ABSTRACT
          Community promoters are community members who are
selected and trained to perform specific tasks in a project or
program. Promoters have worked in education projects throughout Latin
American since the 1960s, and their use in programs has shown to
boost program success. Whether promoters work in externally directed
programs or in more autonomous settings, they are most effective if
they are selected from the community itself and share the
sociocultural surroundings of program participants. The selection of
would-be promoters should be dictated by their personal qualities and
the tasks they will perform. Selection criteria should reflect a mix
of community- and organization-developed desires/needs. The
strategies selected to train promoters must relate the
knowledge/technical skills required of promoters and the cultural
values/guidelines that influence their attitudes/code of conduct. The
most commonly used training strategy is that of transference, which
means training promoters and having them in turn train grassroots
groups. Another training model is based on participatory methods.
Other key issues that must be resolved on a program-by-program basis
are payment/funding of promoters and the relationship between
promoters and professionals. (MN)

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# Studies and Evaluation Papers

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# Selecting and training community promoters in Latin America

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and
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## About the authors

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## About the projects

The projects in Colombia, Peru and Venezuela referred to in this paper have all received support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation at some time. The Foundation itself concentrates on supporting early childhood development projects in more than 40 countries around the world. Nearly three-quarters of the projects that it supports in Latin America make use of community promoters.

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# Selecting and training community promoters in Latin America

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# Selecting and training
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# Latin America

Today's prevailing conditions make it particularly difficult for communities and their inhabitants to participate in the task of education. Nonetheless, it is admirable that, under the most difficult circumstances, communities, parents and promoters alike continue to respond in one way or another to the challenges education poses in our country. Even in the most adverse conditions, volunteers are readily available: while living their own frustrating reality, they express the hope of more and better education for their children. In short, most of them believe in the utopia of a better world, of a less bitter and more gratifying future for those they judge to be 'the country's future'.

Soledad Ordoñez
Peru, 1990

Many non-formal early childhood development programmes directly train and work with community promoters. Promoters are community members who are selected and trained to carry out specific tasks in a project or programme. Depending on the country and the specific features of a particular programme, promoters are referred to by a variety of names: monitors, animators, popular educators, grassroots coordinators, para-professionals.

This paper examines the main criteria for selecting promoters and highlights some training strategies used by education programmes in Latin America. The paper also reflects on the benefits of working with promoters and raises some of the difficult issues that need to be addressed. These include whether to pay or compensate promoters, the relationship between promoters and regular professional or technical staff, and the dichotomy or tension that sometimes exists between the needs and views of the community and the views and objectives of the agency or organisation that has engaged the promoter.

**The place of promoters in Latin American education strategies**

Promoters have worked in education projects throughout Latin America since the 1960s. In most countries, the main reason for involving promoters was one of economics. Programmes run with the assistance of promoters were usually less expensive to implement and therefore had a broader scope.

Experience has shown, however, that the presence of promoters has also generally meant better results. Because promoters are usually selected from the community itself and share the social and cultural surroundings of the children involved in the programmes, they are more likely to understand their needs.[1]

1 Bernard van Leer Foundation (1986) *The parent as prime educator. changing patterns of parenthood*, The Hague, The Netherlands

This allows a programme to be more easily established in a community, enhances interaction, and facilitates continuity and sustainability.

Promoters also contribute to the democratisation of knowledge. Programmes involving community promoters make extensive use of the type of knowledge that people have gained from their own experience, knowledge which can sometimes be overlooked or undervalued by professionals.

### Influencing professionals

Programmes run in this fashion enable local authorities and community members to increase their own capacity to deal with the problems directly affecting them. This does not deny the value of outside expertise. Instead, such programmes can change the traditional relationship specialists have maintained with communities. This new form of interaction allows other interpretations to permeate the thinking of professionals. This in turn enriches their own grasp of problems, and the relevance of their strategies.

Although professionals may have adequate technical skills, they often lack the educational and social know-how needed to work at a grassroots level. It is not easy for them to achieve a genuine cultural union with community members; too often their knowledge becomes a form of imposition and control. Their neutrality and scientific objectivity may conceal an attempt by professionals to transform reality according to their theories, rather than giving value to the knowledge and culture of community members.[2]

Several studies have shown that, in working with society's poorest sectors, institutions tend to transmit their own interpretations and classifications of problems. People who are meant to benefit from programmes that are run in this way have to accept and internalise these interpretations.[3]

### Roles of the promoter

Promoters are an essential link between the institution operating a programme and the community where the programme is based. This is the case no matter what type of education programme is in operation, or what methodology it uses.

The variety of roles attributed to promoters stems from the different ways of defining their specific functions. These vary depending on the social context and the objectives and methodology of the programme.

