrition, rest, proper ventilation, cleanliness
2. mass muscle activity
3. mental and verbal stimulation
4. peer play and fantasy play
5. independence
6. learning control of internal impulses

7. affection, security, acceptance, contact comfort
8. exploration and manipulation of the environment
9. achievement

Helping to meet these needs is the essential purpose of early childhood programs. If the programs are to respond to all such needs, and to foster all aspects of a child's development, the approach of planners and teachers must be a holistic one. It is for logical as well as humanistic reasons that so many early childhood educators insist on viewing "the whole child". The needs of children are interactive; one cannot expect a child to profit from mental and verbal stimulation if his needs for affection and achievement are not being met at the same time. An increasing amount of evidence shows significant relationships between a child's affective and cognitive development, between emotionally healthy feelings about himself and his ability to relate to others.

The Contribution of the Early Childhood Teacher

While it is a somewhat artificial task to divide human development into separate domains, some division must be made in order to assess developments that are believed to provide the foundations, so to speak, for later developments. The review of research on child development and early childhood education led us to concern ourselves in the investigation primarily with the affective domain of development -- that is, with how children feel about themselves in relationship to other people and to the tasks which they perform, rather than with the amount of knowledge they acquire or the particular skills they develop. This is not to ignore the fact that children need a cognitive, as well as a social climate which allows them to be competent -- certainly children become competent through the development of skills. The intent is, rather, to emphasize that the skills and the knowledge are not ends in themselves in the early childhood programs, and that to concentrate on such tangible achievements alone can often hinder the development of children rather than enhance it.

We began with the premise that education is not something one acquires, but is a continuing process of interaction with the physical and human environment. The literature survey led us to conclude that human interaction should be viewed as the single most important ingredient in any early childhood program. In this context, the early childhood teacher plays an essential role in early development, not only in the provision of materials and activities, but, primarily in the manner of relating to each child. The means through which the contribution of early childhood teachers can be maximized are varied, and should be adapted to the situation in which the child is living. Research on programs for young children shows that in order to maximize their contribution to the child's full development, early childhood teachers should relate to children in a way that ensures:

1. the child's mastery and satisfaction, as opposed to frustration and defeat, in interactions with the physical environment, with peers, and with adults;

2. consistency between experiences in the program and the characteristics the child brings to the program, including family characteristics, the child's needs and interests.

These criteria have an effect in the approach that early childhood teachers will take in both fulfilling their roles, and in broadening the scope of their activities:

> In their direct relationships with children, they should move away from the instructional mode of teaching and the practice of isolating their activities with children from those of their parents.
>
> They should work with parents in a spirit of cooperative responsibility for the goals of their programs.
>
> They should extend their scope to connect with resources in the wider community -- including persons, places and materials -- that can be utilized to enhance the child's full development and to meet special needs.
>
> They should be able to adapt their activities to local situations.

The early childhood teacher needs a combination of personal characteristics, skills and knowledge in order to be effective in these activities. While most current models for early childhood programs do not offer the range of activities included above, and thus limit their usefulness as sources for the specification of necessary competence, some guidelines can be drawn from those models. Others must be logically drawn from the nature of the tasks involved.

INTERVIEW SURVEY

During the Spring of 1975 we conducted personal interviews with 331 teachers, coordinators and parents of children in early childhood programs throughout Alberta. A variety of programs were surveyed, including those in disadvantaged areas and those strictly for children with handicaps.

From the vast amount of information obtained during these interviews, we selected for inclusion in the report those responses most relevant to teacher competence in (1) relating to children, (2) the integration of children with handicaps into normal programs, and (3) parent and community involvement in programs.

Relating to Children

Most of those interviewed were very concerned that the early childhood teacher be able, primarily, to relate well with children. For many, this meant sensitivity to the children's feelings, being aware of their individual differences and knowing how to build on these, having a sense of humour and imagination, being able to communicate with children and understand them, and having a sense of commitment to the well-being of each child.

They were also concerned that the teacher be able to observe and interpret child behaviour and development, and many teachers stated that the ability

to structure the environment in such a way as to facilitate the child's active involvement in learning was necessary to foster a proper climate in the group program.

Integrating Children with Handicaps

When asked about their views on the integration of children with handicaps into regular programs, most of the respondents favoured such an approach.

Significant opposition to such integration, however, came from two sources. Both the teachers and the parents of children with handicaps who are presently in segregated programs had reservations about the ability of teachers in normal programs to meet the needs of the handicapped child. The teachers of the children placed the highest priority on their ability to observe and interpret child behaviour and development.

Parent Involvement

A number of responses indicate that there is a need for greater communication between early childhood teachers and parents of children in the programs regarding the purposes and structure of the programs.

The majority of parents said that they would prefer their involvement mean interaction with children in the program rather than the supporting activities - preparing materials, organizing activities, etc. -- which are currently the primary activities of most parents involved in the program.

The majority of teachers, however, stated that they have difficulty involving parents directly in the activities with children. They have found that interpersonal conflicts - between teacher and parents, parents and parents, and children and parents -- are most difficult for them to resolve.

When we talked with teachers in disadvantaged areas of the Province - both urban and rural - they tended to place the strongest emphasis on their need for a good working relationship with parents. For many of these teachers, having positive attitudes, values compatible with those of the parents, responsiveness and initiative were as important for the success of their programs as were the pedagogical skills of planning and implementing activities for the children and knowledge of child development.

Both the teachers and parents of children with handicaps also emphasized the need for parent involvement in the program. The teachers particularly stressed the need for parent education re the nature of their child's handicap and how to implement certain activities at home. A majority of the parents also favoured having the teacher's assistance in carrying out activities in the home.

Conclusion

According to the responses of the majority of both teachers and coordinators, the most essential competence for early childhood teachers is interpersonal competence - primarily communication and leadership skills.

It is also interpersonal competence that is stressed by these teachers and coordinators as the area in which they are most ill-prepared. Beyond this, they also strongly believed that their pedagogical knowledge needs a greater experiential base in order to provide them with the skills to be effective in their programs.

Chapter III

THE OBSERVATION STUDY

The Observation Guidelines

The sixty scales of the guidelines were categorized into the following dimensions: (a) materials (b) program elements (c) teachers interpersonal behaviour (d) teacher personal behaviour (e) children's behaviour and (f) involvement of parents, assistants and community.

The number of items included on any one aspect generally reflected our estimation of the importance of that particular dimension in a program. For example, many of the scales are concerned with the interpersonal behaviour of teachers, a facet of their competence thought to be critical to their effectiveness in the program. The sixty scales were described as clearly as possible in behavioural terms and each was rated as being a characteristic (1), an occasional (2), or an unobserved (3), aspect of the program. The guidelines were so constructed that (1) was always the optimal score, (3) the lowest. Over all the ratings, the interrater reliability was high (.90).

