



2nd Floor Tulleken Forum
4 Tulleken Street
Pretoria 0002

2de Vloer Tulleken Forum
Tullekenstraat 4
Pretoria 0002

P.O. Box 673
Pretoria 0001
South Africa

Postbus 673
Pretoria 0001
Suid-Afrika

Telephone (012) 322-0601/2
Fax (012) 322-9379

Telefoon (012) 322-0601/2
Faks (012) 322-9379

4th May 1992

S.S. Van der Merwe and Mac Maharaj
Codesa Secretariat (Working Group No. 02)
World Trade Centre
PO Box 307
ISANDO
1600

Dear Sirs

**PARTICIPATION FROM INTEREST GROUPS
WANTED BY CODESA WORKING GROUP NUMBER 02.**

On behalf of the Southern African Association for Early Childhood Educare (SAAECE), I wish to refer you to our letter dated 1992-03-02 and enclosures.


Please take note that we responded to your invitation by means of a fax in order to meet your return date of March, 02. The reason for a fax response was that our National Executive met on February 27 to make a decision to respond to your invitation. There was therefore very little time to meet your deadline of March 02.

With this letter, we wish to send the original document to replace the fax.

We also wish to take this opportunity and register our desire to participate in further discussions regarding the early childhood educare field as outlined in our document. We wish to remain in contact with the CODESA talks and close any possible gaps that might be created out of lack of contact. We believe in active participation in the transformation of South Africa into a democratic system of government and not merely a submission of documents.

It is our hope that we will hear from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely


JOYCE MATUBE (MRS)
NATIONAL CO-ORDINATOR

JM/rb/0126
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4 Tulleken Street
Pretoria 0002

P.O. Box 673
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South Africa

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Faks (012) 322-9379

7 February 1990

Mr P J Clase
The Minister of Education
and Culture
House of Assembly
Private Bag X9051
CAPE TOWN
8000

Dear Sir

**MEMORANDUM ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND CARE
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

We enclose herewith a detailed overview of the crisis developing around early childhood education and care in South Africa today.

So serious is the situation that we believe it calls for an urgent pooling of public, private and community resources to formulate a national strategy which will address the problem. As the only non-racial national umbrella body for pre-school education and care in South Africa, SAAECE speaks not only for pre-school practitioners across the country, but also ultimately and most important of all for the 7 million voiceless children between birth and 6 years of age whose welfare and future development are at stake.

Since the State's involvement with this cohort of the population is presently fragmented between the National Departments of Education on the one hand, and Health and associated Own Affairs Departments, we are addressing this appeal to you as well as to all the other Ministers concerned. Our urgent request is to discuss the issues raised in the memorandum in an all-inclusive meeting at Ministerial and top management level, possibly together with certain other private sector stakeholders.

Should you for any reason be unable to participate in such a joint discussion, we should welcome the opportunity of meeting with you and your Director General on an individual

basis. However, it must be stressed that such an arrangement would be less satisfactory than a combined sharing of ideas.

Given the fundamental importance of quality education and care for the overall development of our young children, and in the long-term the future citizens of the new South Africa, we believe you will share our desire to find an equitable solution to an unacceptable situation.

We look forward to your early response.

Yours faithfully

MAPITSO MALEPA
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

MM/rb/0127

Encl:

MEMORANDUM ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND CARE
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

It is universally accepted that during the first 6 years of a child's life, the foundations are laid for all future development, be it physical, intellectual, emotional, social or spiritual. There is also recognition of the fact that the two essential elements of education and care are interlinked and cannot be separated.

With the disintegration of family structures and widespread stress caused by socio-economic pressures, increasing numbers of children are emotionally and cognitively unprepared for formal schooling and have become victims of adult abuse and neglect. Since the child from a deprived background is particularly vulnerable, many comprehensive early childhood programmes around the world have been especially geared towards this target group.

In South Africa, however, despite the high standards which have been achieved in pre-school education, provision has been in inverse proportion to need. There seem to be clear indications that this has contributed to an unacceptably high early failure and drop-out rate amongst black primary school pupils.

2. EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Although good educare programmes assume an holistic approach to the development of the young child, there can be no doubt that a carefully structured pre-school programme has a direct impact on the subsequent scholastic achievement of pupils. We believe that the Government's decision to curtail its financial support at this level has played a direct and significant role in the poor performance record of black primary and secondary school pupils.

