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ABSTRACT

The situation of the young child and family in Peru circa 1986 was the central concern of the Fourth Western Hemisphere Seminar. This summary report and statement of conclusions provides views on (1) meeting the needs of young children; (2) parental roles; (3) the professional's role; and (4) changes in policy. The discussion of children's needs focuses on parents as resources for learning, family school partnership, pressures on the family, and formal versus non-formal models of intervention. The discussion of parental roles takes up the issues of cost-effectiveness of parent-based programs and social influences on program effectiveness. Quality in programs, institutionalization, and professional/parent collaboration are topics discussed in the overview of the professional's role. The discussion of policy issues includes views concerning child advocacy and evaluation as a formative tool. It is concluded that a good curriculum in childhood education should be based on and positively reinforce the child's own family and environment, while remaining sensitive to the need of the child to move on to other environments. The key issues are the child's stable socialization, the development of the capacity to cope with school as an institution, and the ability to actively exploit opportunities. (RH)

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The Parent as Prime Educator: Changing Patterns of Parenthood

Summary Report and Conclusions

PS 016311

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Fourth Western Hemisphere Seminar
with the cooperation of the
Ministry of Education
Republic of Peru
Lima, Peru
7-16 May 1986

THE FOUNDATION

The Bernard van Leer Foundation, which bears the name of its founder, is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Hague, The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group of Companies, a world-wide industrial enterprise of which the Foundation is the principal benificiary shareholder. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Foundation has, since the nineteen-sixties, concentrated on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in the field of early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies concerned with setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from educational and social development opportunities. The Foundation is currently supporting nearly 150 projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries throughout the world.

THE PROGRAMME

All Foundation-supported projects are locally planned and managed in order to meet the needs of specific communities. Several common features, however, can be identified. Emphasis on the training of parents and community members as para-professional orkers in one such feature. Considerable experience in training methodologies and the preparation of curricula and materials for para-professional training has been developed by Foundation-supported projects. A focus on the potential of parents and their neighbours to play a more active role in early childhood care and education has also led many professionals to realise the need to re-examine their own roles and training needs in the delivery of educational and other services to the disadvantaged. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of succesful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work. The aim is that the positive results of Foundation-supported projects will be absorbed and adopted by local or national bodies responsible for educational and other services affecting young children. Projects are therefore carefully evaluated so their outcomes will be fully understood and shared with policy makers.

SCOPE OF OPERATIONS AND GEOGRAPHICAL SPAN

In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established. The following nations are currently eligible:

Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

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Background

Within the series of International Conferences and meetings organised by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the seminar on 'The Parent as Prime Educator: Changing Patterns of Parenthood' took place in Lima, Peru from 7-16 May 1986, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education for Peru. The seminar was inaugurated by the Minister of Education, Dr. Grover Pango Vildoso, in the presence of Dra. Pilar Nores de Garcia, the wife of the President of the Republic.

Thirty-seven project leaders and representatives of associated institutions were brought together from 18 countries. Those involved were selected on the basis of their experience in working with families, in particular using non-formal or informal modes in early childhood care and education. Major international organisations represented were the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Twelve national observers also attended, representing a range of institutions concerned with early childhood. These provided an important link between participants and national experience. A complete list of participants, including national and international observers, is provided in the appendix to this report.

The selection of Peru, and the location of the seminar in the vicinity of the National Training Centre for Non-Formal Pre-School Educators in Ate-Vitarte with which the Foundation has been involved since its inception, had special importance. The long and distinguished tradition of cultural richness and related self-help within Peruvian society provided and added dimension. These have combined to stimulate programmes which support community action in order to provide better chances for children. The Centre at Ate-Vitarte has, therefore, major significance within the national and wider continental setting.

The theme of the seminar, 'The Parent as Prime Educator: Changing Patterns of Parenthood', is a major strand within the current work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation internationaly. Early childhood is a stage at which parents and community have a close interest in the well-being and development of the young child and are prepared to work together to support new opportunities for his development. A variety of experience in Latin America and elsewhere has demonstrated the importance of full parental involvement in educational efforts with the young child if the full benefit of later opportunities is to be gained. This is especialy important for the disadvantaged. Education at this early stage, without the participation and understanding of parents and community members, is limited in its effects.

The seminar provided a useful opportunity for those working in the critical area to meet and to share experience, exchange views and reflect on their own ideas. A wide range of social and cultural backgrounds was represented, enabling participants to discuss the field experience of projects working with young families in the United States, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. A number of these projects, such as the Centre in

Ate-Vitarte, were in the dissemination phase, faced with the special problems of large-scale extension of experimental techniques; others were still in earlier stages of their work.

The opening presentation, delivered by the Minister of Education, Dr. Grover Pango Vildoso, enabled participants to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by Peru in attempting to serve the needs of disadvantaged young children and families, and strategic lines of educational development. Dra. Pilar Nores de Garcia, acting in her capacity as President of the Foundation for the Peruvian Child, offered important perspectives deriving primarily from her Foundation's work with disadvantaged urban populations.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. W.H. Welling, Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The fundamental assumption expressed was that pre-school education, delivered in centres by professionals in forms which merely reflect the approach to children aged seven and above, is not a necessary part of the early education process. Parents are also perfectly capable – even if their level of formal education is not advanced – of performing well when enabled to act either as the deliverers of a non-formal pre-school programme or as home visitors, working as equals with families to help them resolve child-rearing problems and support children's balanced development.

Three distinguished educators, Prof. Elena Valdiviezo Gainza, Director-General of Initial and Special Education, Peru; Dr. Glen Nimnicht, Director of the International Centre for Education and Human Development in Medellín, Colombia; and Dr. Walter Barker, Director of the Child Development Unit, University of Bristol, United Kingdom, presented special papers to the seminar. These provided provocative and wide-ranging introductions to the general theme and succeeded in creating from the early stages of the seminar an awareness of alternative approaches in meeting young children's needs.

Emphasis was placed during the seminar on the exchange of experience through a series of bi-lingual working groups, interspersed with presentations in plenary sessions covering main aspects of the general theme. The seminar's sub-themes were: 'The parent as prime educator of the young child', 'Family self-help; the emerging para-professional', and 'The way ahead; new roles for community and education'. The three sub-themes were introduced in turn by Dra. C. Mijares, Mexico and Dra. S. Mantovani, Italy; Dr. L. Rigal, Argentina and Mrs. A. Cook, U.S.A.; Dr. C. Leighton, Venezuela and Sister D. Grant, U.K. These addresses ably set the tone for the open discussion which followed.