Generally, we found a high positive relationship among the dimensions. High or low scores on one dimension were associated with similar ratings on other dimensions. Teachers who exhibited skillful interpersonal behaviour tended to organize appropriate materials and meaningful programs. Teachers who rated poorly on personal behaviour were usually inept in the area of program development. The exceptions to this finding were the ratings for parents and community involvement, since many of these items were infrequently observed and did not relate as closely with the other dimensions.

Items which Discriminated the 'High' and 'Low' Rated Teacher Behaviour

By dividing the teachers into high rating and low rating groups, it was possible to determine which items best illustrated this discrimination. The following aspects of behaviour appeared to be especially significant.

1. The provision in the program of elements which foster self-knowledge and confidence.

   These elements might include mirrors in the dress-up corner, and frequently photographs of the children were hung on the wall. Charts were used to show the children's growth, and their art work was attractively displayed. Each child has his "cubby" - his own place for his clothes and books or toys.

2. The inclusion of elements designed to meet the specific needs of children.

   This related to the regard the teacher had for each

child individually, planning for his or her involvement in activities according to interests, needs and level of development; keeping records of the children's progress; and making provision in the program for children with special needs.

3. The teacher's demonstrated flexibility in planning and timing the program.

Careful planning and good timing (knowing when to provide an alternate activity, how to pace activities) were essential features of the programs which offered a rich social and cognitive environment for the children. Rigid scheduling by the clock seemed antithetical to the organization of activities in which the children could become deeply involved, and complete with satisfaction. In those programs run along arbitrary time lines, waiting and rushing seemed inevitable. The children seemed to be learning to have patience and to hurry. Sometimes these behaviours were taught. To a child who had finished some worksheets before the others, one teacher said: "You're always one of the first ones finished - just wait - you'll have to learn to wait." To a child struggling to finish some number work, another teacher advised: "I'm sorry you're not finished; try to be very fast and then you can join the others." In some programs children seemed to wait continuously while scissors were distributed, while a timid child tried to think of something to say; often they waited for the teacher to criticize or approve their efforts. There seemed to be in these programs a sense of "much to do and so little time." It was the teacher's general sensitivity to the children's pace and his or her flexibility in programming which characterized programs with overall high ratings.

4. The teacher's spontaneity and good judgement in dealing with undesirable behaviour.

This involved a teacher's responding to the context and significance of a particular behaviour rather than applying general rules to all situations. Such an approach appeared to encourage independent and responsible behaviour in the children. On the other hand, children with highly authoritarian teachers tended to look to them for their cues and rewards.

5. The teacher's interest in the child's thinking rather than solely in the accuracy of his response.

In their responses to children some teachers appeared

to be more concerned with the child's 'finished' product than with the nature of the child's involvement or process of thinking. Their work was evaluative, not in terms of the child's goals or personal accomplishment, but according to conventional or arbitrary standards. One group of five year olds was starting to work with plasticine when the teacher remarked, "Here's something really hard -- I want you to make an animal." When a child brought his finished model to her she remarked, "Practise, you can make a better one." To another child showing off her work, a teacher commented, "You can't see this very well -- you should have coloured it a different colour."

Other teachers, although eager to talk about a child's achievement, would not presume to judge its merit. A young child showed his painting to the teacher who said, "What's it all about, S____?" The child explained, the teacher listened attentively and asked questions to help him expand his ideas. Then she asked him if he would like to hang it up.

6. The teacher's personalized interaction with the children.

Characteristically, most teachers addressed individual children rather than the group. Sometimes, however, individuality was flatly denied as when the boy was told, "You're always one of the first one finished - you'll have to learn to wait." Other teachers revealed a deep respect for the integrity of each child. In one program, the teacher asked a boy, "L___, are you going to help us sing with your gorgeous voice?" When he answered "No," she replied, "Well, listen to our voices and see how beautiful we are."

7. The teacher's skill in fostering interaction among the children.

Frequently, this involved the ability to organize groups of children or one's ease in entering the children's play for a short period.

"Circle time" was often a time for informal talk among the children but the quality of the interactions at this time depended a great deal upon the teacher's behaviour. In one centre, a large group of children were seated in a circle and each child was to speak in turn after they had been instructed to think of something interesting for the others to hear. There was no conversation among the children and the teacher spoke most of the time.

But in another group, twenty-three children were loosely gathered into a carpeted story area. Some stood, most were seated comfortably, and in all, there was a fair amount of movement throughout news time. The teacher opened the discussion but there followed so much enthusiasm and language from the children that she had them raise their hands, and she reminded them occasionally about listening. The children were animated, often in motion, but attentive and responsive.

Some teachers could provide guidance by involving themselves in the children's play. One teacher entered the hospital play as a doctor to "admit for treatment" a shy child who had not joined in the drama.

8. Evidence of the children's reflections on their work.

There was the time and the quiet spaces which allowed for thoughtfulness. Often teachers who, through their interest and questions, prompted the children to consider their activities, expanded their ideas and stimulated their making new plans.

The anecdotes which appear above to help illustrate and define aspects of teacher competence were drawn from the running narratives which were kept for each observation. They provided us with 'instances' of a teacher's competence, often revealing additional information about certain behaviours.

The field study provided us with settings in which the original guidelines could be tried. The pilot study allowed us to test the scales for clarity and appropriateness. The results of the observations as recorded on the guidelines gave an indication of the more critical aspects of the programs. From a review of the 'high discrimination' items -- those which distinguished teachers who appeared to offer a rich social and cognitive environment -- one significant dimension emerged, and that was the teacher's ability to observe and to interact with children individually. Implied in this orientation were a high regard for the self esteem of the children and the value of their growth and learning. Program planning allowed for individual endeavours; flexibility permitted the teachers to respond in appropriate ways to a variety of situations. These teachers seemed to view their work in terms of the problems, delights and achievements of each child rather than fulfilling prescriptions for their programs.

The Influence of Contextual Variables on Teacher Effectiveness

The observational study of the selected sample of early childhood centres afforded us a close look at the current situation in the programs. We were able to identify the following factors as having an inhibiting or facilitating effect on the teacher's performance.

1. The number of children in a program influenced the teacher's performance in both obvious and indirect ways. The teacher needs daily personal contact with each child to observe, and provide for, his needs and abilities. Obviously, such contacts with individual children are limited in a large class. Furthermore, one's ability to provide a meaningful program for handicapped children, who may require special attention, is determined, in a large part, by the number of children in the program.

   The number of children in the centre determines the number of parents with whom the teacher works. Involving parents in the processes of analyzing goals and exchanging information can only be established if one has the time to confer with them. Both the literature on parent involvement and our own observations in the early childhood programs lead us to believe that informal daily contacts between parents and the teacher is the most effective means to promote communication and foster cooperative effort towards mutual goals.