3. SOCIAL CHANGE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE

The face of South African society is undergoing rapid and far-reaching change. Caught in the crossfire, the young child inevitably bears the brunt of the nation's collective stress. Recent studies have painted a grim picture of the effects this is having on the emotional health of children from both privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

In particular, inadequate early childhood facilities are likely to have damaging long-term effects on the future citizens of this country. This predicament is not likely to be ameliorated without harnessing the combined resources of the State, the private sector and parents in a properly co-ordinated national strategy. Such a strategy would need to take into consideration teacher training, parental education and empowerment, varied models of service provision and quality control within a Third World context and without racial differentiation.

4. WHO TAKES RESPONSIBILITY?

- (a) The State. Up to now, the contribution made by the State has been in the form of either educational or welfare subsidies, which have been racially determined and inequitable. There has been no uniformity of policy between the National Departments of Education on the one hand, and Health and Population Development on the other, or for Own Affairs Departments and local authorities. Presently, all educational subsidies are being phased out.

Tertiary pre-school teacher training courses, which, up to now, have also enjoyed Government support, have either been closed down or had student numbers curtailed. The formal paraprofessional course, N1-N3, which is being presented at Technical Colleges falls far short of the ideal.

The school readiness bridging period recently introduced by the DET has certain basic flaws, and both it and the South African National Education Policy, as it affects pre-school structures, need to be urgently reassessed.

- (b) The Private Sector. Traditionally, the private sector has been responsible for by far the largest segment of pre-school provision in this country. Unfortunately, dwindling social responsibility funds will increasingly have a limiting effect on its capacity to extend its support.

Nevertheless, as both management and labour movements become more convinced of the pivotal importance of pre-school provision, they are being encouraged to explore options for meeting the needs of employees' children, in addition to the funding of external projects, like paraprofessional teacher training programmes and the functions of the national umbrella body. The Church too is responding to calls for it to step up its involvement in this area of social concern.

- (c) The Community. Despite the tendency of parents to leave the education of their children to the "experts", the key role they have to play cannot be underestimated. While a significant number of parents have made a valuable contribution to the establishment and management of pre-school centres, attention should be paid to the empowerment of many more. Indeed, day care centres have an important part to play in overall community development.

- (d) SAAECE. As the only non-racial national umbrella body for pre-school education and care in South Africa, SAAECE seeks to promote and co-ordinate the provision of high quality educare for all children from 0-6 years of age. Over and above its roles of advocacy and co-ordination, two of its major projects are service and paraprofessional training course accreditation.

Both accreditation systems are based on an exhaustive self-evaluation process, followed by validation by panels of experts, with the emphasis on the quality of service being provided, rather than physical facilities.

5. PROPOSALS FOR A REASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE

The crisis surrounding early childhood educare is of such vast proportions that it is likely to have disastrous consequences for the future of the country without the urgent co-operation of the State, the private sector and communities to formulate a strategic plan of co-ordinated action. An immediate in-depth needs survey is required, followed without delay by the implementation of a shared programme to address the problems identified.

With regard to public sector involvement in particular, a major reassessment is required in terms of structure, policy, funding, co-ordination, control, the formulation and application of physical standards, teacher training and service provision. In summary, the following proposals are suggested for serious and urgent consideration by the State:

- 5.1 The rationalisation of departmental structures with a view to the integration of pre-school education and care and the implementation of an equitable, non-discriminatory policy concerning physical standards and subsidies.
- 5.2 Its decision to phase out pre-school educational subsidies. It is suggested that it accept the responsibility of subsidising salaries based on quality service provision as promoted through SAAECE's course and service accreditation systems. This should include in particular the subsidisation of paraprofessional trainers, educare field workers and hospital and clinic educare posts.
- 5.3 The introduction of financial incentives and support by means of tax concessions to private sector donors, a State lottery or recreational levies.
- 5.4 Its involvement with Teacher Training by means of tertiary as well as paraprofessional courses, both formal and non-formal. High quality service provision is entirely dependent on the competence of educare workers, and it is necessary to re-evaluate the respective roles of professionally and paraprofessionally trained staff and to facilitate access to a variety of non-racial training programmes.

- 5.5 The creation of posts for educare workers and supervisors in the paediatric wards of all non-private hospitals, as well as at child-care and antenatal clinics.
- 5.6 The entrenchment and enforcement of children's rights through constitutional statutes and the signing of the U.N. Convention on Children's Rights.

6. CONCLUSION

It is appreciated that a total revolution in the State's approach to pre-school education and care will not happen overnight. Nevertheless, given the gravity of the situation, we urge the immediate initiation of a national, multi-sector strategy, which will herald a future of promise, security and hope for all the children of South Africa.

MAPITSO MALEPA
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

MEMORANDUM ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND CARE IN
SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

1. INTRODUCTION

There can now be no doubt anywhere in the world that the first 6 years of a child's life are of crucial importance. During this time, the foundations are laid for every aspect of future development, be it physical, intellectual, emotional, social or spiritual. Extensive studies, both in South Africa and abroad have shown too that education and care must be integrated, and that any early childhood programme of worth should combine both elements.