The Foundation wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the collaboration of the Peruvian Ministry of Education and the staff of the National Training Centre for Non-Formal Pre-School Education in Ate-Vitarte in the organisation and implementation of the seminar. In particular the contribution of the Minister of Education, Dr. Grover Pango Vildoso, both at the opening and the closing sessions, was a manifestation of the degree of importance attached by the Peruvian Government to the seminar's main theme.

Summary Report and Conclusions

Introduction

1. In November 1985, the Minister of Education for Peru, in a major statement on national education policy to the Commissions for Education, Science and Culture of the Peruvian legislature stated that, despite the economic difficulties through which the country was passing, the first priority of the Peruvian Government in education would be the expansion of the 'Initial Education' service 'to defend and develop the potential of children below five years of age...' It was therefore particularly apposite that the Bernard van Leer Foundation's Fourth Western Hemisphere Seminar, mounted with the cooperation of the Peruvian Ministry of Education, should occur at this time, with a focus on education in the early years, particularly on 'The Parent as Prime Educator'.

2. The present situation of the young child and family in Peru was the touchstone for the Seminar. Peru, as with many Latin American countries, is passing through the severest economic crisis in its history. This crisis is pressing restrictively upon all aspects of national life, provoking a high-risk environment which has negative effects upon the development of children. Poverty, inadequate services, pressures of survival from day to day all contribute to acute malnutrition of children when they are most vulnerable. An infant mortality rate of 12.7% is unacceptably high. This does not cover a large, hidden figure in severe poverty areas. The repercussions of these problems are reflected later in the school system where high rates of drop-out prevail. Peru has a population aged 0-6 years of four millions, of which two millions live below the poverty line.

3. At the level of the family, Peru illustrates a set of problems common throughout the region: an authoritarian, male-dominated family structure; frequent absences of fathers and little integration of fathers into family life. There is little understanding of parenting, or preparation for the fact of becoming a parent. Low educational levels, particularly of mothers, all result in little stimulation in the home for the child in infancy.

4. On the other hand, Peru, as many other Latin American countries, has had an enlightened policy for providing education in the early years. The Initial Education programme, a joint effort of the national authorities and local communities, has a coverage of over half a million three to five year olds, or approximately 30% of the age group. This figure bears favourable comparison with that in many other countries, including some in the so-called developed world. Equally there is a realisation that mere extension of coverage is not enough. There has also to be a concern with quality. Improvements in quality are particularly sought after, although the difficulties are substantial. Peru, in addition, accepts the need for a social policy specifically aimed at children, resting on the expansion of the Initial Education programme which operates in favour of children in high poverty situations.

Meeting the needs of young children

5. While the problems raised are particularly acute in the Third World, they are by no means the monopoly of countries in this category. In the past few decades there have

been throughout the world many attempts to devise strategies which meet the needs of young children. There has been much rhetoric, without much substantiation, on the virtues of the formal pre-school as a device for off-setting the effects of poverty in the early years. Yet both pre-schools and day-care centres are extremely costly, requiring professional teachers, fixed installations and sophisticated equipment. Achieving national coverage via the formal pre-school would appear to be, for most countries at least, beyond their economic capabilities, even if this formula were the most effective.

6. Evidently *alternative* approaches are therefore essential, particularly but not only in low income countries, based on an understanding of the real needs of young children and how these can be met without formal models. Such formal models are in any case frequently imported from elsewhere and ill-adapted to the conditions of many Third World countries. They are often based upon standardised learning materials and cultural assumptions wich may bear little relationship to the lifestyles of disadvantaged communities. Their usefulness in these settings has yet to be demonstrated.

Parents as resources for learning

7. The limitations of conventional systems point to the need instead for children to be exposed to locally-derived programmes. Children cannot learn in abstract terms; for them the process, to be effective, should be consonant with the rest of their daily experience. They must be brought up in loving, caring environments, in which teachers and parents offer secure relationships, if they are to develop into adults who can deal creatively with the problems of the societies in which they live. At the core is the development in children of a healthy self-concept which in turn depends upon positive interaction between children and the adults who feature in their lives.

8. The role of the family, particularly of the mother, is critical. Mothers with poor self-concept will pass this on to their children. Mothers' poor self-concept itself often derives from the remnants of various factors such as school failure, lack of status attributed to their role in society and a sense of cultural inferiority. Thus the healthy development of young children does not depend primarily on placing them in institutions of a specific type, such as a pre-school. Rather, the healthy development of young children can best be achieved by fortifying families, particularly mothers, in their task as the child's prime educators. Unfortunately, parents of disadvantaged children are those *least* likely to recognise their own value in this respect, since they themselves are likely not to have experienced school success. Parents may not recognise that their role as a primary educator is independent of their levels of formal schooling.

9. The key to this is that parents should have the opportunity to gain confidence over time and develop skills which improve their ability to interact with the child. The process is more difficult when one parent must assume the tasks of two, when parents are distracted by other commitments, when there are too many children, when there is sickness and when parents are too closely engaged in the struggle for existence to devote time to their children. Effective early childhood programmes must seek to alleviate the effects of these and other inhibiting factors. Self-reliance within the family becomes an important goal, therefore.

10. World-wide, many successful early childhood education and care programmes have addressed these issues. They tend to have as a central focus the empowerment of parents and demonstrate that parents can create new kinds of family and community self-help based on local realities. Parents who have learned to organise their own family services and to work directly with service providers can gain expertise in community organising which can then be transferred to other areas of need. Their children and their communities benefit.

11. Yet it appears to be a recurrent fact that government intervention in early childhood programmes can be destructive where there is no parental participation. Ways have to be found whereby partnership of local people to maintain programmes and extend their work is ensured. Standardised early childhood programmes are unlikely to benefit disadvantaged children or communities and may even compound the conditions under which children fail.

Partnership

12. There are two possible solutions to these problems. On the one hand, existing child care institutions have to be reformed to permit greater parent involvement and attention to the child's broad needs; on the other, these institutions may be enriched by a strategy that works directly with parents, family and community. The intention is to convey to parents, and thus to their children, a corpus of know-how and values whereby individuals understand and can cope with the problems in their daily lives. In the effort to reach large numbers of families, one approach is to use the mass media in some form of distance education. However, even where the mass media are culturally relevant – and in much of Latin America this is far from being the case – individuals exposed to this approach remain passive receivers rather than active participants. The phenomenon then becomes indeed a new version of the "opiate of the masses" in *telenovella* form.