Some programmes work from the understanding that change is a process chiefly stimulated by external agents. The promoter is viewed as someone who cooperates with external agents and is usually chosen from those seeming more receptive to change. These tend to be young people and/or community members not previously incorporated in the traditional social or economic structures. Such promoters see themselves as modernisation agents or extension workers, and essentially transmit an institution's ideas and technical guidelines.

Another approach, that of *educación popular* (popular education), draws heavily on Paulo Freire's concept of a non-formal education activity, with a methodological content linking educational action to the development of grassroots identity and organisation within society.[4] Most popular education projects involve promoters who have specific skills and knowledge and who help groups to express themselves and coordinate their actions. In many cases, they become community leaders. Such promoters are expected to be committed to the interests of the community as a whole, not just to a project's direct target group. Institutions which hold this view regard promoters as mediators for their workplans. They encourage them to participate in decisions about a project's contents and procedures.[5]

2   Interdisciplinary Programme of Research on Education (PIIE) (1989) *Guía para la capacitación en educación popular*, Module 1, Santiago, Chile

3   Gumperz, J. (1982) *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK; Goodwin, E (1990) 'Conversation analysis', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 19, 1990, pp 283 308, Paugam, S (1991), *La disqualification sociale: essai sur la nouvelle pauvreté*, PUF, Paris, France

4   An overview of the evolution of Freire's thinking may be seen in Torres, R M (1986), *Educación popular un encuentro con Paulo Freire*, Quito, Ecuador, CECCA CLDCO

5   Lizarzaburu, A (1981), *La formación de promotores de base en programas de alfabetización*, ORE ALC/UNESCO, Santiago, Chile

## Relating grassroots groups and external institutions

There are three key aspects to the relationship between grassroots groups and institutions. These are: the participatory nature of educational action; the transmission and transformation of knowledge; and the production of independent action.

Participation may have an integrating nature if it seeks to increase community involvement in an existing social order, or a more liberating nature if it tries to transform existing institutions and social structures.[6] Some forms of participation may treat all members of the community homogeneously; other approaches may take into account the differences that can exist as a result of class or gender.

External knowledge can simply be transmitted to help transform traditional thought patterns in the community. Another approach is to 'rescue' everyday or popular knowledge within the community. This can then be used as the viewpoint from which to analyse situations. External knowledge then complements popular knowledge.

The acquisition of new knowledge can stimulate either individual or social action in the community. In some cases, this may be collective action geared towards a transformation of the power structures affecting the living conditions and the identity of society's marginalised sectors.[7]

## Who decides?

The work of promoters can be analysed or classified according to whether their primary relationship is with the community or with the external body that operates development programmes. Another way of describing this is whether the promoter is 'managed' or has a fair amount of autonomy.

6   Cariola, P (1986) cited in LaBelle, T J, *Non-formal education in Latin America and the Caribbean: stability, reform or revolution?*, Praeguer, USA.

7   Bengoa, J. (1988) 'La educación para los movimientos sociales' in: Van Dam, A., et al, *Educación popular en América Latina: la teoría en la práctica*, CESO, pp.7-42, The Hague, The Netherlands

## Two Colombian examples

The strategies implemented by projects in Colombia illustrate the diverse approaches that involve promoters.

The International Centre for Education and Human Development (CINDE) assumes that development is not a mere technological problem that can be resolved simply by disseminating knowledge. For CINDE, development of human potential is the crucial point. This occurs through a process in which people become organised and active in solving their own problems with the aid of a catalyst. Development, therefore, must come from the local people and be based on their perceptions of their needs. At every step of the way, communities themselves participate in identifying and solving their problems.

The educator's role in such an approach is considered non-directive and interactive. Educators work with the people, stimulating but not dictating their development. They can provide options and information, but their main tasks are to stimulate ideas, help people express their own needs and

thoughts, and build up their self-confidence so that they can attempt to satisfy their own needs. This method encourages discussion and offers a strong possibility for sustainable development.

The community development approach used in the Atlantic Coast project operated by the University of the North in Barranquilla involves a set of actions that aims to improve the community's social relationships and to transform the material living conditions of a given group or sector. This type of promotion is held to have liberation as its ultimate goal, that is, the continuous creation of a new way of being human. It offers the opportunity to create new and better human relations, while overtly it is only material living conditions which are being transformed. It coins the term community promoter, mainly attributing to promoters the role of catalysts in the process of community development.

Sources: CINDE (1990) *Algunos elementos que describen el proyecto PROMESA*, Medellín, Colombia.
CINDE (1989) *Creciendo Unidos*, November
Chetley, A. (1990) *The Power to Change  the experience of the Costa Atlántica Project in Colombia (1977-1988)*, The Hague, The Netherlands, Bernard van Leer Foundation

In a more externally directed programme, promoters are trained to carry out certain activities. They do not usually question the general guidelines of a project or its goals; they just perform a specialised function and are expected to carry out the technical requirements of their job in an acceptable manner.