Where, historically, the mother and extended family were responsible for providing both physical care and opportunities for mental stimulation for the young child, societal changes and increased industrialisation have turned this structure upside down. More and more children now enter the formal educational system emotionally and cognitively unprepared to deal with its demands. Furthermore, the disintegration of family life and the increasing stress experienced by the nuclear and especially the one-parent family have resulted in an escalating incidence of child neglect and abuse.

Empirical research has indicated that the child from a low socio-economic background is most likely to suffer deprivation under these circumstances and is therefore in particular need of support. The alternative is early school drop-out, resulting in a growing army of citizens who are both illiterate and lacking in economically productive skills.

These principles have been recognised in countries throughout the world and have given rise to massively funded programmes aimed at providing educare services for as many pre-school children as possible, but particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Head Start programme in the United States of America is a notable example, as are the comprehensive programmes being offered in the Scandinavian countries. However, the acceptance of this principle has taken root not only in wealthy First World Countries, but also, increasingly, in developing countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, where a far more realistic and pragmatic approach has had to be adopted, dictated by economic constraints.

In South Africa we have a proud and long-standing tradition of nursery school education of the highest standard. However, in general, this facility has been available only to a small minority of children, mostly white. A 1985 survey showed that of the approximately 6.4 million children of all races under the age of 6, only 2.5% had access to any form of early childhood educare. Of this already negligible number, 31.1% were other than white, in comparison with 68.9% who were white. These figures should of course be viewed within the context of the relative size of population cohorts - 91.6% other than white, as opposed to 8.4% white.

If the principle is accepted that those in greatest need of pre-school provision are children from low socio-economic backgrounds and if there is agreement that, generally speaking in South Africa, this refers to other than white population groups, then it is clear that in this country provision has been in inverse proportion to need.

Taking the argument further, a recent report from the University of the Witwatersrand's Education Policy Unit describes the shockingly high percentage of black children who drop out of school after the First Grade - almost 25%. As the Government withdraws its financial support from the pre-school field, concerned educationists believe that this state of affairs will be further exacerbated in the years to come.

2. EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

We have said that a good educare programme assumes an holistic approach to the development of the young child, without therefore placing particular emphasis on the cognitive aspect. Nevertheless, within the perspective of scholastic achievement, there is overwhelming international and local evidence that school readiness and subsequent aptitude are greatly enhanced as a result of exposure to a carefully structured early childhood programme.

It is now a known fact that play enables children to manipulate language, grasp scientific and mathematical concepts, give shape to their creative instincts and develop mechanical skills and an ability to think logically. Studies in the USSR have shown that children deprived of the opportunity for meaningful play, have difficulties with self concept and suffer emotionally, physically and cognitively.

Dictated as it is by economic constraints, the Government's decision to prune from the bottom of the educational structure contains an inherent weakness. We believe that in so doing it is laying an axe to the roots which will be required to feed the entire tree. Indeed, there is a particular need to ensure continuity of educational principles between the non-formal pre-school programme and the formal primary school curriculum.

In black education the problem has already become apparent in the high early drop-out figure mentioned above, and in the handicap which continues to dog the school careers of those students who persevere in the system. This has recently been graphically demonstrated in the 42% pass rate achieved by black matriculants in 1989. Even if they do reach tertiary level, these students are still at a disadvantage compared with their white counterparts.

While we acknowledge that it would be simplistic to ascribe this disablement entirely to lack of early childhood stimulation, there is enough evidence available to indicate that it is likely to be a major contributory factor.

What then of parents? Do they have a role to play in this predicament? Even where they have both the time and will to provide the necessary mental stimulation for their children, the absence of the essential element of peer socialisation and interaction is a handicapping factor. In addition, most of them lack the specialised knowledge to provide for the holistic development of the child or to identify learning problems. Nevertheless, parents remain the primary source of care and education for the young child, and educationists recognise that without a structure for co-operation and continuity between the pre-school programme and the home, the results will be less than satisfactory. The education and empowerment of parents to fulfil a far more dynamic partnership role therefore becomes a priority in an holistic approach to early childhood education and care.

We have been concentrating in the foregoing paragraphs on only the educational aspects of the problem. Relatively little work has been done on the long-term emotional, social and physical effects of early childhood deprivation.

3. SOCIAL CHANGE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE

The changing face of South African society holds special implications for educare service provision. Those forces which must be taken into account include the rapid process of urbanisation, inadequate and insufficient housing provision, a gross incidence of poverty, high infant mortality in black children due to nutrition-related and preventable diseases, family breakdown, the growing number of women of child-bearing age entering the labour market, the education explosion, evidence of escalating child abuse, incest and family violence, the dismantling of apartheid, rising black political power, the spread of non-racialism, and a fragile economy.