13. A more dynamic approach is through a group strategy in which the professional takes on a new role, that of facilitator. In bringing together parents and interested members of the community, individuals interact and together enrich their understanding. Working together, children learn how to communicate better, understanding others and the norms and values of their society. With adults the process goes far deeper. Together, adults can reflect upon, generate and act upon ideas drawn from their daily life and experience in working together. Adult mothers from a particular environment can group together around their shared interest in the child. In coming together they create awareness of the needs of their children and how to respond to them; they also generate forms of group organisation which may outlive any special intervention needed to get them off the ground. Such parents' groups are vital in allowing the disenfranchised a taste of success.

14. In the end, such community initiatives are probably the only viable way whereby large-scale programmes for young children can be launched. No government can afford mass coverage using conventional techniques. Those who wish to help with their chil-

dren can, as in the Peruvian example, create new options in non-formal early childhood education and care, in line with local realities. Government can then undertake certain support functions beyond the resources of individual communities: for example in promoting training programmes, the development of learning materials, evaluation and wider dissemination of the experience gained. This approach maximises the specific resources of participating groups and institutions.

15. The advantages of such approaches are not only confined to education; resultant benefits to their communities are increasingly evident. Such an approach does not exclude a subtle role for the professional. Indeed, if an effective educational component is to be part of such a programme, then the professional's role becomes richer and more demanding. Different qualities are, however, demanded of the professional as the role of educator is taken up more widely. The cardinal point is that teachers become, in effect, adult educators able to work with parents and monitor activities, whilst the task of direct interaction with children falls upon parents. The assumption is that, by encouraging parents to apply in their own homes the experience gained, the sound development of the child is reinforced. Family and the 'education' process then are able to dovetail in a continuous developmental environment for the child.

16. There are also cautionary experiences which reveal the dangers of launching loosely planned programmes of this type *without* the necessary professional support. It is important that community efforts should not fail, since this reinforces the social history of 'failure' which characterises the disadvantaged and heightens their negative expectations.

17. It must therefore be recognised that planning family-based alternatives is complex, requiring the careful deployment of professionals, adults, time, space and community resources. The pay-off for these efforts is, however, worthwhile. Research indicates that the greatest long-term benefits to the child – and all subsequent children in the same family – accrue from changes in home environment over time. These changes are gradual but are likely to be sustained: their effects are therefore cumulative. The effort needed to promote parent education is clearly valid in these terms alone.

18. Ideally, the adoption of such a programme requires financial and institutional support, the political will to implement it and a positive attitude on the part of administrators and professionals. Also it needs a sizeable pressure group to push forward the idea and to create public receptivity to it. In consequence, programmes and services will be organised, selecting and training people for their new functions. With inter-institutional cooperation and the participation of local people, the influence of the programmes will grow.

19. In practice, this is not so easy. There are many forces, internal and external, influencing a decision-maker in the selection of a programme. It is possible to categorise these. Internal influences relate to the characteristics of the programme: the nature and complexity of its objectives, its origins and institutional base; the possibility of its adap-

tation to other contexts, the system of training developed to support it and the resources required. External forces relate to the broader socio-political context in which the programme is taking place: the political climate, the attitudes of professionals, the system's capacity to accomodate the programme's financial and administrative needs, and the prevalling pattern of administration.

20. Fortunately, the decision-maker faced with this situation has a wide range of choices. One is to concentrate on the development of materials for large-scale implementation through the national government or similar nation-wide organisation. Another could be to support semi-governmental or special interest groups in their effort to design and apply local programmes for varying localities. Or, alternatively, he can design the total programme and implement different parts of it through a variety of collaborating institutions.

Pressures on the family

21. Even if all governments were to set up an efficient alternative parent-child programme, there would still be a desire for pre-schools and a need for day-care centres for working parents. There will always be some people who see a need for institution-based programmes. Furthermore, one of the most common reasons for child abuse is because mothers - many of them single and without support - suffer from the strain of continuously caring for young children. In these cases in particular, there may be a need for formal care in early childhood.

22. Problems of family stress are on the increase world-wide, particularly as the major cities continue to absorb migrant rural populations into shanty towns which often lack even the most basic facilities. Displaced rural populations find themselves detached from the traditional community structures and associated social mores which had strengthened them in the past. In the new world of the city, the child is often unable to play freely or safely. He is removed from the supportive extended family into a situation where he must frequently fend for himself, or help to support a fragmented family unit. Families, and especially mothers, are increasingly isolated, although in some Latin American cities this problem is mitigated, for a time at least, by the re-formation in urban areas of distinct rural groups. Even these, however, are subject to stresses deriving from challenges to their culture and lifestyle for which they are unprepared.

23. This social isolation means that there is frequently no-one with whom the parent can share the emotional burdens of daily life. A new social pattern is emerging in which young women live alone with one or more infants. This form of social fragmentation generates new types of difficulty. The historical systems of family and social support are not structured to provide appropriate responses to these. The young mother, typically herself the child of a young, single mother, may be seeking through the child an opportunity for a loving personal relationship. In the inner-city culture of poverty in which most teenage parents live, expectations are low and the role of 'mother' may seem to offer the only way to realise some degree of self-worth or personal achievement. On a daily level, the constant demands of her child - for which she has received little or no

preparation – inhibit social contact with others and the transfer of know-how on child-rearing.

24. This becomes more complicated due to the predominance of contradictory models of parenting (especially motherhood) projected by the mass media, and even by some professionals. These models tend to present the child as a lovable but passive object instead of the more challenging reality. The parent, only superficially sophisticated, is likely to have a low self-concept and little understanding of her own emotional patterns. Coping with the demands of her child(ren) then becomes an additional burden, revealing her limited ability to provide emotional support for the child.

25. Equally, parents' isolation often produces excessive emotional investment in the child. The service of the child becomes the only goal in the mother's life. This may serve a purpose for a time but can ultimately lead to great ambivalence, even abuse. On the child's part, such a closed relationship slows up the process whereby the child gains autonomy and is prepared for wider social contacts and learning.