   We found that teachers with more than 20 children in a program appeared to be hampered in their effectiveness. Even with this number, teachers without professional assistance seemed over-taxed.

2. The availability of resources in the community for children with special needs, which the teacher alone cannot meet, is an important contingency. While teachers require the knowledge and skills to identify special needs and to implement appropriate programs they are not themselves specialists and cannot provide for unusual needs without resources and consultation.

3. The attitude and circumstances of the parents influences the teacher's relationship with them and effectiveness in the programs. While the inability of teachers and parents to work together is often related to lack of skills on the part of the teachers, we did observe situations in which circumstances which were inimical to the parent-teacher relationship were beyond the control of teachers themselves. Such observations were made in centres where the parents, for various reasons, were unable or unwilling to become involved in the program, or in programs where the parents were openly antipathetic to the teacher's plans and efforts.

4. In order to be effective, teachers need a valid support system. We observed some situations in which teachers were working at odds with those who were responsible for supporting the efforts of the early childhood program. In other instances, the necessary direction for the program was not forthcoming from consultants or school principals. This situation arose most frequently in rural or isolated areas; however, even in urban programs we seldom observed a program which could be regarded as an integral part of a network of services for young children. Most frequently, early

childhood teachers called upon those resources with which they were familiar when the need arose. The ideal of effective on-going cooperation among services for young children is still to be realized.

5. Effective programs require the presence and skills of other professionals in the program. The teacher who has the assistance of someone with the ability to assume many of the responsibilities of the teacher is at a decided advantage in providing a meaningful program for the children. In some centres we were unable to assess the skills of the assistants because the nature of their duties were peripheral and involved very little contact with the children. In others, we saw highly skilled assistants who worked cooperatively with teachers who recognized and used the talents of their colleagues.

Chapter IV

THE TASKS AND COMPETENCE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER

THE TASKS

Teachers as Facilitators

The tasks of early childhood teachers are arduous and, in many ways, complex. These teachers should be both nurturing and challenging, accepting and exacting. They should be able to support and to motivate children and other adults in the program. They should be aware and respectful of each child's view of reality, and yet hold sound educational goals for the children. The children's own interests and endeavours should be accepted and encouraged, and experiences provided which motivate further exploration and learning. Teachers, themselves, should provide a model of inquiry into the children's ever-expanding environments.

Teachers should encourage identification of the children with their caregivers, with their peers and with the larger community. At the same time, they must allow for the growing autonomy, independence and self-discipline of the children. To facilitate the parents' involvement in the lives of their children the teachers should provide support for the family and encourage [illegible]cipation in the program. Furthermore, the teachers themselves will be part of a network of professionals who will provide comprehensive services for young children and their families.

The following thirteen points provide a thumbnail sketch of the tasks of the facilitator developed during the course of this investigation, tasks for which the competence of early childhood teachers should be suited.

1. The creation of a convenient, safe, comfortable and attractive space for the children, whether the program is in a classroom, a playground or in a home.

2. The organization of materials in that space to allow for easy access and storage. It is important that play materials -- especially for sensory-motor and expressive activities be available and that the play environment encourages their utilization. Large, small and private spaces should be available for appropriate activities.

3. The provision of a physical and interpersonal environment, ordered but flexible, in which experimentation and exploration are encouraged, without undue social or psychological risk. The environment should be carefully organized to permit the children's expectancies of objects and events to be confirmed or revised. At the same time, there are a minimum of

social restrictions on exploratory and motor activity. Furthermore, the teacher, as a part of the child's "interpersonal environment", accepts the ambiguity inherent in exploration rather than relying on a "right or wrong" paradigm, or conventional standards.

4. Knowledgeable and accepting of the children and their families. They understand the children's life styles, ways of thinking, feelings, their efforts and their problems. They are able, through positive interaction with the children to provide a climate of warmth, enthusiasm and trust.

5. Encouraging rapport among the children -- with themselves, with each other and with other members of the community. The teachers foster the involvement of the children in the program in making group and individual decisions. They value achievement and recognize the accomplishment of individual and group efforts.

6. Responding physically, verbally and emotionally with sufficient consistency and clarity to provide cues as to appropriate and valued behaviours and to reinforce such behaviours when they occur. Characteristically, their responses are to individual children, rather than to a group of children.

7. The provision of a wide range of direct (rather than vicarious) sequenced experiences -- physical, sensory, expressive, intellectual and social, which are compatible with the experiences the child has at home.

8. The provision of a wide range of experiences which effectively initiate and/or expand the child's interest and mastery in cognitive, social, and affective learning. The activities are developmentally appropriate, sequenced in a meaningful and motivating way. The child's mastery and satisfaction, as opposed to frustration and defeat, in his interactions with the physical environment, with his peers and adults is planned for and encouraged. In most of his learning experiences, the child receives factual and specific feedback from the teacher, which he is able to acknowledge as information rather than as praise or criticism.

9. The observation and recording of the children's behaviour as a basis for program planning so that the child's interest and capabilities are challenged but not overloaded. By such means, teachers can also detect any possible difficulties among the children.

10. The provision for language development, building, listening and expressive skills which enable the child to

organize and reorganize his conceptual knowledge and to communicate with peers and adults. The teachers organize the spatial arrangements so that situations are conducive to communication; they are responsive, flexible and provocative in providing tasks and activities; they serve as models of language usage.

11. The provision for exceptional children in the classroom. Concerned with growth rather than compensating for deficiencies, the teachers use a diagnostic approach and resource material and personnel in working with handicapped children.

12. The provision for liaison between the program and the children's homes and the community. The teachers provide programs that are readily accessible to, motivating for, and in keeping with the values, interests and resources of the family and community. They work in a cooperative relationship with parents and other professionals, contributing and accepting ideas and directions. The teachers are viewed as sources of support to parents, providing and accepting information, feedback, and alternatives. They utilize resources in the community as part of the child's learning, to ensure the child's total health and well-being, and to meet special needs of children.

13. The teachers' willingness and capability to serve as members of a network of educational and social services for young children. The most appropriate model for early childhood teachers may not be as coordinators of these services, but rather as knowledgeable resource persons themselves, in liaison with other areas of early childhood services -- e.g. infant-toddler programs, guidance and services for handicapped children, and the elementary schools.

COMPETENCE: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

This discussion of teacher competence proceeds along three barely discrete lines. As we studied the data collected during the observation study, we found that the nature of competence is integrative rather than additive -- that competence is a synthesis of knowledge, attitudes and skills, rather than a collection of these. They are formed, and interact with each other, to produce facilitative behaviours.

1. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

Ability to relate the use of time, space and activities to the developmental levels, learning abilities and individual characteristics of the children.