In the turmoil brought about by a rapidly changing society, the young child inevitably bears the brunt of its collective stress. Studies done by researchers in South Africa in the past couple of years paint a grim picture of the effect this is having on children right across the board, whether they be from a privileged or disadvantaged background. This fact is borne out by the recent mental health report released by the Department of National Health and Population Development and entitled "His Name is Today". Children are being forced into adulthood before they have had the chance to be fully children, and at a very young age vast numbers are being maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually.

What, one wonders, would be the ultimate effect on a child of three who is locked up all alone in an empty house from early in the morning until late afternoon when a parent finally returns from work, simply because there is no one available to provide the necessary care? What are the long-term chances of success for the 100 or more children crammed into an unventilated garage with inadequate provision of food, water and toilet facilities, and no mental stimulation? What excuse do we offer to the six children who have been repeatedly violated by a male childminder? In the long run, what sort of citizens are we building for a new South Africa?

It is important to point out that the conditions described above, do not usually stem from a lack of parental concern for their children, but simply from want of adequate service-provision and control. There are just not enough high quality early childhood facilities available, and neither are there likely to be, without the existence of a properly co-ordinated national strategy which harnesses the resources of the State, private sector and parents. Such a strategy would need to take into consideration teacher training, parental education and empowerment, varied models of service provision and quality control within the context of a Third World reality, and without racial differentiation.

4. WHO TAKES RESPONSIBILITY?

- a) The State. Up to now, the contribution made by the State has been in the form of educational subsidies for children from 4-6 years of age, welfare subsidies for children from 0-3 years of age and the funding of professional Pre-primary Teacher Training Courses. Not only have the subsidies been racially determined and inequitable, again in inverse proportion to need, but there has been no co-ordination or uniformity of policy between the Education and Welfare Departments. The problem has been further compounded by fragmentation into a multitude of Own Affairs Departments, each with its own policy variation.

More recently, in line with the Government's privatisation policy, education subsidies have either been frozen or altogether withdrawn, and indications are that this process will steadily continue until they are altogether phased out. Welfare subsidies on the other hand, are only available to black children at the discretion of provincial and local authorities, and for other race groups, where the means test is applied, subsidy determination is both discriminatory and inadequate.

The bridging period school readiness programme which has been introduced by the DET for black children, contains many basic flaws and is out of line with recommendations made in the De Lange Report, as well as accepted early childhood education principles. Both this programme, which was introduced without consultation with professionals in the field, and the South African National Education Policy (SANEP), as it affects pre-school structures, need to be re-assessed as a matter of urgency.

In the meantime, tertiary Pre-primary Teachers' Courses have been terminated at all but a small minority of Training Colleges, all for white students except one. Even these appear to be under threat of closure and have already been obliged to curtail student numbers.

An 18-month long formal paraprofessional course in Educare training, at N1-N3 level, has been introduced at Technical Colleges throughout the country, as well as the distance-teaching Technical College of South Africa (Technisa). While, in principle, the establishment of this course has decided merit, in its present form and structure it falls far short of acceptable standards, and much work will need to be done before it fulfils the purpose for which it was intended.

- b) The Private Sector. Traditionally, the private sector has been responsible for by far the largest segment of pre-school provision in this country. As the need increases, together with the pressure exerted by a wide variety of welfare and educational agencies on a dwindling private sector purse, it is in danger of collapsing under the load.

This fact notwithstanding, it is encouraging to note that the Managers of Social Responsibility programmes for some of the major corporations in South Africa are becoming more and more convinced of the need to support pre-school programmes in preference to those higher up the educational ladder. They realise that for the same amount of money introduced at an early stage, far greater long-term results can be achieved than in the application of expensive band-aid programmes at secondary or tertiary level. In this regard, an organisation as influential as the Urban Foundation has led the field by identifying as two of its major targets the improvement of housing and early childhood educare provision.

There is a growing awareness too that if companies are to encourage greater productivity in their workers, they need to devote more attention to the welfare of their employees' children. Various schemes have been initiated to meet this need, either by means of subsidising educare fees or building and running day-care facilities. Joint schemes in which Trade Unions and Management co-operate to implement a mutually agreed programme are particularly successful.

The organised Church, which to a large extent withdrew from the educational field when the Bantu Education Act came into force in the early 50's, is now actively returning, in particular to the pre-school arena.