26. In these circumstances, the fundamental goal of parent and child-directed programmes should be to enable the mother learn how to build a mutually rewarding relationship, based on accurate observations of the child's growth and progress. Without such an affective base to the relationship, children cannot derive maximum benefit from 'educational' experiences. In simple terms, the aim is the generation of pleasure in the relationship, pleasure for the parent in living with the child. This leads in turn to the mother's heightened self-esteem, obviating her guilt feelings that the child is burdensome and that she is not able to cope.

27. Parent groups enable mothers to share their doubts and fears on child-rearing in a non-judgmental atmosphere. They can then gain understanding of the norms of child development in a setting of mutual acceptance. Again, *time* is an important factor, especially in circumstances where there is a daily struggle for survival. This tends to mean that parents can afford only to attend to children's basic physical needs. Children are, equally, entitled to time of their own. This factor alone is a profound justification for child care programmes, formal or informal.

28. Most disadvantaged families do not have the luxury of periodic relief through institutionalised child care programmes. Equally, in many developing countries, young children themselves help to sustain the family unit through contributions to work or care of even younger children. The real argument at present is how the most disadvantaged families, those with the greatest need, can be helped to gain some relief, increase their pleasure in their relationship with children, recognise their role in promoting their child's development and become thereby more effective parents and citizens.

Formal versus non-formal models

29. This reopens the debate concerning group care versus home-based programmes.

Group programmes allow for a better physical environment, for the socialisation of children along with their peers in an enlarged environment and for the systematic training of staff. Its disadvantages are its cost, a tendency for institutionalised programmes to atrophy, to provide unstimulating standardised programmes which fail to help the young child to develop skills and understanding, and a tendency to keep parents excluded or in passive roles. Where programmes are run by professionals, assistants without formal qualifications may only discharge subservient roles.

30. On the other hand, home-based programmes are less costly, more personalised, more open to what the community can contribute; yet – if they do not offer opportunities for parents to combine forces – there is the risk that they deny to the mother and child the possibility of enlarging their social horizons. The ideal would appear to be a mixed system combining group and more individualised approaches, according to community preferences.

31. Both types of programme, and this applies particularly to programmes for the very young child, provide occasions for exploiting the 'educational' potential of the child's daily routines. These are not merely occasions for introducing topics such as health, hygiene and nutrition. They also permit the encouragement of the affective dimension of mother/child relationships and can provide a point of departure for promoting autonomy, exploratory behaviour, richer contact and communication.

32. A similar debate between the formal and the non-formal model occurs in relation to training. This refers both to the work of professionals and so-called para-professionals. There is a universal agreement on the need for a new terminology. However they may be named, there are hardly any training programmes for workers of whatever sort concerned with community-based early childhood education, especially in the particular skills of working with *adults*. Building parental responsibility and confidence is a very delicate business. It requires non-intrusive, supportive skills which deal not only with the traditional tools but with emotions, relationships and attitudes (on one plane) and (on another) with the fragile 'politics' of community development. The complexity of these relationships must be recognised. They demand skills of negotiation and counselling of a high order, and must be a priority in in-service training. This is still an area on which the present state of knowledge is insufficient.

33. Certain general features are already discernible. When working with deprived groups, communication – verbal and non-verbal – should be empathetic, respectful, positive. 'Respectful intervention' rather than 'cultural arrogance' is the only way forward. The aim at the outset is to convey the notion that for parents or professionals to ask for help is *normal* not shameful, and that the so-called disadvantaged have much experience which they can share. Mothers are not required to be 'on duty' all the time. There are others who can share the load and who might welcome the chance to improve their skills and understanding. This could include members of the extended family when available, or other members of the community in surrogate positions.

Parental roles

34. Prevailing cultural patterns have, in practice, identified women as the prime educators/caregivers of children, especially in Latin America. Male involvement has been minimal. Since society rarely expects the father to contribute to the rearing of infants, they often live up to these negative expectations. It is very difficult to change fathers' involvement in the care of children unless their consciousness is raised so that involvement with their children becomes a rewarding experience. Important work in this difficult area has been achieved by various pilot programmes working to prepare disadvantaged adolescents for the parenting role by a combination of practice and theory.

35. Fathers' self-esteem suffers from their exclusion. Many are unable to get a job and end up using what little money they have for drinking, in the absence of more productive roles. Since society has placed fathers in a 'macho' role, they are rarely able to work or interact positively with their children. The father's role can, however, be conducive to helping young children. Young fathers should, for example, be encouraged to allow children to work alongside them in daily routine tasks, as has already been pioneered in some special vocational training programmes in the Caribbean which are linked with pre-school programmes.

36. Involvement of fathers is also a question of culture. Some communities are more difficult and resistant than others to the notion that the involvement of men in early child-rearing is appropriate. There is a need to concentrate in early childhood programmes on working with fathers and to enrich existing knowledge and understanding of how fathers can fulfil their role and provide positive models. In preparation of this, boys can be involved in school in working with young children and thus improving their understanding of their development. Courses in self-awareness, raising their self-esteem and offering balanced parenting patterns and models, are essential.

37. 'Men are drinking themselves to death, but women are breeding themselves to death'. Women's health is a crucial issue for the preservation of the family. Furthermore, low self-esteem in women affects every aspect of their lives, especially when it comes to the raising or rearing of their children, even to the extent of generating a self-hatred which can be passed on to children at a very early stage. It is for such reasons that early childhood programmes which do not take account of parents' needs and difficulties are likely to achieve only partial success.

38. Whether parents are indeed the prime educators is not a debatable issue. The question, however, is the degree to which this applies in individual cases and the kinds of support systems needed to enable the role to be discharged optimally. This points, in turn, to the need for information about successful initiatives in this important area to identify the common elements which might guide the development of new strategies.

39. The issue then is how best parents can realise their role. Working with parents and community for the benefit of the child has a distinct political dimension. This consists of enabling parents to achieve power and use it constructively – the so-called 'advo-

cacy' argument. Fundamental to this is the need to foster group awareness and organisation. Through such procedures parents should learn not only to use the institutions to benefit their children; they should also have the right to decide what is most advisable for their children's development and their own. In most countries educational systems reflect the values, cultures and priorities of the dominant social group. The educational system in these circumstances has a social control function rather than opening up new opportunities to the mass of the population. There are consequently divisive effects. The educational system in practice fails to work effectively with the most socially disadvantaged sectors, so increasing social discontent.