1. Ability to Involve Parents, Professionals and Others in the Planning and Implementation of the Program.

If teachers are to relate their programs to the children's lives, and encourage them to grow in ways which increase the parents' confidence in them, they must be aware of the nature of their family and social life. It is exceedingly difficult to determine the significance of a child's behaviour in a program if a teacher is unknowing about the context in which the child lives. Teachers need to be keen observers of their communities and able to interpret the possible relationships between factors in the child's background and his behaviour in the program.

In order to provide meaningful programs for the young child, parents and teachers must cooperate in this essential kind of diagnostic planning. It is important that parents be included in the process of analyzing goals, formulating objectives and planning action. Finding ways to enable parents to see themselves as effective in the rearing of their own children and in the program itself is important if the parents are to feel that they are really involved with the program. Willingness to cooperate with parent-initiated activities and the ability of teachers to demonstrate to parents that they value a partnership with them will enable teachers to promote such involvement.

1.1 Teachers must be able to share information with others knowledgeably and respectfully. Probably most valuable are the informal "meetings" teachers can have with parents to exchange ideas about the program, materials and problems. Teachers should make themselves available, having the time to talk and visit.

1.2 Teachers need to be able to analyze the structural elements of the system (organizational, social and physical) which affect the relationships between the teacher, the program, the families and the community. The most appropriate model for the relationship between parents and teachers appears to be one of cooperative responsibility.

Cooperating in a team relationship with parents requires that early childhood teachers serve as effective leaders - acknowledging their own responsibility for the program while helping parents find solutions that make sense to them. Parents should be viewed as active collaborators who can contribute ideas and direction as well as service.

Achieving a cooperative relationship with parents requires, first of all, that teachers provide a program that is readily accessible to parents. They also must provide the opportunity and encouragement for the involvement of parents in the planning and execution of the program-activating, when necessary, the initiative and action of the parents by helping them acquire the motivation, understanding and skills to be effectively involved in the education of their children.

1.3 Teachers need to be able to analyze situations with a view of action, that is, to understand what forces are at work and to be able to recognize and communicate alternatives for remediation or enhancement. Quite simply, in their extended role as early childhood teachers, they need to be effective problem solvers, and to share some of their responsibility for providing an appropriate program for the children with the parents of those children.

2. Ability to Facilitate Language Development.

2.1 Teachers must be able to "diagnose" the child's present level of usuage, and be able to detect any possible difficulties. They must possess the listening skills to appraise the child's needs, and the ability to conduct systematic observations of the child's oral expression. Teachers should have knowledge of the child's home environment and the speech examples which have been available to the child.

2.2 Teachers must provide the opportunity and structure for the acquisition of verbal skills. One of the most important advantages of small programs and of organization for small groups is that children are thus given the chance to converse with their peers and with adults in the program. Teachers themselves can encourage children to talk about their personal experiences and adventures and, with sensitive questioning, draw from the children more elaborate language to explain and to clarify their ideas. One of the most frequently observed techniques for provoking language, was the Show and Tell time. If not properly integrated with other skills, however, such techniques can be a total waste of time for all.

2.3 In order to promote self-expression and experimentation with symbols, children should be able to use a variety of forms of creative expression. They should have the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in different media, dictating or recording their stories, making up short plays, staging puppet shows, as well as the non-verbal media of paint, music and dance. Careful planning is needed to organize space, time and materials, as is good judgement in arranging appropriate groups of children to work together. It is necessary that teachers be able to provide direction in activities like creative drama, puppetry, music and dance and also be able to extend the children's own interests and attempts in these areas.

3. Ability to Promote Problem-Solving Behaviours Among the Children.

Teachers should alert the children to problem situations in their play, encourage their alternative solutions and assist them in testing ideas. The program should include materials which are particularly useful in stimulating problems, e.g. attribute blocks, puzzles, games, magnets, grids, balances, etc. Teachers

3.1 should encourage the children's manipulation of these physical
3.2 objects and set problems which can be solved through such manipulations. It is important that teachers have a clear idea in their own minds of the nature of the problem and that they support the children's efforts to find a solution. They must ensure that a child is aware when he has solved the problem, or redirect him to a simpler problem if he is having real difficulties.

4. Ability to Facilitate Sensory Motor Development.

Children need the opportunity and encouragement to explore different sense modalities. Teachers should provide for their exploration of the physical world (plants, pets, nature walks, etc.) and for activities which encourage sensory discrimination, such as listening centres, "spice racks", microscopes, etc. and activities for sensory exploration, such as sand and water play.

5. Ability to Increase the Child's Self-Knowledge, Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence.

5.1 A group of children can frequently participate in decisions about the program.

The program itself should be designed so that a minimum of adult assistance is required in activities or in the use of materials. Children can be encouraged to choose and develop at least some of their own activities.

Avoiding a work-play dichotomy in programming appears to be facilitative in involving children in meaningful activity. In some of the programs we observed, the abstract dimensions of 'work' and 'play' were used to provide structure for the program; play was regarded -- and offered as -- a reward for work completed, or for good behaviour.

5.2 Children's use of certain materials, and appropriate program elements can foster the development of self-confidence. Thus mirrors, photographs of the children, height measures, and voice recordings may be included. Activities which foster responsibility, such as taking care of pets and those which emphasize body awareness are important. As much as possible, children should be encouraged to talk about their activities, to display their work and to follow up on their projects. For such concentration and
5.3 reflection, children must be provided with a relaxed atmosphere, a quiet place and some time for each child to be alone.

Among the children in the program, it is important that teachers
5.4 encourage understanding and respect for the child's own, and others' backgrounds and ethnic origin. This may be done through the introduction of foods, customs, stories and music of other people, and by encouraging the children to share their family experiences.

6. Awareness of the Individual Characteristics and Special Temporary and Long-Term Needs of Children.

6.1 Teachers must be skilled in observational techniques, have a sound understanding of normal development and learning and be able to recognize indications of physical and emotional distress among the children. They should know, as individuals, the children in the program and use this knowledge in planning the program.

An awareness and accommodation of individual differences is especially important among teachers who work with handicapped
6.2 children in their programs. They must understand the nature of the child's handicap and how it interferes with learning. In most cases the teacher will require support and perhaps a referral service to make the assessment. Besides diagnostic skills, teachers should
6.3 have the ability to plan and implement an appropriate sequential program for the handicapped child.

6.4 Furthermore, it may be necessary for them to organize the physical environment in a way that is functional for the handicapped child. Here again, teachers may require assistance, either from a resource centre or from the inclusion of another adult in the program. It is important that they be able to establish access to and open communication with resources for children with handicaps.

7. Ability to Foster Social Development Among the Children.

7.1 Teachers should reinforce the child or the group for achievement or positive social behaviour.

7.2 It is important that teachers be able to integrate children who may in some way be different from any of the other children.

Young children learn many social skills from each other if they
7.3 are given the opportunity to play and work together in small groups. Organizing the room and the program for such activity can facilitate their socialization. The teacher can use these
7.4 opportunities to reinforce the children's positive responses to each other as an effective means to assist them in their social development.