In a more autonomous situation, a promoter can participate in decision making, share in project evaluation, redefine contents and strategies, and initiate new experiences.

### Complex interactions

Either approach involves a complex set of interactions. First, the promoter has to deal with the tensions between the needs of the community and the objectives of the organisation sponsoring work in that community, if these are different. Then the promoter and those involved in selecting and training the promoter have to decide whether more emphasis should be placed on technical knowledge or on attitudes and values. Finally, there is a question of the ultimate outcome of the training: whether the aim is to develop a specialist or a leader.

In practice, of course, the role of the promoter is rarely only one of these positions, but ranges across the whole spectrum of possibilities. At times, the power or authority of promoters lies in what they know and in the relationship they hold with the institution managing the project. The role of the promoters is centred on their ability to solve some of the demands and needs of a given community. In such cases, promoters translate community needs into active responses related to a project's objectives, methodology and resources, for example: vaccination campaigns, birth control programmes, support to families on environmental hygiene.[8] This means that the promoters' work relates to specific tasks and responsibilities within the project. Promoters can influence some changes or reformulations of the action undertaken, but do not have the opportunity to substantially transform the already defined programme.

In other cases, the promoter is defined chiefly as an example or role model for the community. Here, a promoter's technical or specialised knowledge is not as important as his or her capacity to motivate the community and represent its interests. Emphasis is placed on a series of values a promoter should have, such as showing solidarity, having a critical capacity, being resourceful, conscientious, democratic, being a good teamworker. These qualities allow promoters to become respected and accepted by the community and to obtain power or authority in a given project and with its external agents. This allows promoters to negotiate or reformulate a project's goals, contents and procedures in relation to the community interests they represent. Promoters are expected to be independent and display initiative and resourcefulness. They are also expected eventually to be able to replicate the experience beyond the space and time limits of a given institution and project. Through this strategy, in the medium or long term, personnel will be trained at the popular level who continue to cater to local educational needs. These are people with recognised leadership capacities who can strengthen grassroots organisations.

The greatest challenge community intervention projects face today is for promoters to achieve an adequate balance between fulfilling a limited, specialised role and assuming a leadership role.

### Selection and training of promoters

> To have experience as mothers, to have qualities, abilities ... a wish to work with families.
> You don't have to be a professional to work with families, the main thing is to have a good temper, to be patient, to love them.

8  Amar, J (1986) Los hogares comunales del niño teoría y experiencias, Ediciones Uninorte, p 76, Barranquilla, Colombia

You must know how to read and write to avoid problems.
Some people have studied, but they don't know much.

> – opinions of promoters in Peru about the qualities to look for when selecting promoters

## Selecting promoters

Both the personal qualities of would-be-promoters and the tasks they will carry out should be considered during a selection process. A desired profile for promoters varies according to the work being planned.

Some programmes, when selecting promoters, give special attention to skills and knowledge or previous experience in dealing with the problems or issues that are likely to be encountered. Other programmes emphasise the individual qualities the potential candidates display to become community leaders in the future: their honesty and willingness to serve the community; their ability to be truly representative and to be democratic in the exercise of their duties; their capacity to stand up to authorities, if necessary.[9]

Minimum preliminary requirements normally do exist, such as living in the community, having enough spare time and a minimum level of schooling, wanting to work with families and so on.[10] Usually, too, common principles guide selection procedures in different projects. There is broad agreement, for example, that communities should help choose promoters, although the degree of participation and the importance attributed to it, might vary from project to project.

Some institutions and staff managing a programme make their own criteria explicit, while also taking into account the community's criteria. Negotiation takes place in which a genuine effort is made to match the candidates' legitimacy with the desired efficiency and other working requirements. Other projects attach more importance to the community's opinion. External agents do not provide a set of criteria because they regard producing such a list as imposing their viewpoint.

Nevertheless, implicit criteria operate during the selection process, both at community and institution levels. For example, when promoters are not paid, the candidates usually come from the richer families, are more likely to be very young and have more schooling. When the work is with children, the community almost invariably recommends women. They have always been assigned this role and have more experience in child care.[11] If a project is geared to the family unit, a stable, harmonious couple is selected to be a model for the community.

## Training promoters

Different training strategies relate to the two central aspects that define the work of the promoters: the knowledge and technical skills, and the set of cultural values and guidelines that influence a promoter's attitudes or code of conduct. When knowledge acquisition is stressed, strategies focusing on its transmission will be developed. Training will be instructive and limited in terms of time (training sessions, courses, work with educational materials). When values are emphasised, training will be based upon reflection about daily life and accumulated experiences and will be a lengthier process.