40. Programmes which seek to strengthen the family should therefore be based on the economic and social conditions in which families and children live. In some cases in the economically disadvantaged sectors the importance of education in its present form is not always fully recognised. Even when it is accepted that parents can be outstanding educators, it is necessary to strengthen their efficiency and to ensure that they gain in self-confidence. They often believe that professional educators are better equipped to educate and readily defer to the professional's expertise. This problem is evident in home-visiting programmes, and for this reason 'para-professional' parents should insist on meeting other parents who face the same difficulties so that they can learn to support each other. Such an approach widens the child's horizons and enriches possibilities for his or her future growth.

Cost-effectiveness of parent-based programmes

41. Programmes in early childhood, especially in Latin America, offer useful extension opportunities which assist communities' abilities to increase income. One such approach gives priority to the production aspect, whereby new resources are generated within the community in order to set up services for children. A second approach encourages programmes to centre first on the development of the child, in the process building community motivation and leading to self-financing of the programmes. The aim is to enable these to continue even if governmental assistance is not available. The first approach applies primarily in communities which lack any capital resources. The second is more appropriate to areas where the political will to provide enhanced early education opportunities has yet to be created.

42. Much depends on the political, social and economic circumstances in which programmes operate. However, in the current economic circumstances, governments are not necessarily predisposed to increase spending on social programmes. The classical routes to institutionalisation and dissemination are via evaluation, publication and influencing of policy with a view to gaining access to national resources. Experience indicates that the strategies do not always work. In situations of gross deprivation it is essential to look to other avenues which might ensure long-term continuity. Already in Latin America and the Caribbean a variety of programmes have emerged, as yet relatively small-scale, which show that new resources can be tapped in the interests of children. This, of course, does not exclude the community's own efforts to increase income through production.

43. Possibly the greatest single resource which the community can contribute is its own time, effort and dedication. Such energy is not to be viewed in terms of paternalistic voluntarism. In many societies in this region there is a deep-rooted tradition of collective community effort to achieve its own betterment. This force can be channelled directly for the benefit of children. Such experience generates a range of critical questions on just how far the 'empowerment' of parents can go.

Social influences

44. The total responsibility for children, which was accepted by most parents and local communities in earlier times, has altered radically as a result of modernisation. Social structures have become larger and less identified with the local communities. In the technically developed societies, professions have emerged which give status and validation to modern mandarins, 'the wise men' whose judgements on the health, development and rearing of children take precedence over those of parents and community leaders. Many non-professionals assume that professional judgments are necessarily superior to the knowledge, instincts and traditional judgements of parents and local communities. Indeed, most policy discussions and decisions on early childhood programmes take place in the absence of those most intimately concerned with these issues. This process reflects the extent to which parents have lost the confidence to assert the value of their child-rearing experience within the family unit.

45. Within the advantaged communities the gap between professionals and community perspectives is not too wide. The real clash of perspectives occurs when professionals and parents belong to different social strata or ethnic groups. The differing cultural norms and values among these groups are highlighted, to the disadvantage of those least able to articulate their significance.

46. A recent British study of children from differing social environments clearly illustrates the problem; 'The working class girls were particularly affected by the nursery school (wholly professionalised) setting. In their relations with the nursery staff they tended to be much more subdued, passive and dependent than at home. The staff responded to this perceived immaturity of working class children by pitching their talk to them at a lower level. Far from compensating for any inadequacies of their homes, the staff were in fact lowering their expectations and standards for the working class children'. Needless to say, one of this study's conclusions is that '...children's intellectual and language needs are more likely to be satisfied at home than at school.'

47. A cardinal issue is how parents can redress this situation; and whether professionals can develop facilitating skills. The issue of 'The Parent as Prime Educator' has both a qualitative and an economic dimension, although the economic attractions of the parental role are too easily accepted by policy makers.

48. The educational role of the parent is given fairly perfunctory attention in much of the literature on early childhood education. Although it is recognised in theory and in a number of research reports, it is seldom an integral part of formal early childhood pro-

grammes, especially in the technically developed societies. The reasons for this neglect are hard to grasp. There are differing perceptions of what is possible. It is clear that those promoting a micro-social focus approach the theme somewhat more optimistically than those with a more macro approach, even though there are in Latin America some noteworthy exceptions to this.

49. Yet there is much evidence that parents and other para-professionals, such as day care assistants with minimal training, can offer administrative and teaching skills and sensitivity which are more than adequate to the needs of early childhood programmes. However, professionally-staffed institutions remain an expensive part of the pre-school scene. It is central to the thinking of most employers that formal qualifications are crucial for those who provide early childhood education.

The professional's role

50. The adherents of the 'micro' approach emphasise that parents can indeed be the prime educator but need professional help. Parents can be supported in precise ways, for example by learning that by reading stories to their children they are carrying out educational tasks and improving their children's language. For this work professionals must accept the realities of family life and be made aware of their own professional defensiveness. They have to recognise that parents can and do educate their children. The problem is to define the type of help, the tools, and how to apply them.

51. Parent-based early childhood education programmes could be given access to a wide range of developmental materials so that they can exercise choice as to the extent to which their local programmes will emphasise developmental, educational, nutritional, health, community, economic or civic goals. Coordinating centres, operating regionally, not too strongly tied to the central bureaucracy, could in turn produce and supply a range of inexpensive resources. These might include illustrated materials explaining topics of importance, simple pictorial, reading, spatial and other materials of educational value, materials relevant to the local environment and traditional occupations, and any other materials suited to the overall goals of the programmes. Such supplies should include materials of particular relevance to nutrition and health. The centres could also encourage artistic, musical and dramatic expressions appropriate to and arising from local cultures.

52. The importance of the link between the 'promotor' (the professional or para-professional who activates programmes) and the parents is clear. If the matters presented, raised or encouraged by the 'promotor' are relevant and interesting, the parents will be likely to adopt them. Thus it is important to design and make materials for the home, based on an intimate understanding of both the home and the local environment; to pace the work according to the parents' responses and to discuss problems openly.

53. The role of the professional is not to *teach* the parents. The relationship, at best, is complementary not hierarchical. Professionals can best contribute by systematising

parents' experiences, widening their common meeting ground, and enriching their environment. In particular, teaching-learning situations must be developed and shared between parent and professional, so as to enable the validation of the parents' knowledge and self-confidence. This should be achieved without encouraging unrealistic opinions in parents or professionals that everything they know is good.