8. Ability to Facilitate Physical Health and Development.

The teacher should be able to provide a physical environment that meets health and safety needs and, if necessary, make special provision for the handicapped children in the program. In most
8.1 programs, there is the opportunity to include a sound nutritional component. It is especially important for young children that
8.2 large muscle activities be included as an integral part of the program. Children need space and adequate equipment in order to fully enjoy large motor activity. Some programs we observed were

fortunate in having excellent outdoor facilities adjacent
8.3 to the centre. Other centres were able to utilize community resources, such as local parks and skating rinks in their program. Furthermore, resource persons in the community; nurses, hygienists and policemen may be called upon to contribute to the children's program.

9. Ability to Observe Individual Behaviour, Record and Plan.

It is important that the teacher be skilled in observing children objectively, be able to describe their individual characteristics and be knowledgeable about indications of problems. Many teachers we observed kept anecdotal records of the children's behaviour, activities, interests and needs. If the program is to be meaningful for the
9.1 children, the information collected through such observations should be used in the daily planning of activities. The activities themselves should be logically and sequentially arranged, and children should be prepared for changes in the program.

II. PERSONAL COMPETENCE

Ability to serve as an effective model of behaviour for children and other adults.

1. Knowledge of Self.

1.1 Early childhood teachers should be aware of their own values and prejudices. It is unrealistic to suggest that they be without bias and illogical to propose that they be able to accept any value system. In their work, however, they will encounter children and parents whose standards and lifestyles may be rather different from their own.

1.2 Teachers should also have a realistic view of their own needs and abilities. They should understand their own motivations for entering the field and respect their personal needs for support, stimulation and growth.

Teachers cannot be all things to all children. They must know their strengths and limitations. However, with an accurate appraisal of the complementary resources among the parents, their assistants and themselves, teachers can plan a workable and appropriate program.

2. Express to the Children Curiosity and Exploratory Behaviour.

2.1 They should indicate that asking questions is important. Questionning, obviously, is a complex technique and how the query is

phrased depends in large part on the teacher's purpose in posing the problem. Many effective teachers seemed to muse and wonder themselves and ask general, open-ended questions to which any child felt free to respond. "I wonder what makes the outside of the glass wet?" "Why do you think that happened?" "How did you feel?" Questions which are really test items, for example, the familiar - "What is this called?" - have some use in

2.2 diagnosis perhaps, but little in learning. By their own non-threatening and provocative questions teachers should provide a model of inquiry for the children.

3. Sense of Humour and Perspective.

3.1 By a natural, unaffected manner teachers can show their personal delight in the company of the children and other adults. They should be confident and relaxed, frequently playful. They should have perspective as well as identification with the children and gracefulness in their guidance.

4. Ability to Accept People without Prejudice, and work effectively with others whose values are not consonant with one's own.

Teachers need to respect the abilities and endeavours of the children, parents and colleagues. Evidence of this attitude is particularly important among those who work with children whose lifestyles are different from the teacher's own.

5. Commitment to Human Growth.

For themselves and other adults as well as the children, effective teachers believed that education was a lifetime endeavour. They appreciated the need in everyone for stimulation and support. To help sustain their own motivation and enthusiasm, teachers should be vitally concerned with their own professional development. Formal course work, inservice workshops and exchanges with other teachers can provide information and alternatives.

The teacher in the program should be aware of the strengths and concerns of others working in the program, encouraging and helping the assistants to take responsibility for different aspects of the program. Undoubtedly all teachers provide a model for those working with them; they have the opportunity to demonstrate ways of interacting with young children. They can also relay information about appropriate courses and workshops.

It is most important that early childhood teachers be committed to individual children's growth rather than to curriculum or arbitrary standards. The imposition of conventional standards, of a curriculum to complete, seems related to the teacher's view of the early childhood program as a preparation for grade one rather than a contribution to the child.

Commitment to individual children's growth implies that teachers
5.1 listen intently to the children's expression of their own ideas.

5.2 Teachers should be sensitive to the individual needs and behaviours of children, especially within the context of large group activities. Their response may be to incorporate the child's ideas into the group activity or perhaps change the direction of the activity.

6. Ability to be Flexible, to adapt activities to the situation.

Of course, careful planning is essential for effective programming; teachers must know where they are heading, and why. But good planning makes room for feedback and alterations.

6.1 Teachers should be able to follow a worthwhile digression and make way for the spontaneous interest and needs of the children.

6.2 Teachers should be able to assess the children's level of involvement in an activity. In planning it is important that teachers not 'confuse the issues' in an activity; they should be sensitive to the children's responses.

7. Ability to be Emotionally Responsive.

Teachers should be ready to deal with another's social immaturities, feelings of inadequacy, anger and joy. It is important that teachers try to understand the significance of certain behaviours and the depth of the children's feelings.

III. INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

> Ability to facilitate the child's mastery and satisfaction in interactions with the physical environment, peers, and adults: to stimulate the child's exploration and explanatory of reality rather than imposing one's own which may have no meaning for the child; to view success and failure as information rather than as reward or punishment.

1. Ability to Support the Child's Goals in a Particular Activity Rather than Curricular or Teacher Standards.

Unfortunately, in our observations, the teacher was frequently the judge of the children's endeavours. Unable to rely on their own evaluation in activities which had uncertain meaningfulness for them, the children continually approached the teacher for her or his approval. Less often did we observe teachers making non-evaluative comments which either offered information or
1.1 expressed their own feelings. Children solicit and undoubtedly need feedback from adults - it should be positive, specific and informative.

1.2 Achievement should be regarded in terms of the child's progress rather than conventional normative standards of the group.

2. Ability to Recognize and Use the Individual Characteristics of Each Child.

This does not mean that the program goes off in many different directions at once, for the teachers provide a basic structure by the arrangement of the room and their own careful programming. Their orientation, however, is not toward a group of
2.1 children but rather toward each child in the group. Teachers should be able to stimulate the child's expression of ideas and feelings in a natural and unaffected way. Many informal observations of teacher-child interactions suggested that young children may become reticent, even secretive, in situations where they are continuously being asked "How they feel about it" or "what it means." The most spontaneous expressions of interest, discovery, satisfaction or frustration were observed in those programs where the teacher only occasionally asked direct questions of the children. They waited for the children to come to them when they gave them their individual and personal attention. They were good listeners. In their responses, these teachers were empathetic and specific, often asking short pertinent questions to encourage the child's elaboration or paraphrasing the child's utterance as a way of checking if they had heard what the child wanted to say. They
2.2 acknowledged the children's feelings and accepted but did not necessarily agree with, the children's ideas.