Experience of popular education projects shows that external agents favour the attitudinal aspects and imparting education principles. Many feel that although promoters should have some specific knowledge or be competent in specific areas, the most important thing is for them to internalise a methodology and general principles. They want promoters to be independent individuals who are

9   PIIE-CIDE (1986) La acción de las organizaciones poblacionales, Santiago, Chile

10  These constitute requirements for promoters in the PRONOEI project See Llanos, M (1984) Evaluación Integral del Proyecto Experimental de Educación Inicial No Escolarizada de VITARTE, p 31. Lima, Peru

11  Llanos, M (1990) Evaluación del Centro Nacional de Capacitación Docente de Educación Inicial No Escolarizada, p 47. Lima, Peru

## Selecting promoters in Peru

PRONOEI, a non-formal early childhood development programme in Peru, used a dynamic process to select promoters. The community helped propose and select the candidates and was involved in the design of the selection process.

PRONOEI's selection process had three phases which linked community criteria with the institution's. These three phases were information sharing, the actual selection, and an evaluation of the process.

The first phase was to disseminate information and motivate community leaders and parents. Participation was fostered by communal assemblies and house-to-house calls. These provided details about the programme and about the profile and tasks of the potential promoter.

The second phase had its own three stages: assessing the candidates, making a selection, and conveying the result.

An open-ended interview was used to ask why candidates wanted to become promoters and about their experience with children. A questionnaire helped to assess their knowledge of community problems and their level of identification with the community. In addition, candidates were given a topic 'Me, PRONOEI and my community' and asked to make something in clay that reflected their views on the subject. Because modelling with clay was a resource local people were familiar with and could

handle quite skilfully, it allowed the candidates to express and communicate their ideas, knowledge and experience. This was no academic exercise: on the contrary, it enabled people to express themselves through their own cultural resources and codes. The use of this strategy is of interest because usually community participation is limited to providing a chance for the community to speak at formal meetings. Little attention is given to other forms of expression, such as body language or icons, although in some cultures and with certain groups these techniques are much more appropriate.

The final selection verified the test results and compared the community's demands with the information and evaluation already supplied by the teachers involved. These were teachers from pre-school and primary education who were in charge of training promoters and following up their activities. After this, the promoter was chosen.

The final results were announced at community meetings to parents, leaders and other community members who took part in the process.

The third phase, evaluation, took into consideration the level of the whole community's participation. It looked at the difficulties encountered and assessed how effective the tools and resources were, so their application could be improved during the next selection process.

creative and show leadership capacity. Promoters, however, tend to emphasise the technical aspects. They want to learn more so that they can teach better. They want to know about child behaviour, how to work with parents, and how to produce educaticnal material.[12]

### Transference and appropriation in the learning process

Any training process should take into account these different perspectives. What an educator or external agent wants to transmit does not necessarily coincide with what a promoter wants to learn. The concepts of transference and appropriation help to resolve these different, sometimes conflicting, perspectives.

Transference refers to the transmission of knowledge, methods and value-loaded guidelines which, in an external agent's opinion, enable promoters to carry out their jobs. Appropriation is the interaction of transmitted knowledge and values with the promoter's own practice. This requires an interpretative, critical process, rather than mechanistic learning. Appropriation has more to do with an individual's ability to interpret, select and recreate the contents transmitted, according to a personal way of thinking, and according to the immediate surroundings and circumstances.[13]

This is a dynamic process, one in which external agents and promoters alike are involved in a negotiation of meanings and interpretations. The training aims to heighten the critical capacity of promoters to interpret knowledge transmitted.

12  On this subject, see Llanos. M , (1990) op cit.; Martinic, S , *La educación popular vista por sus participantes*, CIDE, Santiago, Chile

13  Vaccaro, L. (1990) 'Transferencia y apropiación en intervenciones educativas comunitarias un marco de referencia para su análisis', *Harvard Educational Review*, February 1990, Martinic. S and Walker, H (1990) *De los profesionales a los grupos de base transferencias de recursos para la acción social*, CIDE, Santiago. Chile

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More than merely being repeated, contents are recreated and adapted creatively to the reality in which promoters work.

Transference and appropriation also affect external agents themselves. They learn during the experience of training promoters, and much of their previous knowledge and interpretations may be questioned. Thus, the capacity for external agents to reflect and investigate is important. This can increase and recreate their knowledge based on the actions undertaken and on interpreting these actions in different ways. This reflection should lead to a better grasp of reality and of the problems that need to be tackled. This is not simply an unquestioned acceptance of what 'the people' say, but is the stimulation of critical, systematic reflection.

## Training strategies

Learning pedagogical principles is a lengthy process that entails permanently linking practical experience and reflection. For most programmes, training promoters is not an isolated process that takes place in a classroom, but an attempt to establish a steady link with the community, promoter practice and reflection. Training should be a continuous, systematic process.