54. It is important that the teacher or 'promotor' be able to identify certain types of themes that bring together parents' shared problems, for example on health practices, nutrition and specific problems. In addition, in the interests of restoring cultural awareness and confidence, the designing of toys and the retrieval of games rooted in the culture as well as legend and folklore should be promoted and community expertise in these areas tapped.

Quality in programmes

55. The latter point is particularly important in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies that prevail throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region. There is a growing, but still as yet not fully realised, trend towards enabling children to grow up within the symbolic world deriving from their own culture. Here, play is frequently the starting point. The content of early childhood programmes draws in parents and other adults who, as carriers of the local culture, should be closely involved.

56. Such culturally sensitive early childhood programmes should on the one hand reflect community language(s), patterns of interaction and play. On the other hand, programmes should seek to build on this base so as to extend the child's world *beyond* the particular world of the home. The key issues are to promote continuity and to avoid cultural ambivalence, which confuse the child. Given a strong and sure foundation in his or her own culture, the 'minority' child can display a remarkable capacity for mastering new skills and new languages which may not be of that culture. Programmes must not seek, even inadvertently, to devalue what is properly of the child's self, the very root of the emerging personality. The safeguarding role which parents can serve is again underlined.

57. This further underlines the need for early childhood programmes, so far as possible, to be decentralised and to be clearly placed within local community frameworks. Not only should they be managed by the local communities, but para-professionals and parents from the same communities should play a major part in staffing the programmes. In this, it is important to remain conscious of the need to judge quality in relation to local needs, perceptions and life-styles.

58. Another aspect of parent participation is the need to enable not only professionals but also local leaders and community residents to have a clearly recognised responsibility for chosing the most suitable people to serve the community as workers in early childhood development initiatives.

59. The education of the young is a shared task, a coming together of many 'profes-

sionalisms'. Although at theoretical, and even at policy, levels there is a growing understanding of the notion of partnership, this comprehension often does not exist in the bureaucracies which execute policy, nor in many professionals nor indeed training institutions.

60. Fuller comprehension should arise from a sound understanding of the concept of the para-professional. 'Para' denotes something complementary: the one that helps, the one who gives aid, a 'volunteer' agent, supported by the community and working with it. Problems may arise when the non-professional, 'promotor', 'animador' or 'community agent', whatever they may be called, become permanent employees within formal systems.

Institutionalisation

61. This raises the whole issue of institutionalisation of the para-professional, how the paraprofessional finds a place within the established structures.

62. In Peru, para-professional 'animadoras' receive a small stipend. The majority of these do not plan on making this work a career, but consider it as temporary. In Jamaica, para-professionals working in community-supported early childhood facilities also receive a nominal stipend plus whatever additional amounts the host community can afford. Significantly, in Venezuela during the 1970's a major effort to introduce para-professionals into the education system failed when the group in question was absorbed as a new stratum of the teachers' pay structure.

63. The real challenge lies in creating a system of continuous 'professionalisation' for all, based on the concept that knowledge is power. Ways must be found to make knowledge accessible to the greatest number of people. This is not just a professional or para-professional dilemma. The problem is how to assemble the body of knowledge needed for communities to be able to sustain themselves and achieve a better future for their children.

64. In the majority of countries the principal reason for setting up programmes based on para-professionals has been financial. Evidence is, however, accumulating that a number of such programmes are based on a better conceptual and methodological foundation than are many professionally organised programmes. Some project evaluations have showed that children within informal parent-delivered programmes achieve on a similar level as do children (from the same environment) who receive good quality formal schooling. Programmes based on family and community development and carried out by those actually involved have not only proved successful in the child's development, but have been of marked social benefit to family and community. They have contributed to a notable improvement in the material conditions of life surrounding children, and furthermore the cost of such a service is very much lower.

65. Families initially can find it difficult to participate in an organised way in such programmes. Often professionals may assume that such behaviour is caused by

parents' laziness or ignorance. However, such an explanation may ignore the difference between the coordinators' expectations of the families and what the conditions of their normal daily life permit. Where conditions of poverty dominate, it is almost impossible for parents to carry out some activities at home. In such cases the professionals' expectations may be unrealistic.

66. In other circumstances families may have previously been exposed to paternalistic or charitable initiatives by social agencies of various kinds. These agencies have in fact encouraged local people to be passive. This makes it difficult for families to understand the meaning or purposes of programmes which operate on the principle of parental empowerment and activation. They may indeed prefer dependence upon the professional which removes the need to initiate changes in their own lives.

67. Overcoming this requires professionals with a new repertoire of skills, alert to the problems of working with marginal communities and sensitive in conveying insights. Thus, the professional becomes facilitator, counsellor, training agent and monitor for the non-professional. Such a professional recognises that most of his or her skills, knowledge and wisdom *can* be imparted to non-professionals, and realises that there is much to be learned from the skills, knowledge and wisdom of non-professionals.

68. A professional who can help local communities to articulate their needs, and who can persuade governments and funding bodies to invest in areas which have been previously neglected, has a particular contribution to make. There is a need, then, for professional deliverers of services to families, whether in education, health or welfare, to reconceive their role. By stressing the importance of parents, professionals take on a more sensitive and skilled partnership role, using their professionalism to bring out skills in others.

Professional and parent in collaboration

69. What are the pratical implications of this? In Latin America especially, schools and teachers have often turned their backs on reality. There is particular pertinence in the famous phrase of educator John Holt, who said: 'Everything important in my life I learned before going to school, outside school and after leaving school'. It is important to develop strategies for modifying educators' attitudes and behaviour in the subsequent school years also. Programmes have been launched along these lines, such as that of the noted Brazilian educator, Dra. Ana María Popovic, who developed a system in Brazil called 'Thought and Language'. This attempted to change teachers' attitudes and behaviour as an essential precursor to improving pedagogical know-how.

70. To ensure that this dynamic process occurs, parents should also be encouraged to carry out the learning approaches developed together with the professionals. Parents and professionals should derive strength and insight from each other's special attributes and accomplishments. Here again vestigial professional arrogance can act as a barrier and this can only be offset by continuing in-service training.

71. Teachers need to be convinced of the importance of working with parents. Since they are often over-burdened with a heavy work load they may view parent involvement as an additional task. Schools must allow time for the teacher to work with families. This should be an integral and normal part of the teacher's job.