3. Ability to Provide for the Children a Socially and Psychologically Safe Environment.

3.1 Children need the assurance that their ideas and achievement will be respected, that their curiosity will not be discredited, that their attempts will not be ridiculed. Teachers should foster cooperation, mutual respect rather than competition among the children. Undoubtedly part of the establishment of a secure environment depends upon the attitude of the teacher towards the whole group of children.

Another aspect of teachers' behaviour which fosters a supportive
3.2 environment is their personal interaction with individual or small groups of children.

It is important that they relate to children individually rather than solely to the group. In some programs individuality was, at times, flatly denied -- the child belonged only as a member of the group.

4. Ability to Provide the Structure and Encouragement Necessary for the Children to Explore, Learn About and Master their Environment.

4.1 Teachers should be able to demonstrate procedures and give directions which are simple, positive and task orientated.

4.2 They should be able to ask relevant and appropriate questions which are open-ended rather than allowing only "right" or "wrong" answers.

4.3 Teachers should be able to structure problem solving situations for the children rather than presenting them with information, or leaving their queries unanswered. Encouraging the children to discover for themselves, to make predictions and test their ideas, and to experiment is an important part of facilitating their mastery and success. When children are having difficulty, teachers should provide assistance and encouragement; when they succeed, recognition and enjoyment.

5. Ability to Respond to the Context, Motivation and Significance of Behaviour.

5.1 Teachers should be able to use a positive approach in guiding behaviour rather than shaming, sarcasm, threats or physical punishment. Those teachers who were concerned with the

5.2 individual child focussed on the child's intent and a workable solution for undesirable behaviour rather than relying on arbitrary rules or directives. Their ability to direct children effectively is an important skill. A regard for the child, a responsiveness to his needs, flexibility and a non-threatening manner appear to be significant aspects of guidance.

5.3 Effective teachers often use positive reinforcement to encourage desirable behaviours.

6. Ability to Communicate Effectively.

In their work with children, parents and colleagues, teachers must be able to communicate well. They need to be able to

6.1 listen attentively, using paraphrase when necessary to understand the meaning of another's communication. It is important that

6.2 one formulate clearly to oneself what one intends to communicate,

6.3 and ensure, as far as possible, that the intention is congruent with the effect one has on others. Teachers should be able to analyze how others react to them through the verbal and nonverbal messages which others express to them.

In this chapter, we have presented a description of many aspects of the competent early childhood teacher. Although they have been categorized as interpersonal, personal or program competence, the teacher's skills are, in practice, closely integrated; e.g., the ability to communicate well enhances the teacher's skill in planning a program for the children.

Chapter V

I M P L I C A T I O N S

Many of the teachers currently working in early childhood programs are ill-prepared to fulfill the role of the teacher-as-a-facilitator which has been proposed in this report. Few of those we observed possess highly developed skills in the areas of competence described in Chapter IV. Many teachers themselves, during the interview survey, stated that they keenly felt their lack of training in interpersonal skills - skills which they believed were important to the success of their programs. It would appear, therefore, that few teachers could offer the scope of activities described in this report.

The report presents a description of the competence which should be evident among the staff working in early childhood programs. It is expected that it will provide a useful guideline for three sectors of services to young children: a) early childhood personnel in the development of their current programs; b) training institutions in preparing future teachers, daycare supervisors, and other early childhood personnel; and c) related resources and support systems which contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

In this chapter we are presenting the major implications of our investigations for: the assessment of competence; staff differentiation in early childhood programs; daycare personnel; training programs; and support systems for early childhood programs.

THE ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE

We recognize the need for a valid measure of the competence of early childhood personnel and believe that the guidelines described in Chapter IV can provide the basis for developing valid assessment criteria. However, it would be premature to use these guidelines as they are as an instrument to evaluate the skills of early childhood personnel presently working in the field. There are several reasons for this cautionary note, related both to the development of the instrument and to the contingencies in the field.

In the development of a valid measuring instrument it is necessary, first, to specify a criterion of acceptable performance and, second, to determine alternative ways of demonstrating competence. We believe that an instrument which specifies discrete behavioural units (such as that currently employed in the assessment of the Child Development Associates in the United States) allows neither for alternative means of demonstrating competence, nor for the interaction effects of the various behaviours found in the observational study. The present guidelines provide for such variations of competence, though they do not specify a criterion of acceptable performance.

It was apparent during the observation study that certain factors which are beyond the control of the early childhood teachers have a major influence on their effectiveness (Ch. III, 49-50). Until such variables

as the needs of children in the program and the quality of the support system the skills of other personnel in the program and the attitudes and circumstances of the parents can be built into a measurement instrument, it cannot be considered an objective criterion. The saliency of these contingencies precludes the use of any single measure of effectiveness.

At present, therefore, as definitions of those areas of competence considered important for an effective program for young children, the guidelines in Chapter IV should be immediately useful for early childhood personnel in self-evaluation, for consultants assisting early childhood personnel in the development of their programs, and as a guide for developing means to assess demonstrated competence.

DIFFERENTIATED COMPETENCE AND DIFFERENTIATED STAFFING

The major implications for differentiated competence and differentiated staffing, which emerged during this study, centre on five issues:

1. Sufficient skilled personnel are needed in early childhood programs in order to meet individual needs of children.

2. The relationship between teachers and others working in the program should be one of cooperative responsibility.

3. The respective skills of teachers and others working in a program should be complementary.

4. There is need for a clear definition of the requisite tasks and skills of differentiated staff in early childhood programs.

5. Certain basic skills appear to be requisites for all persons working with children, regardless of their respective responsibilities in the program.

1. The need for sufficient skilled personnel

Our observations led us to believe that teachers who have assistance from skilled individuals are at a decided advantage in providing a meaningful program for children. While this assistance may be provided by professionals from other agencies coming into the program, the most common form of assistance presently available to early childhood teachers is the "assistant" who is present daily in the program. There are two concerns in this regard of which we are aware:

a) teachers who have neither paid assistants nor other skilled resource persons available to them;

b) trained vs. untrained assistants.

...28

a) teachers without assistance

The teacher needs daily personal contact with each child in order to observe, and provide for, his needs and abilities. Likewise, involving parents in the processes of analyzing goals and exchanging information can only be accomplished if one has the time to confer with them. These activities appear to be significantly influenced by the number of children and parents with whom one works. Furthermore, one's ability to provide a meaningful program for handicapped children, who require more special attention, is determined by the time one has to work individually with these children as well as one's competence in meeting their needs.

We found that early childhood teachers who did not have assistance from skilled individuals appeared to be severely hampered in effectively meeting their objectives. We saw few programs with less than 19 children and even with this number, teachers without skilled assistance could be only minimally concerned with individual development.

b) trained vs. untrained assistants

Where assistants are present in early childhood programs, those who have had practical training in early childhood appear to be more skillful in relating to children than are those without training. The quality of their training is, of course, very important. In general, however, assistants who had had supervised experience and training in early childhood were able to skillfully carry out activities with children which untrained assistants were not. As better observers of children's behaviour, they could also provide meaningful information to the teacher about the children.