Throughout training, the interaction between promoters and those who train them is crucial. Training should not lead to a promoter becoming a reproducer or repeater of ideas; it should stimulate autonomy, and the growth of individual and group leadership skills. To do so, actual strategies and processes should be examined and highlighted more than contents themselves (for example, acquiring the principles of the active-participation methodology) and will depend on the role of the promotor. This encourages a type of training that is based on the needs of the community and that makes use of individual and collective knowledge that already exists in the community.

Three key skills that can help promoters carry out their duties are learning to:

> lead or influence group interaction and communication;

> suggest and define the interest areas to be worked on with the community;

> relate the grassroots group with the project and other institutions.

These involve concepts of diplomacy, management and networking. The promoters learn to conduct group sessions, providing and encouraging opportunity for involvement, while at the same time helping to focus discussion and action. Part of their training involves learning how to establish limits and priorities. It also includes learning how to persuade other institutions and groups to become involved in meeting the objectives of the programme.

Training should try to focus on the problems people themselves define as priorities, and foster learning about community social relations and strengths. Training should also spring from popular knowledge which can effectively be used as a strategy to stimulate new knowledge. Training should, above all, be followed by understanding, application and communication of the processes learned.

The strategy most resorted to is one in which external agents train promoters and they in turn train grassroots groups. Project staff delegate tasks to promoters and evaluate their interaction with the grassroots groups throughout the whole experience, introducing new knowledge only according to the needs and demands of the job.

## A continuing process in Colombia

An example of a strategy for training promoters is the PROMESA project of CINDE in Colombia. It sees promoter training as a process of continuing education that develops the capacity to produce educational tools and materials, according to the context of the programme. At the same time, promoters are encouraged to develop their self-management and self-evaluation capacities, learning to learn and to teach others through careful guidelines.

In this early childhood development programme, promoters are trained to meet four general aims:

> to plan, execute and evaluate programmes that involve the family unit and the community to create a better environment for healthy child development;

> to create and consolidate community groups that commit themselves to actions related to improving the community's environment, health and education;

> to reinforce action committees and other groups that the community has already set up in different areas of child development;

> to make better use of resources and efforts by encouraging other institutions to provide child and family care.

### Using participatory methods

Another model with a different approach[14] argues that the preparation of promoters should be based on the principles guiding participatory methodology. In this case, promoters begin by examining personal experiences together, in order to learn more about community life. This pooling of knowledge and the establishment of democratic relationships reinforce a climate of personal and group freedom in which intellectual expertise, simple handicraft projects, different forms of games and artistic expressions are integrated in one active learning process.

These promoters are trained to question critically the transformation of some aspects of reality (associating these with the knowledge they acquire), re-interpreting educational actions in the national context (such as the political situation and major socio-economic problems).

As the PRONOEI project in Peru demonstrated,[15] the simultaneous and continuous combination of action and reflection gives way to the detection of new needs and to the formulation of new proposals, generating new learning processes at every stage of training. This includes basic training, on-site training, weekly promoter meetings, workshops with parents, general community meetings and workshops to produce teaching material.

### Building on experience

Another experience is that of the Popular Education Workshops run by CIDE in Chile. Here promoters meet for a total of three weeks during the year, intermittently but on a residential basis. Training includes activities that the participants must also apply in their workplaces upon their return. The training methodology is evolved by the participants during the workshop and developed further in their own workplaces. Participants exchange experiences, reflect collectively, learn to produce teaching aids, design projects together.

Outside guests, experienced educators, politicians, leaders and social scientists are invited to join these encounters. They provide theoretical analysis about education, and the national and popular reality. Evaluation of this experience has

14  Vaccaro. L . op cit The PRONOEI programme in Peru also uses this approach

15  Ordoñez, S and Frenkiel. C (1983) *Selección y capacitación del personal no profesional voluntario en el proyecto Me Pe Val*, Lima. Peru

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shown it to be very positive, highlighting one key factor: participants consider that this training enables them to continue learning throughout their practice. Their training is never totally severed from action.

## Factors that affect promoters' authority

Training is only one of the factors that helps to establish the legitimacy and authority of the promoter. Chief among the other factors are the questions of the voluntary or low-paid nature of the work of promoters and the relationship between promoters and professionals.

In a seminar organised by PIIE,[16] promoters complained of not having enough influence. They identified three causes: the voluntary character of their activity; the lack of adequate material resources; and the lack of status and formal recognition. Particularly important was the voluntary character; they, too, needed to earn a living. Also, because there was no formal requirement to take responsibility, they could simply stop being involved at any point.

### To pay or not to pay
The issue of whether to pay promoters is controversial. The social context and the nature of the work undertaken by promoters are points to consider. Some people argue that paying promoters can erode the 'mystique' lying behind this type of work and introduce a divisive factor of unequal power relationships in a community. Payment is seen as interfering with promoters' ability to act as leaders and as making them dependent on the institution that implements a programme.