72. The basic strategy in this case is to direct teacher-training efforts towards those teachers who are more predisposed towards innovation and more sensitive, in particular, to working with parents. The tactical objective is to create interest among the professsional 'peers' and draw the more hesitant professionals along in the wake of the innovators, once it is clearly perceived that work with parents enriches and does not threaten.

73. Parents and the community must have a voice in the selection of teachers if effective partnerships are to be launched. They must be enabled to exercise this voice. Executive decree, as has already been shown, is not enough. Teachers must understand that they are not feather-bedded for life and they must constantly refine and improve their cognitive and social skills and open themselves to new ideas.

74. The middle classes are very vocal and deeply involved in the educational system. In the United States they dominate Parent Teacher Associations. Although all schools have these, lower socio-economic groups are only marginally represented. There are many reasons why this is so. Some pertain to language barriers; others to social class and still others to political or racial factors. In many instances there is in practice no real basis for cooperation. The success of the middle classes in organising parental associations in many countries stems from their direct iterest in the quality of their children's education and their demonstrated ability to bring about change in the school system serving their children. The issue has to be faced that the need to change the way in which professionals participate in early education applies with equal force to some kinds of parental organisations. There may be, for example, a case for well organised parent bodies sharing their skills with other parents seeking ways of achieving a 'voice'.

The way ahead: Impact on policy

75. Looking across the board at projects in countries at all levels of development, the crucial question now is *how* the parent can grow as an *educator*. Parenting is no longer an amateur business, to be picked up in a haphazard way. Nor can institutions and armies of professionals substitute effectively for lost forms of social reinforcement. A society which passes total responsibility to professional service providers is one which has lost the ability to educate and care for its children. In these circumstances, an authoritarian, role-prescribing, isolated approach by professionals has therefore failed and other options, which put the prime role of parents as educators in the forefront, should be considered.

76. Support systems which are functioning well demonstrate that the family cannot

be the *object* of education. Rather, a transaction between equals must be established, that is between parents and professionals. The family is not a 'problem' to be 'solved'. On the contrary, starting from where people are, the aim is to help families to reach appropriate goals; the stress must be on habilitation rather than on the cure of some supposed disease, or the remedy of some deficiency. The bottom line is the extent to which motivated parents develop as deliverers of services to young children and also as community leaders able to direct their energies towards addressing the problems of their own and other disadvantaged communities.

77. There has been a widespread tendency towards the generation of small-scale-projects, particularly in Latin America. These can have considerable value in 'model development' terms but may not always provide answers to the broad problems of children and families with which societies are faced. The transition from micro to macro is one which has to be faced by funding angecies, public and private, national and international. It is too easy to create cosy projects under the protective umbrella of special funding arrangements. Ultimately, projects are successful in so far as they pass without substantial losses from the micro to the macro level. This progression demands both programme quality clearly demonstrated and political conviction at all levels. In this latter aspect, too romantic a position should be avoided. Nearly all governments promise change but social and economic considerations seldom meet.

78. Recent years have witnessed a major trend in many countries for proponents of policy shifts in the social field, particularly policy as it relates to children, to take on the task of influencing the process of decision-making. This can be successful in the relatively few instances where a straight line can be traced between intervention, analysis, presentation of results (whether in technical of more popular form) and decision-making. Even in countries where the legislator is strongly susceptible to 'pressure' of this nature, the line is not always very clear and there are understandable doubts about the influence of research upon decision-making in the social field.

79. Some governments also may not be responsive to pressure. Once policy-makers are in office they can do as they please. This system may be in place for five to ten years. It may take that length of time to reach these policy-makers and then suddenly another political party or system comes to power with subsequent reversals in policy and personnel.

Child advocacy

80. The exponents of 'child advocacy' should develop a double strategy, working not only from the top down, influencing policy-makers through conventional lobbying techniques, but also working from the grassroots. There is a need to heighten general sensitivity to programmes for the benefit of children and families and at the same time, to promote awareness of what governments, following their stated policies, can or may do in this field. Mobilised grassroots opinion can have a salutary, formative effect on legislators' attitudes.

81. For many years educators have sat back and assumed that it is the business of policy-makers to accept innovation. Educators have failed to be as politically astute as other groups and are only now beginning to present their views on essential educational issues. Policy-makers *have* a point of view and generally use that as a spring board for their decisions. Educators and researchers have failed to provide them with the elements on which to base ideas on educational policy. Educators have failed to listen to policy-makers, to understand their points of view, to reach out to them and explore new viewpoints with an open mind.

82. Policy-makers and parents should make every attempt to understand each other. Educators should try to become aware of the problems which policy-makers are attempting to resolve. They do, after all, have the last word in the decision-making process. they need information, in abundance, to help them comprehend educators, parents and the needs of families. The kind of information which is of greatest interest, rightly or wrongly, to the decision-maker inevitably focuses onn the issue of cost-effectiveness. Too little information is available in this critical aspect.

83. Current day care services are expensive and reach only a small part of the population. By manipulating resources and other facilities and modifying programmes, it is possible to reach many more children as well as their parents. For example, if one takes the time, space, resources and people needed for full-time day care centres and uses these for part-time pre-school centres, two and a half times as many children can be involved. A combined programme of parent group meetings and para-professional home visiting can be even more cost-effective. Such alternatives need to be considered in all those countries facing financial stringency, where a large proportion of children receive no early childhood education.

84. In wider terms the economic value of early education needs to be recognised, since economic effectiveness can be a powerful incentive to governments to increase investment. It has been shown that the social rate of return for higher education is 13%, for secondary education 16%, and for primary education 27%. Consolidated evidence on the rate of return of early childhood education is not yet available but it is not likely to be less than 27%, and may be a good deal higher if parents are closely involved in the work.

85. Much research has pointed to other economic benefits of education. The more access there is to education, the more just is the division of income in the population. Unless there is a strong foundation of early childhood education, however, many children cannot benefit from school education.

86. Early drop-out from school is a critically important economic loss for many societies, especially in Latin America. Investment in early childhood can reduce this loss. The economic benefits of early childhood education need to be explored more fully in order to convince governments and international organisations, such as the World Bank, that this should be a prime area for investment.