Private sector involvement is not, however, restricted to service provision, but has notably extended to the field of informal paraprofessional training for educare workers. A number of training institutions around the country have established in-service courses of a high standard and play a vital role towards meeting the massive need for adequately qualified educare staff. All of these institutions rely entirely on the private sector for the financing of research, curriculum development, teaching, practical supervision and support functions, as well as material resources.

Funding from the same source is also employed to maintain the independent Southern African Association for Early Childhood Educare, the co-ordinating national umbrella body for pre-school education and care in this country, whose role is described in greater detail under (d) below.

- c) The Community. There can be no question about the influential effect that parents have on the educational and physical development of their children. Unfortunately, many disadvantaged parents who have themselves had limited exposure to education, tend to feel inadequate in this regard and withdraw from meaningful participation. Indeed, irrespective of background, parents are often inclined to take a passive stance and "leave it to the experts".

Nevertheless, a significant number of educare centres presently in operation have been initiated, funded, built and equipped by parents and community groups, and they remain actively involved in their management. This is to be encouraged on an even larger scale. There is also a need to empower parents to engage more actively in a demand for high standards and the identification of community needs. Indeed, day care centres have the potential to act as a focus and resource for wider community development, with parents playing a crucial initiating and consultative role.

- d) SAAECE

Established 50 years ago, the Southern African Association for Early Childhood Educare is the only non-racial national umbrella body for pre-school education and care in this country. It strives to promote the provision of high quality educare for all children from 0-6 years of age.

In the early days, as the Nursery School Association, it facilitated wide-spread acceptance of the value of Nursery School education. This led in due course to the establishment of a range of professional pre-school courses at Teacher Training Colleges and Universities for all population groups, which even then however, were not able to produce sufficient teachers to meet the need. Half-day Nursery Schools, mainly privately run and for white children, were introduced in all the major metropolitan areas of South Africa and, generally speaking, maintained a standard which was comparable with the best in the world.

As social conditions and needs have changed, the organisation has extended the scope of its concern to paraprofessional training on the one hand, and a variety of service models on the other, including home-based educare, day care centres, creches, pre-schools, kindergartens and play groups.

It is a democratic organisation, implementing bottom-up, rather than top-down principles of management. Through the ten autonomous regional associations for early childhood educare which are affiliated to it, SAAECE formulates policy and responds to needs as dictated by its grassroots membership.

Members, comprising individuals who have a stake in educare, centres and pre-school agencies and organisations, today run to a total of approximately 3 000. The national body seeks to speak with one voice on behalf of all those involved with the young child when it lobbies the State, the private sector and community representatives to increase their commitment to high quality pre-school education and care.

Its functions and programmes are outlined in the accompanying brochure, but over and above its roles of advocacy and co-ordination, two major concerns are the setting of standards, both for paraprofessional training courses and service provision. It has therefore established national course accreditation, as well as service accreditation structures. Since service provision will not reach the required standards of excellence without enough adequately trained adults to put into practice a sound educare programme, the two are closely related.

Both are based on an exhaustive process of self-evaluation, followed by validation by separate panels of experts. Course accreditation is possible at a number of different levels, from training for the most basic Educare Assistant to Adult Education Trainer. Placing particular emphasis on practical application, and taking into account environmental considerations affecting the implementation of training, the standard set is nevertheless very high.

The service accreditation system, which is adapted from an American model, should be seen not as an end in itself, but as a tool for upgrading the service provided. Taking cognisance of economic realities, its primary concern is the quality of care and education being offered, rather than physical facilities. It is therefore perfectly feasible that a purpose-built pre-school centre and a creche operating from a church hall would be equally eligible for accreditation.

Built into both the course and centre accreditation systems is a regular re-evaluation requirement. Quality control checks have also been included, to ensure uniformity of standards countrywide. Since we consider these to be key issues, we shall return to them in the section below, where we discuss our proposals for future State involvement.

5. PROPOSALS FOR A REASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE

We have tried in this memorandum to outline the magnitude and gravity of the problem confronting early childhood education and care in South Africa today. Indeed we consider it to be a crisis of no smaller proportions than that of housing provision, the effects of which are likely to hold disastrous consequences for the country in the years to come. Given the extent of the dilemma, it will call, as we have stressed, for full participation at public and private sector as well as community level, in order to go any way towards meeting the overwhelming need.

An immediate in-depth enquiry is needed to identify the scope of the problem and to formulate a strategic plan, allowing for multi-sector co-operation and an holistic approach. Since time is of the essence, it would be essential for such a plan to be implemented without delay.