Others feel that paying promoters is only ethical, since their work is specialised and time-consuming. Promoters are expected to devote a given amount of time to carrying out a series of tasks they have been trained to do.

The argument in favour of voluntary promoters relates strongly to the role of the promoter as leader. In order for them to become leaders, promoters must first acquire legitimacy within their own social group. Part of this legitimacy comes from being motivated more by concern for the interests of the community than by desires for their own personal gain. This is clearly stated by a promoter in Peru:

> to be a volunteer is to want to do things on one's own, without expecting to be paid a fixed sum. It's useful for me as a mother, with my children. I'm happy to contribute to my community. I help and I feel closer to others. I can help the children get ahead.[17]

From this perspective, paying promoters creates a distance between them and the community. In effect, a promoter is thought to lose the leader's charisma and become simply an employee of the institution sponsoring a project.[18] At the same time, being paid means promoters lose their independence from the institution itself. Furthermore, they are segregated from the grassroots as they acquire power and economic capacity.

In disadvantaged communities, people have to resort to all kinds of survival strategies. Paying promoters may distort existing relationships. This does not imply that there are no social and economic differences to begin with, as communities are heterogenic and hierarchical, but rather that a promoter's function has a symbolic meaning that transcends economic logic. A promoter's involvement is considered a social service and commitment, a kind of moral covenant, rather than an ordinary work contract. It can be argued that paying a promoter inevitably leads to conflicts. Tensions could arise among other members of the community, caused by the desire to have access to a new source

16  Marquez, P and Medina, A (1989)
    Educación y transición democrática
    propuestas de políticas educacionales,
    PIIE, Santiago, Chile

17  PRONOEI project (1985) Victoria tiene la
    palabra: estudio de caso de una
    animadora, Lima, Peru

18  PAESMi (1990) La formación de monitores
    de salud en una sociedad democrática,
    encuentro organizado por el Programa de
    apoyo y extensión en salud materno
    infantil (PAESMi), Santiago, Chile

of income. Similarly, promoters may try to hold on to their position. It is then difficult to gauge whether their continued presence means commitment to the community or simply financial need.

Some programmes try to reimburse the basic expenses of promoters and in some cases provide symbolic rewards for their work as well. Transportation costs, free supplies for the workshops they participate in, or a minimum expense allowance are some of the methods used to reimburse promoters. Indirect payment is another idea, for example, paying study fees to allow promoters to pursue technical or vocational training. This may lead to their being more qualified for jobs, and thus provide better employment opportunities. The Centre for Research on Childhood and the Family (CENDIF) in Venezuela, has opted for this alternative, awarding a study grant to promoters equal to 60 per cent of the minimum wage. Symbolic rewards, such as handing out certificates, diplomas, and finding other meaningful ways of accrediting the work of promoters, are other possibilities.

Nonetheless, the work of a promoter involves time and expense. Promoters need to earn an income and often have to take a paid job that takes them away from their work with the community. This can mean the loss of a particular promoter's accumulated ability and expertise, which is bound to affect a programme's continuity and efficiency.

It is sometimes argued that promoters should be paid according to the functions they carry out, subject to the prevalent national labour code. This argument rests on ethical grounds: if everyone else involved with a programme is being paid, no valid reason can be offered for promoters, who are the key component of the programme, to work for free. Paying them is a way of redistributing income in favour of poor population sectors. Practical reasons are also evident for paying promoters. They undertake specialised activities that must be subjected to regular supervision and evaluation. Paying promoters allows an institution to make demands, punctuality for instance, and benefits programme quality and efficiency.

Many promoters argue that the nature of their work is compatible with getting some form of payment. The evaluation of the early childhood development project in Lima, Peru[19] points out that appreciating the committed nature of work done by promoters does not contradict their getting an income. Token payments are unlikely to be successful: 'to really be of some use, it should be similar to a minimum wage, which is barely enough to pay for anything anyway'.

Some programmes recognise that being a promoter can become a full-fledged occupation. In fact, some promoters may even become promoter supervisors or programme multipliers, responsible for a group of promoters, organising and supporting planning, programming, training and evaluation activities.

### Payment, funding and institutionalisation
If an institution decides to pay its promoters, the next question is: who should finance these costs, and how can this expense be covered in the future? One approach is for the community to generate its own resources to finance the work of promoters. This has the advantage of allowing the community to exert greater control over work content, policies and procedures. The purpose is clear and laudable, but not very compatible with reality. Usually communities are too poor to finance promoters. Even if they found additional income generating strategies, other priorities would probably prevail.

Another suggestion is for the project itself to meet these costs during its first phase, and then, once the purpose and utility of a programme are verified and

19 Llanos M . (1984). op cit

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there is the political will to continue it, financing is preferably to be undertaken by the state or other sources like international non-governmental organisations (NGOS). In Mexico, Chile and Venezuela, projects have gone from a pilot or experimental phase, initially in the hands of an NGO, to being taken over by a government body to be implemented nationally.