Evaluation as a formative tool

87. Evaluation in more general terms has other implications and other audiences. Until today there has been a trend to evaluate programmes with instruments designed before modern strategies emerged. Programmes are evaluated with instruments such as scales of development and intelligence tests that do not *reflect* the real degree of achievement. The traditional ways of evaluation are an obstacle to innovation and to the clarification of concepts concerning the problematics of evaluation.

88. To overcome this situation, methods and instruments should be developed of greater descriptive power so as to document some at least of the following: parents' participation in the programme, especially at the stage of planning and launching; attitudes, beliefs, values and expectations of parents in regard to the education of the very young child; the degree of satisfaction felt by parents concerning programme activities; the varieties and level of interaction between children and adults; language activities, turn-taking and role-playing; perception by adults and children of their social competence, self-image, self-confidence, autonomy; ability to share and organisational capacity; improvement of environmental conditions; child-rearing practices; the process of programme development including its management and institutional links; and the development of forms of interaction between para-professionals on the one hand and communities on the other.

89. Deciding upon what to evaluate and how to do this is not easy. There are perhaps three identifiable groups which have an interest in evaluation. Project workers (and funding agencies) are concerned to establish whether programme objectives have been achieved. Parents and communities wish to know what is coming out of their endeavours. The State itself, or where applicable the relevant local authority, has a vested interest in outcomes. The views of all these interested bodies should find a place within the overall evaluation design.

90. The issue of the practicability of control groups inevitably generates heat. One possibility is that two equivalent neighbourhoods might be chosen for comparison, although natural variance has to be taken into account. In one area the programme might start one or two years later than in the other, which facilitates the examination of programme effects over time. Another view focusses on the difficulties of this style of evaluation and stresses the in-depth study of process – how the programme is being developed, what are the factors which point to its success or failure in different areas of operation, what changes are brought about in the community, in administrative structures and in project workers themselves.

91. Both positions stress the fact that, however simple or sophisticated the evaluation, there are useful indicators that can be used to assess programme effectiveness. The quantitative does not have to be intimidating. Projects can record what has been achieved in the numbers of the communities and groups involved, the numbers of promoters recruited from the community and trained. Changes in the home environment can also be measured.

92. In evaluation the crucial feature is honesty – ultimately to project workers themselves. Honestly conducted evaluation can show where a programme is failing and point to areas where modification is needed. In this respect it may be the case that changes in the behaviour of target groups are a more useful and valid indication of programme outcomes than are attitudes. The latter are very personal, intimate and alter very slowly. There is also an overriding need for sensitivity to the interests of parents so that they do not feel 'used' by the researcher.

93. The discussion continues on the respective virtues of internal and external evaluation. the external evaluator often has little awareness of the fine nuances of a project's functioning. This unfamiliarity means that he or she may fail to elicit the best information from parents and communities. The internal evaluator is more likely to be entrusted with information which may enrich the perception of a programme's growth. Both approaches have a part to play and are complementary if properly applied.

94. The debate on evaluation can take a somewhat anarchic form. There *are* no fixed answers. However, returning to the needs of the policy-makers, there is a clear need for ways to be discovered of comparing programmes, of drawing general strategic lessons, of validating the case for scarce funds to be directed towards meeting the needs of children and families in new and more productive ways.

Conclusions

95. For many people, particularly parents, the argument for early childhood education still relates to how children perform in primary school. The understandable demand is that public education systems improve their performance vis à vis disadvantaged children in particular. This concern inevitably produces a variety of mythis, the most powerful of which relates to curriculum. The notion of a global curriculum still has its adherents. It feeds on the dated idea of universal stages in children's development. Yet it is clear that a formal curriculum developed without reference to parents which is one-sided, for example, purely cognitive or based upon the norms of another culture, does not respond to children's needs. It may even underline and reinforce parents' fears that the indigenous culture is in some way inferior, which in turn leaves the child in an educational limbo.

96. A good curriculum at this stage should be based on the child's own family and environment, positively reinforcing these whilst remaining sensitive to the need of the child to move on to other environments. The key issue is the child's stable socialisation, the development of the capacity to cope with school as an institution, and the ability to exploit is opportunities rather than only to be made 'ready' for the school's supposed academic challenge.

97. Regarding the school itself, the need is that is should play an active role in educational innovation for deprived children. The urgency of the problems facing educational global makes this imperative. Many teachers of deprived children lay the

blame for the failure of the school entirely on the parents, thereby absolving themselves from reponsibility. It is essential to introduce an awareness of the real nature of these issues into the formal educational system and to heighten many teachers' levels of awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged children and families and educator's responsibilities towards them.

98. Family education and its support systems should be guided by the principle that all human beings have the right to develop their potential to the full, to carry responsibility for their own deeds and be valued as individuals. Equally, every society, if it is to release the capacities of its population for the benenfit of all, needs to understand and create the structures and opportunities for this process to occur.

99. This point is illustrated by a recent interview with one of he 'Madres-Animadores' in Ate-Vitarte, Lima. She was asked the 'What do you see as the meaning of your experience?' She replied: 'I would never have thought that the person I am now could have merged from what I used to be. The project we have here is something that should be spread all over the country. This is how we can help our children, who need this kind of education. There are lots of mothers, like myself, who could do it. I see the future as neither good nor bad, but our children are not abandoned. As for my future, I hope I'll get to be someone some day. I want to help children - all of them, not just my own. I can see, through my own experience, that working with young children is good work - work that can be done by mothers even if they don't have a degree. We must not wait for help from outside; instead, we must begin to stand by ourselves, to progress because, like that, we can change our country.'

100. Against this setting the words of the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral are particularly apposite:

> 'Many things can wait. The child cannot.
> Right now his bones are being formed,
> His blood is being made, his senses are
> Being developed. To him we cannot say
> Tomorrow. HIS NAME IS TODAY.'

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- Funds can be made available for projects organised and implemented by public authorities, academic and non-governmental, voluntary institutions.
- Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide grants for study, research or travel. No grants are made in reponse to general appeals.
- The Foundation recognises that projects in its field of work require time to develop and implement new approaches. Grants are normally made in cycles of three years. The long-term sustainability of a project is an important consideration in the appraisal of proposals.
- The Foundation does not prescribe a rigid formula for proposals. Potential applicants are advised to submit an outline before preparing a detailed document.
- Decisions regarding the funding of major projects are the responsibility of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. No commitment can be given prior to approval of a project by Trustees.

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