With regard to public sector involvement, a major reassessment is required in terms of structure, policy, funding, co-ordination, control, the formulation and application of physical standards, teacher training and service provision. We would offer the following proposals for serious and urgent consideration:

5.1 Departmental Rationalisation

The Government's present policy of dividing the education and care components of pre-school provision between two different departments, those of Education and Health and Population Development is not only economically wasteful, but confusing and unproductive. Since it is essential to view the 0-6 age-group as an integrated unit requiring that care and education go hand in hand, the one complementing the other, it would be logical for one department to co-ordinate all those matters which concern the young child, including health, welfare and informal education.

As the situation stands, the division is not only between Education and Welfare but also in the multiple fragmentation of own affairs departments. Within the overall policy formulated by the two national departments, there is enough leeway for the own affairs components, as well as local authorities, to diverge drastically from one another, with little or no co-ordination to create uniformity.

This ensures not only inequity of provision, but extreme confusion with regard to statutory and control structures. In this regard, the recent move by the Department of National Health and Population Development to rationalise the minimum physical standards to be applied across all population groups is to be welcomed. We were distressed, however, to learn that the Welfare Department of the House of Assembly had decided not to conform to these standards, but to continue to implement its own.

Not only would we plead therefore, for a complete integration of the pre-school divisions of the two national departments, but also for that one department to formulate and apply a single non-discriminatory policy for all children, irrespective of colour. There is a growing demand for non-racial educare services, where these are appropriate, at community level, and if the private sector and parents are expected to carry a major share of the financial burden, in the form of capital and running costs, then they have a right to expect their wishes to be recognised in this regard.

The rationalization of pre-school services is not unknown elsewhere in the world. In recent times for instance, New Zealand has drastically reorganised its Education Department and especially its pre-school division, to incorporate the principles mentioned above. In so doing, it has managed to create a Government structure that is much leaner, and linked it very effectively to expanded private sector structures, so that each plays a clearly defined and complementary role. Rather than costing the South African Government more money in the form of administrative costs, the adoption of this kind of model would be likely to save it large sums of money.

In the spirit of consultation and negotiation rather than unilateral decision-making which is currently taking root in South Africa, we would suggest that any re-structuring or revision of State policy be done in close partnership with our organisation and other influential stake-holders in the private pre-school field.

5.2 Services, subsidies and standards

Given the massive need for educare provision in this country, it is essential that a variety of service models be accepted and indeed encouraged. Home-based childminders, playgroups, creches, nursery schools and day care centres each meet particular needs in the community and should have equal access to some form of funding, based on the quality of service offered.

Closely related to quality is of course the question of appropriate training for educare workers, which is dealt with in greater detail under 5.4 below. Also implied is some form of quality control. SAAECE's systems of service and course accreditation, which have been developed after a great deal of careful research and practical testing and are largely based on a process of self-evaluation and professional validation, are of relevance in this regard.

So too is the appointment of a network of appropriately qualified educare advisers, field workers and municipal day care visitors, who would be able to carry out quality checks and assist with on-going in-service training, as well as practical support and advice.

It is quite clear, given economic realities, that no single population group will ever again be able to enjoy the range of funding for pre-school services that whites, as compared with other population groups, have benefited from in the past. What is needed now is a more realistic and equitable approach to subsidisation, which is linked to quality. It is proposed, therefore, that, while parents and the private sector might be expected to carry the responsibility of capital funding and running costs, the State's share of the financial load for pre-school education and care should take the form of salary subsidies linked to SAAECE's accreditation systems.

To be eligible for a subsidy, educare workers will have to have completed and received a certificate of competence from an accredited training programme, and the service they subsequently provide will be monitored. Salaries should be standardised and graded according to level of qualification. At the moment, salaries, generally speaking, bear no relation to reality and might be as low as R60 per month in impoverished black communities, irrespective of whether the "teacher" is trained or not.

Appropriately qualified and registered educare advisers or visitors should be subsidised in the same way and might be attached to our affiliated regional associations for early childhood educare or a local authority. Ideally, they, like social workers, would be eligible for full no-strings-attached subsidisation, as would the trainers/lecturers at accredited training institutions, both professional and paraprofessional. For service providers whether centre or home-based, part-subsidisation may be the only option, if sufficient money is not available for more, but again this should be based on qualification and not on race classification.

The question of standardised conditions of service and fringe benefits should also be investigated and linked to subsidisation.

Physical standards should be sufficiently flexible to apply to a wide range of circumstances and service models and should be seen as a guideline rather than a rigidly enforceable requirement. Far greater emphasis should be placed on the standards of service offered, and this would link up once again with SAAECE's system of service accreditation. In this connection, it would be important for educare visitors to encourage and support service providers in their efforts to work towards accreditation, which in itself is an upgrading process. A graded registration structure may be built into the programme, as has been done in the New Zealand model.