In Venezuela, an effort was made to introduce the figure of a promoter into the formal educational system. It was not successful and ended in the assimilation of the group of promoters as a new rank of personnel.[20] Curiously enough, this strategy had an unexpected outcome: the new group of promoters gained access into the system, becoming a new rank of government education officials. In a continent where education budgets are very low, this might be seen as a triumph in that it gained legitimacy and political recognition for promoters. It was not however what had been envisaged in terms of gaining forms of co-existence between promoters and the formal system.

When state organisations take over these types of projects, difficulties can occur. A centralised body financing and thus controlling the work of promoters from a distance may interfere with a well-integrated programme that has gained community respect and involvement.

However, the state has an obligation to provide the services necessary to improve the quality of life of the population. Given the financial constraints and the inefficiency that application of a centralised model generally implies, a co-management model may be more practical. The state can share implementation of certain projects with NGOs, while still guaranteeing community participation and a measure of control in the direction and effectiveness of such programmes. The quality of services will increase without necessarily increasing costs. In addition, such a design can transform power relationships between the community and state institutions and increase the permanence of the project's impact.

### The relationship between promoters and professionals

Another power relationship that affects the impact of early childhood development or community development programmes concerns professionals and promoters in particular, and professionals and communities in general. By and large, it is an unequal relationship. In addition to the financial subordination of promoters, professionals and their institutions make the initial contacts and define the programme; they have the authority of their knowledge; they control material resources and often the evaluation process.

These power relationships are often difficult to change. What a project attempts to achieve is not always the most important thing for the community or the promoters. A starting point for change is to stimulate the discussion of a programme's objectives and strategies with its promoters, and to develop tools that also allow the performance and efficiency of professionals themselves to be evaluated.

Another urgent need is to improve the training of professionals who work with community education projects. As well as having solid qualifications, professionals need the skills to reflect on the social and educational dimensions of their work. Professionals have to come to terms with the popular sectors they are involved with, both during the course of their work and through their reflection.

The training most professionals receive at universities in Latin America usually prepares them to work among the middle and upper classes. It does not often address the needs of low-income groups, or deal with the living conditions professionals will find in the field. This means a much needed revision in

20    *The Parent as Prime Educator*, (1986)
      op cit

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training programmes, so that professionals can begin to understand the characteristics of the popular sectors they work and interact with,[21] and get closer to them.

Professionals are needed with a whole new repertoire of skills, sensitive to the problems of the marginalised communities. They must learn to recognise and accept that a greater part of their skills, knowledge and experience can be transferred to non-professionals. At the same time, they should accept that they can also learn much from the experience of the popular sectors.[22]

In the case of early childhood development projects, several studies have shown that a family's active participation, in particular that of the mothers, is crucial for adequate physical, psycho-motor and psychological development in children. This is as valid for Latin America as it is for industrialised nations. In fact, Bronfenbrenner,[23] analysing different early childhood development programmes in the 1960s and 1970s, proved that better results were achieved when overall social support was provided: family education, medical check-ups, food supplements. Working with marginalised families and communities in intervention programmes requires professionals with more holistic vision and skills allowing them to surpass the limitations of traditional training.

## Summary and conclusions

Promoters have made a crucial contribution to implementing strategies for education and development. However, they still face dilemmas over the extent to which their primary relationship is with the community or with the external body that operates development programmes. Related to this are a series of questions about whose priorities should determine action; whether the skills or the attitudes of promoters are the more essential characteristics; whether the purpose of training is to develop specialists or encourage leadership ability; and whether their work should be considered voluntary or should be rewarded financially.

These questions affect the selection and training of promoters. Although there are basic requirements for promoters such as membership of the community or a minimum level of schooling, some implicit criteria operate during the selection process because of these questions. For example, when promoters are not paid, the candidates usually come from the richer families. When the work is with children, the community almost invariably recommends women.

Indeed, most promoters are women. Usually they have completed only primary education and previously were occupied with domestic chores. In spite of their difficulty struggling with both domestic work and promotion, their motivation to either join or lead a group is high.