2. The relationship between teachers and others working in the program.

Some of the assistants we observed did not appear to be given the opportunity to use or develop their skills because of the superficial nature of the tasks assigned to them. In many programs, the assistant presently serves in a subordinate role to the teacher, primarily responsible for preparing materials, but not directly concerned with the daily activities of the children.

In order to promote the development of skills in assistants and to utilize fully the skills they possess, there needs to be an atmosphere of cooperative responsibility; the teacher serves as a leader, not as an authority. In some of the most effective programs which we observed, teachers encouraged and depended upon the highly developed skills of their assistants.

3. Complementarity of skills among staff.

Realistically, we cannot expect teachers, at this stage, to possess

most of the skills described in Chapter IV. In any program, therefore, there should be an attempt to ensure that the skills of others working in the program complement those of the teacher so that the program may be as comprehensive as possible. An example of such a fortuitous merger of talents was a program run by a teacher who was particularly effective with a large group of children. She directed highly stimulating and enjoyable lessons in creative dance, puppetry and singing and she told spell-binding stories. Her assistant, on the other hand, was particularly responsive and skilled in working with individual children. Each used her personal skills and together they provided a nurturing, stimulating program.

4. <u>There is a need for a clear definition of the requisite tasks and skills of the staff in early childhood programs</u>.

If teachers and other staff are to work cooperatively in a program it is necessary that they understand what their respective role is to be. Teachers should be able, in consultation with the parents and others working in the program, to formulate the goals of the program and to provide a model and direction for others involved in realizing these goals. Certain skills are required of all adults who work with young children (see below); however, it is also true that each person must be aware of, and responsible for, his unique contribution to the program. The issue of staff differentiation should be resolved, as it relates significantly to training, to program operators and to certification. A first step in defining the various roles within a program (and hence, different training and certification standards) would be an analysis of the tasks and skills required of differentiated personnel so that it would be clear what are their respective responsibilities.

5. <u>Certain basic skills are required by all early childhood staff</u>.

It appears from our observations that the following basic competencies are necessary to work effectively in any capacity in the program. (cf. Chapter IV).

(1) Personal competence

i) expresses curiosity and exploratory behaviour
ii) sense of humour and perspective
iii) respect for self and others
iv) commitment to growth

(2) Interpersonal competence

i) ability to establish and reinforce child's mastery and success
ii) ability to respond to context, significance and motivation of behaviour
iii) ability to communicate effectively

It is interesting that the teachers we interviewed also stated that these are among the most important skills for the person working with young children. They believed that the ability to relate well to children is a critical aspect of their competence. Similarly, these teachers considered the ability to relate well to parents and colleagues as important. They also regarded the ability to observe and interpret child behaviour as essential to their effectiveness. Obviously, such an ability is closely related to the teacher's capacity for understanding the significance of behaviour and reinforcing children's mastery and success.

The possession of other knowledge and skills would depend upon one's areas of responsibility in the program. The above competencies, however, are essential.

DAY CARE STAFF

One cannot separate "caregiving" from "educational" programs for the young child. Anyone who is responsible for the conditions of the child's growth cannot escape being an educator of that child: whether a person is aware of his impact or not, by interacting with the child that person gives meaning and direction to the child's development.

Because day care centres provide full-day care for children, their environment and personnel have a pervasive influence on the lives of the children who live there for the greater part of their day.

Quality day care can never be merely custodial care. If we are truly concerned with meeting the needs of all of our children, day care workers must be skilled in evaluating development, planning appropriate activities and providing for individual needs, interests and achievements. Most of the skills proposed in this report as necessary for early childhood teachers are intended for day care workers as well, as are the implications for training and support services outlined below. Because day care staff offer child care services primarily for working parents, they may not obtain the degree of parent involvement discussed in this report. They do, nevertheless, have a responsibility for the tasks listed on pages 53-54, Chapter IV. In addition, where there are infants and toddlers in the day care program, those caring for these very young children would require an understanding of their developmental needs not discussed in this report.

It is likely that children will be attending day care centres in increasing numbers; meeting the needs of these children requires that the centres be staffed with competent child care workers.

TRAINING

1. Selection

Insofar as the attitudes and personal skills discussed in Chapter IV are an educable part of personality they can be influenced and developed in certain types of experiential learning. They are, however, relatively stable

and slow changing and, as such, are not easily taught. Since the attitudes and personal skills appear to be prerequisites to the development of other important skills, incoming students should possess these characteristics to the extent that they demonstrate the potential for further development.

Though selection of students for training is a difficult process, our view is that it should be an integral part of the training program, and should include an assessment of the prospective student's:

a) expectations for the role of the early childhood personnel
b) respect for the abilities of self and others
c) emotional responsiveness to others
d) curiosity
e) flexibility

2. Preservice training

Theoretical considerations and "content" knowledge in training programs should be integrated with a solid "practical activity" component. Only in this way can the student develop skills with supervision which provides feedback, information and support to the student's learning. It seems fairly certain that the skills outlined in Chapter IV can be learned only in situations where the students themselves can observe, question, plan, experiment and reflect upon the behaviour of children, other adults and themselves. Such experiential learning is crucial for the development of personal attitudes and interpersonal skills which are considered essential aspects of the early childhood teacher's competence. Implications for training include a need for the following:

(1) The development of a positive attitude toward working in a cooperative spirit with others.

a) The old model of the teacher as "information transmitter" is clearly inadequate, but it is the one most teachers themselves have learned. Early childhood educators work with children and families towards mutually decided goals. To maintain their perspective as facilitators - rather than as experts - they require mature and positive attitudes towards those with whom they work. In much of their involvement with young children and with others, teachers' attitudes towards a problem, a project or a delight is undoubtedly as important as any information they convey.

b) Teachers need the opportunity to examine (and possibly change) their attitudes. They should gain awareness of their own motivations and values and reflect upon their role, especially as a model, in the lives of the children they will serve.

(2) The development of effective interpersonal skills.

a) Whether they are working with children or other adults, teachers need the ability to communicate clearly, to provide leadership and to lend support. They need to be aware of the

effect they have upon others, to be able to listen, and to respond in a way meaningful to other persons. Their skill in motivating children, and supporting them in their efforts, is crucial to the success in reaching the goals of the program. The ability to inform and perhaps involve parents in the program, to be effective in using outside resources and willingness to cooperate with other professionals should be considerations of any training program.

b) Teachers need the opportunity to practice interpersonal skills in real and, perhaps, simulated situations. It is unfortunate that while we can, with confidence, emphasize the significance of interpersonal skills, we are unable with equal certainty to outline explicitly how they can be developed. Nonetheless, the ability to relate well - to children and adults - was seen to be the single most important aspect of the early childhood teacher's competence. Provision for the development of that ability should be made essential to training.