5.3 Tax Concessions, a State Lottery and other options

If the State wishes to encourage the private sector to play a greater role in educare provision, it will have to provide the facilities for tax benefits which have been built into the funding of secondary and tertiary education programmes. At the moment, despite a growing acknowledgement by corporate donors of the value of early childhood education and care, there is minimal financial incentive for them to contribute to its large-scale development.

In addition, serious consideration should be given to the resolution recently passed by Assocom's national conference which called for the introduction of a State Lottery for support of welfare and educational services in South Africa. This is a common phenomenon in other countries and effectively harnesses private funding for essential services, which have little or no other source of revenue. The moral argument against gambling must be weighed against the urgency of the need and the economic reality of impoverished State coffers and the over-taxed man in the street. Alternatively, a levy might be considered on recreational activities.

5.4 Teacher Training

Most of the advances originally made in terms of the establishment of tertiary courses in pre-school education for all population groups, have unfortunately been reversed in recent times. Apart from the course being offered by the Sallie Davies College in the Cape, the few remaining pre-school courses at undergraduate level are for white students only, and even then in reduced numbers.

The combined pre-primary and junior primary courses which have been introduced at Training Colleges, mainly to cater for the bridging period, are in our opinion, entirely unsatisfactory, leaving students to fall between the two stools of formal and informal teaching practice. In addition, graduates from these courses would tend to seek employment at government primary schools, where their salaries would be considerably higher than the wage they could earn at most non-subsidised pre-schools.

While it continues to close down tertiary training courses, the Government nevertheless consistently refuses to recognise paraprofessional training, thereby effectively nullifying all forms of pre-school teacher training. In so doing, it altogether ignores the reality of early childhood educare service provision, which exists to meet a clearly identified need and will continue to do so at an increasingly lower standard, without the availability of adequately trained staff.

Taking present circumstances into consideration, our proposals with regard to training would be the following:

- 5.4.1 Teachers' Training Colleges. All the specialised pre-primary courses which previously existed should be reinstated, and across the board be opened to all population groups. In addition, their aim and purpose should be carefully reconsidered. As things are, we can no longer afford nursery schools with an entire staff of tertiary-trained teachers. Instead, we should be aiming to have a supervisor with pre-school professional training at each centre, complemented by a staff of paraprofessional assistants.

Over and above this role, Training College graduates should be employed to train paraprofessionals, implying the need to incorporate an adult education component in tertiary courses. In addition, they might be used as educare field workers or visitors, to ensure the maintenance of high standards in home- and centre-based services.

- 5.4.2 Technical Colleges. The formal paraprofessional courses being offered at Technical Colleges at the N1-N3 level should be drastically upgraded in consultation with qualified pre-school professionals, in respect of curriculum content, practical work, teaching skills and examination methods. Again, all colleges should accept students from every population group.

As mainly an out-of-service full-time course, one of the problems being experienced by Technical College graduates is an inability to acquire jobs at an appropriate living wage. From the beginning, the salaries of all pre-school teachers have been below standard, and although the need for qualified staff continues to escalate, salaries have remained so poor that there is no incentive for students to spend the time and money on a full-time educare training course.

Until the difficulties have been ironed out of this course, it would be unwise to proceed to more advanced training at the N4-N6 level. Nevertheless, should such a course be carefully designed and introduced at a later stage, graduates would be able to play similar roles to those who had completed Teachers' Training College courses.

- 5.4.3 Informal Paraprofessional Training Institutions. As was mentioned earlier, a number of privately funded non-racial Training Institutions have for up to fifteen years been offering largely in-service training for educare workers at a variety of levels. In most cases, they struggle to keep up with the overwhelming demand for training and are prevented only by financial constraints from expanding even further. Course fees are kept as low as possible in order to ensure that the training is accessible even to the poorest of community centres. Through SAAECE's stringent course accreditation system, standards of training will be carefully maintained.

It seems realistic to expect that paraprofessional training at its lower per capita cost will for the foreseeable future be required to equip the bulk of educare workers with the necessary skills to provide high quality education and care for the masses. This being the case, their qualifications must be recognised by the Government and rewarded with graduated salary subsidies. Equally, accredited training institutions should be eligible for subsidies for teachers' posts, whilst still retaining their autonomy and freedom from Government control.

There is also a pressing need for the creation of structures which will enable the paraprofessionally trained worker with special ability to move across an academic bridge to obtain higher professional training.

- 5.4.4 A University Chair in Early Childhood Educare Studies. At the other end of the scale, it is of vital importance that research and postgraduate studies at an advanced level be encouraged, encompassing all aspects of education and care for the pre-school child. Chairs in Early Childhood Studies are relatively common in both Europe and America and a similar facility is essential if South Africans are to keep up with and adapt worldwide trends as well as set the pace in their own right. Not nearly enough is known about the effects of socio-economic conditions in South Africa on the young child, or what the most appropriate educational and health care programmes would be to meet their particular needs.