It is important to trace women's participation in promotion work and ensure that key issues concerning women and mothers are always part of the reflection of institutions carrying out education and development programmes. One of the most salient results of projects is the change promoters themselves undergo. Some studies show that very positive changes take place in the relationship with their children and relatives, other community members and the way they perceive themselves.[24]

Because many programmes have difficulty defining the role and profile of their promoters, different training strategies need to be considered. Training strategies relate to the two central factors that define the work of the promoters: the knowledge and technical skills and the attitudinal values and leadership

21 Comment made by Salomón Magendzo in. Martinic, S and Walker, H. (eds) (1988) *Profesionales en la Ación una mirada crítica a la educación popular*, CIDE, Santiago, Chile

22 *The Parent as Prime Educator*. (1986) op cit

23 Bronfenbrenner, U (1974) 'Is early intervention effective?', *Teachers College Record*, Vol 76, pp 2279-3303

24 Filp, J and Undurraga, C (1989) *La atención preescolar en Chile desafíos para la redemocratización*, CIDE Santiago, Chile

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## How promoters see change

The way promoters perceive the changes that take place in their relationship with their families and other people in the community is illustrated in this testimony taken from the evaluation of the non-formal early childhood development programme in Peru, PRONOEI.

### Changes in the relationship with their family

More dialogue and a better understanding is described by promoters when they talk about their relationships with their spouses: 'I have improved my relationship with my husband; I talk to him now, I tell him that he has to talk to me more', is one of the comments heard. With their children, promoters learn how to stimulate the cognitive and emotional development of pre-schoolers. They learn to evaluate achievement or stagnation plateaux in the children's development, resort to physical punishment less, show increased affection, and undergo a re-valuation of their educational potential: 'I feel like a more responsible mother, I have more trust in my children, I talk to them more... I know my children better, I can help them more, I know what bothers them', were some comments. Improvements were also noticed in the children's psychomotor development, and in their physical and nutritional states.

### Relationships with other people in the community

Promoters are better able to organise and form groups to confront problems, take decisions and focus on accomplishing a common task. They are also more able to express themselves verbally and to defend their position with arguments. Overall, this reflects an increased capacity to relate to others and to cooperate more.

### Relationships with professionals

A teacher explains the changes she has seen as a result of working with promoters:

> In personal terms working with promoters has given me a different view of life, my life and even of my profession. I used to have a more static vision of things and of life, of the values that people hold... Because of our interchange, I have gained more respect for promoters. They also helped me to be more motivated because they always expect something from you, and this is a mobilising force. My perception of our teaching role has changed too. We have had to constantly review our work and be receptive to new things.

Source: Llanos, M.(1990) *Evaluación del centro nacional de capacitación docente de educación inicial no escolarizada*, Lima, Peru.

qualities. Any training process should take into account these different perspectives. What an educator or external agent wants to transmit is not necessarily what a promoter wants to learn.

Many promoters prefer to see themselves as doing work of a technical nature. They want to learn more, get paid and have clearly-designated functions. This tendency is encouraged by the prevailing cultural patterns, which grant more power to men than to women in the exercise of social leadership, and reduce women's role to the private and domestic sphere.

However, the legitimacy of promoters does not only come from knowledge possessed and transmitted, but chiefly through their capacity to generate group educational processes. There needs to be an adequate balance between the specialised functions and the leadership role of promoters.

Training promoters should heighten their critical capacity to interpret knowledge. It should be a continuous, systematic process. This suggests a type of training that is based on the needs of the community and that makes use of individual and collective knowledge that already exists in the community.

Other factors that have an impact on the legitimacy and authority of promoters include the voluntary or low-paid nature of their work and the relationship between promoters and professionals.

The issue of whether to pay promoters is controversial and unlikely to be resolved easily or quickly. Payment can be seen as interfering with promoters'

ability to act as leaders and destroy their independence from the institution that implements a programme. On the other hand, promoters are expected to devote time to carrying out a series of tasks they have been trained to do, and for which they should be paid. If an institution decides to pay its promoters, the next question is: who should finance these costs, and how can this expense be covered in the future?

The relationship between promoters and professionals is one that will not change simply by focusing on the training of promoters. Professionals who work with community education projects also need improved training so that they are more sensitive to the problems of the marginalised communities they work with. Such training should help them see that much of their skills, knowledge and experience can be transferred to non-professionals. At the same time, they can also learn much from the experience of the promoters and the people in the communities.

Projects involving promoters in their educational action have achieved impressive results. According to a teacher in Peru[25], 'the promoter has discovered her ability to educate'. She says that the promoters that she works with have increased their self-esteem and self-confidence:

> They are more responsible and more sure of themselves. They value the relationship with their children more. Their relationships with their husbands have improved. They describe these processes as a change in character, as an opening, and they talk about a greater level of communication now. Before, they did not value themselves as women. Now, they see the role that they can perform in their community. They feel more appreciated. The improved self-perception of promoters is expressed in these statements: 'to fulfill an aspiration that I had a long time ago, to be able to work with children and with others... I've lost my shyness, before I never used to leave the house ... now I go out and I feel I'm useful and I can do more things'.

25. Llanos, M.(1990) op cit

## Studies and Evaluation Papers

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**Studies and Evaluation Papers** is a series of background documents drawn from field experience to present relevant findings and reflections on 'work in progress'. The series therefore acts primarily as a forum for the exchange of ideas.

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