(3) The development of observation skills.

a) Some of the most effective teachers we saw demonstrated often their ability to observe children, to understand the significance of what they saw and to "use" their observations in planning for the child's activities. They were accurate in charting the children's progress and keen to spot difficulties children might be having. Characteristically their observations were objective, made in terms of the child's progress rather than with reference to external criteria or their own personal values.

b) Student teachers need to have a great deal of direct contact with young children and to be guided into making perceptive and useful observations of them. Only with such information can they proceed to develop their programs.

(4) A sound knowledge base in the skills they are helping the children to achieve.

a) Much of the research concerned with the teacher in the program attests to the significance of the "match" of the appropriateness of materials and activities with the child's own development. Besides an understanding of general child development and the skills to observe accurately the progress of individual children, teachers should be knowledgeable about the nature and sequence of activities which can stimulate the children to further discovery.

b) Training schools have traditionally been concerned with the "methods and materials" of instruction. To emphasize the interpersonal skills a teacher needs does not diminish the importance of the more traditional concerns. Student teachers need every opportunity to learn about and practice the best ways to motivate and reinforce children's learning.

(5) If we are concerned with the full development of young children, we must consider them in the context of their families and communities:

a) Teachers need to be familiar with the characteristics and resources of the communities in which they work. Similarly they should understand the values, problems and strengths of the families of the children in their programs.

b) If we hope to integrate early childhood programs into the ongoing education of young children, teachers should be aware of the possibilities for learning and development in infant and toddler programs, parent programs, as well as in the elementary schools. They need to know how to establish and maintain liaison with other educational programs.

c) It is especially important that teachers be aware of the resources for handicapped children - and be able to work with other professionals to develop programs for these children.

d) Pilot courses which consider the role of the teacher in relation to the community are being established. Hopefully such courses will encourage teachers to look beyond the classroom and to consider the extended community in their program.

3. Inservice training

The implications for preservice training hold for any inservice programs. After interviewing teachers in the field, even experienced teachers, we have no doubts about the need for inservice programs. Often teachers spoke of their need to learn more about diagnosing problems, providing special services, learning new ways of programming. They also spoke often of the need to develop their interpersonal skills, especially for working with parents.

We emphasized at the beginning of this chapter that most teachers are inadequately prepared for the role proposed in this report. We believe that inservice training for those now working in the field is essential for their development and, thus, for the benefit of the children in their programs.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES

Early childhood teachers need a clearer definition of their roles and informative feedback for self-evaluation of their performance. It is evident, also, that the role of the teacher cannot be reconsidered without reference to the roles of others with whom they work - e.g. assistants, consultants, school principals and related social services.

If early childhood services is to operate as an effective network, everyone involved must be aware of the goals and principles of education for young children, and capable of cooperating with teachers in the realization of optimal services. Consultants should be available to provide direction and feedback for early childhood personnel in the field. School principals should be made aware of the goals of the early childhood programs operating in their schools and supportive of the efforts of their teachers. We can-

not expect early childhood teachers to fit roles unfamiliar to them unless they have direction, information and the resources they require to discharge their new responsibilities.

Chapter VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

If early childhood programs are to be staffed by personnel who possess the competence described in Chapter IV of this report, certain requirements must be met by teachers themselves, and by those responsible for the preparatory training and back-up support of early childhood teachers. These requirements were outlined in Chapter V.

In this chapter specific recommendations are presented for the use of the guidelines in effecting both immediate change and long-term development in providing more effective programs for young children.

In the recommendations which follow, the term "early childhood personnel" refers to anyone responsible for the daily care of young children, whether this be in Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs, day care programs, or other types of programs.

Early childhood personnel first of all, need a clear definition of their tasks, and the skills necessary to fulfill these tasks (Ch. II, 37-38,* Ch. V, 75). Therefore, the following recommendation is made:

1. That the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Branch of the Department of Education provide all early childhood personnel with a self-evaluation guide describing their tasks and requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills as proposed in this report.

The development of a systematic means of determining the competence of early childhood personnel is needed (Ch. V, 75-76). Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

2. That the governing Provincial authorities, training institutions and certifying bodies collaborate to develop means, in relationship to the guidelines set forth in Chapter IV of this report, to assess the demonstrated competence of early childhood personnel.

3. That competence criteria (cf. #2) be the basis for granting permanent certification to those early childhood teachers who now have interim certificates.

4. That competence criteria (cf #2) be developed to grant temporary certification to those early childhood teachers who do not have interim certificates.

* All page numbers refer to pages in Final Report.

While certain basic skills should be possessed by any person working in an early childhood program, differentiated competence of early childhood personnel should be determined, in accordance with their different responsibilities in the program, in order to provide an effective service (Ch. V, 77-78). Therefore, the following recommendation is made:

5. That the Provincial Department of Advanced Education and Manpower and the Early Childhood Services Branch of the Department of Education address the issue of differentiated competence and differentiated staffing in relationship to the guidelines set forth in Chapter IV of this report.

It was apparent during the observation study that effective programs require sufficient skilled personnel and adequate back-up support of professional personnel to meet the individual needs of children (Ch. III, 49-50; Ch. V, 81-82). Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

6. That the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Branch of the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services and Community Health, the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, and the operators of ECS and day care programs assure that every ECS and day care program is provided with sufficient skilled personnel to meet the individual needs of children.

7. That the ECS Branch of the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services and Community Health, and the program operators provide consultative services to enhance programs and meet special requirements.

8. That the ECS Branch of the Department of Education and the program operators actively encourage school principals, consultants, and other professionals involved in services to young children, to work in cooperation with early childhood program personnel in meeting the needs of children.

If early childhood personnel currently working in the field are to fulfill the expanded role envisaged in this report, they must have relevant preparatory training (Ch. V, 81). Therefore, the following recommendation is made:

9. That early childhood program operators, with the support of the responsible provincial authorities, provide inservice training for early childhood personnel in the following areas:

    a. identifying emotional, speech and learning difficulties so that appropriate assistance may be provided;

b. designing programs to meet the individual needs of children;

c. developing an approach of cooperative responsibility with parents and assistants.

d. utilizing community resources - people, places, materials - for general development and for special needs of children.

Preservice preparation of early childhood personnel requires careful development of relevant selection and training procedures (Ch. V, 78-81). Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

10. That the provincial Department of Advanced Education and Manpower and the institutions of Advanced Education responsible for training early childhood personnel work together to develop training programs in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Chapter IV of this report.

11. That the institutions of Advanced Education develop means to select for these programs students with the capacity to become effective early childhood workers.

12. That the Provincial Department of Advanced Education and Manpower and the institutions of Advanced Education work together to develop means, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Chapter IV of this report, to grant advanced credit to students in the training programs on the basis of demonstrated competence.