5.5 Hospitals, Child-care Clinics and Antenatal Training

On an unco-ordinated ad hoc basis, a number of educare programmes have been started in the paediatric wards of several hospitals around the country, notably the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in Mdantsane, Ciskei. Especially where children come long distances and are hospitalised for protracted periods of time, some form of mental stimulation and surrogate parental care is desperately needed.

Where this kind of programme has been operating for some time, medical staff have reported a marked improvement in the response of the children to treatment. This is in line with similar results obtained in Britain and the United States where pre-school hospital programmes have been functioning successfully for a number of years.

At the hospitals in this country where the project has been introduced, the major difficulties have been staffing and venue. In some cases, domestic workers have been seconded for the purpose and appropriately trained. However, when they are needed elsewhere, they are summarily transferred from their educare work, leaving no replacement, a situation which is less than satisfactory. We would therefore appeal for the establishment of educare assistants' and supervisors' posts within the staff structure of every hospital that has a paediatric component.

Ambulatory patients also need a room where they can participate in constructive and creative activities and where equipment is stored. If possible, an area should be set aside for outdoor activities as well.

For children from disadvantaged backgrounds who regularly visit child care clinics or soup kitchens, a pre-school programme there may be the only chance of stimulation they might have. An educare worker attached to each clinic would also be in a position to carry out some form of parental education programme with mothers. The growing incidence of child abuse and neglect across all population groups, points to an urgent need for preventive education and support for parents, especially those with at-risk profiles.

Ante-natal clinics, therefore, also offer opportunities for the teaching of parenting skills. In order for this to happen, posts will need to be created and funding found for salaries.

5.6 Children's Rights

The recognition and promotion of children's rights by the State will only ultimately be effective if these rights are placed on the Statute books in the form of either a separate Children's Bill of Rights or a comprehensive set of articles built into a general bill of rights. In addition, the South African Government is urged to become a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights. By taking a firm stand on this issue the State will be giving an important lead to the protection of the children who represent the future of the country.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary then, SAAECE urges the Government, in consultation with pre-school authorities in the private sector, to reassess its role in this field as a matter of extreme urgency. It believes that by abrogating its responsibility towards pre-school education and care, the Government will precipitate an educational, economic and welfare crisis of unprecedented proportions.

Instead, it suggests that structures be created which will enable the State, the private sector and communities to share the financial burden in a co-ordinated and complementary fashion. A comprehensive needs assessment is called for followed by strategic planning on a multi-lateral basis.

The State is particularly urged to consider its role with respect to the following:

- 1) The rationalisation of departmental structures with a view to the integration of pre-school education and care and the implementation of an equitable, non-discriminatory policy concerning physical standards and subsidies.
- 2) Its decision to phase out pre-school educational subsidies. It is suggested that it accept the responsibility of subsidising salaries based on quality service provision as promoted through SAAECE's course and service accreditation systems. This should include the subsidisation of paraprofessional trainers, educare field workers and hospital and clinic educare posts.
- 3) The introduction of financial incentives and support by means of tax concessions to private sector donors, a State lottery or recreational levies.

- 4) Its involvement with Teacher Training by means of tertiary as well as paraprofessional courses, both formal and non-formal. High quality service provision is entirely dependent on the competence of educare workers, and it is necessary to re-evaluate the respective roles of professionally and paraprofessionally trained staff and to facilitate access to a variety of non-racial training programmes.
- 5) The creation of posts for educare workers and supervisors in the paediatric wards of all non-private hospitals, as well as at child-care and antenatal clinics.
- 6) The entrenchment and enforcement of children's rights through constitutional statutes and the signing of the U.N. Convention on Children's Rights.

It is appreciated that a total revolution in the State's approach to pre-school education and care, such as that which is called for here, will not necessarily happen overnight. Nevertheless, the urgency and the gravity of the situation cannot be over-emphasised. If civilisation is measured by the way a country treats its children, then the South African Government with its Christian ethic, has a shameful record.

In the spirit of the short poem quoted by the Department of National Health and Population Development in its report of the same name, we look forward to participating in the initiation of a new national, multi-sector strategy, which will herald a future of promise, security and hope for all the children of South Africa.

His Name is Today

We are guilty of many errors and many faults,
but our worst crime is abandoning the children,
neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot.
Right now is the time his bones are being
formed, his blood is being made and his
senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'. His
name is 'Today'.

MAPITSO MALEPA
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN