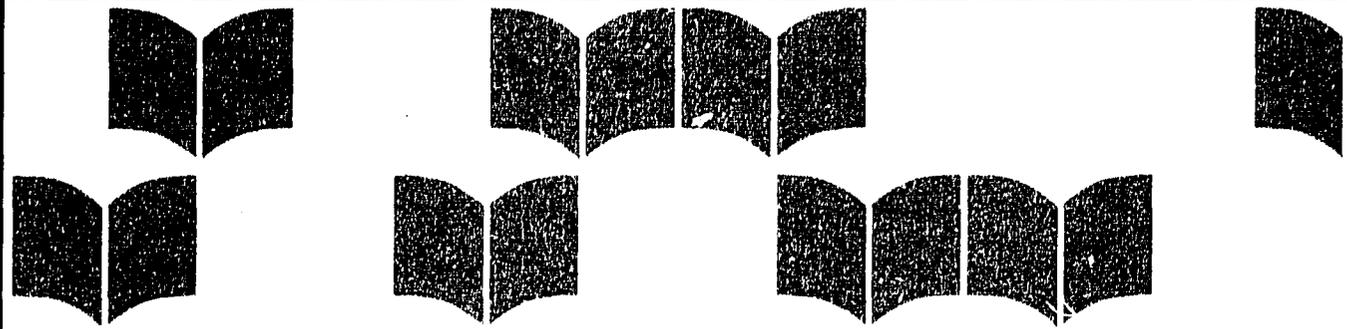
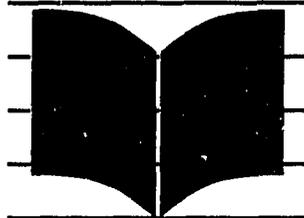


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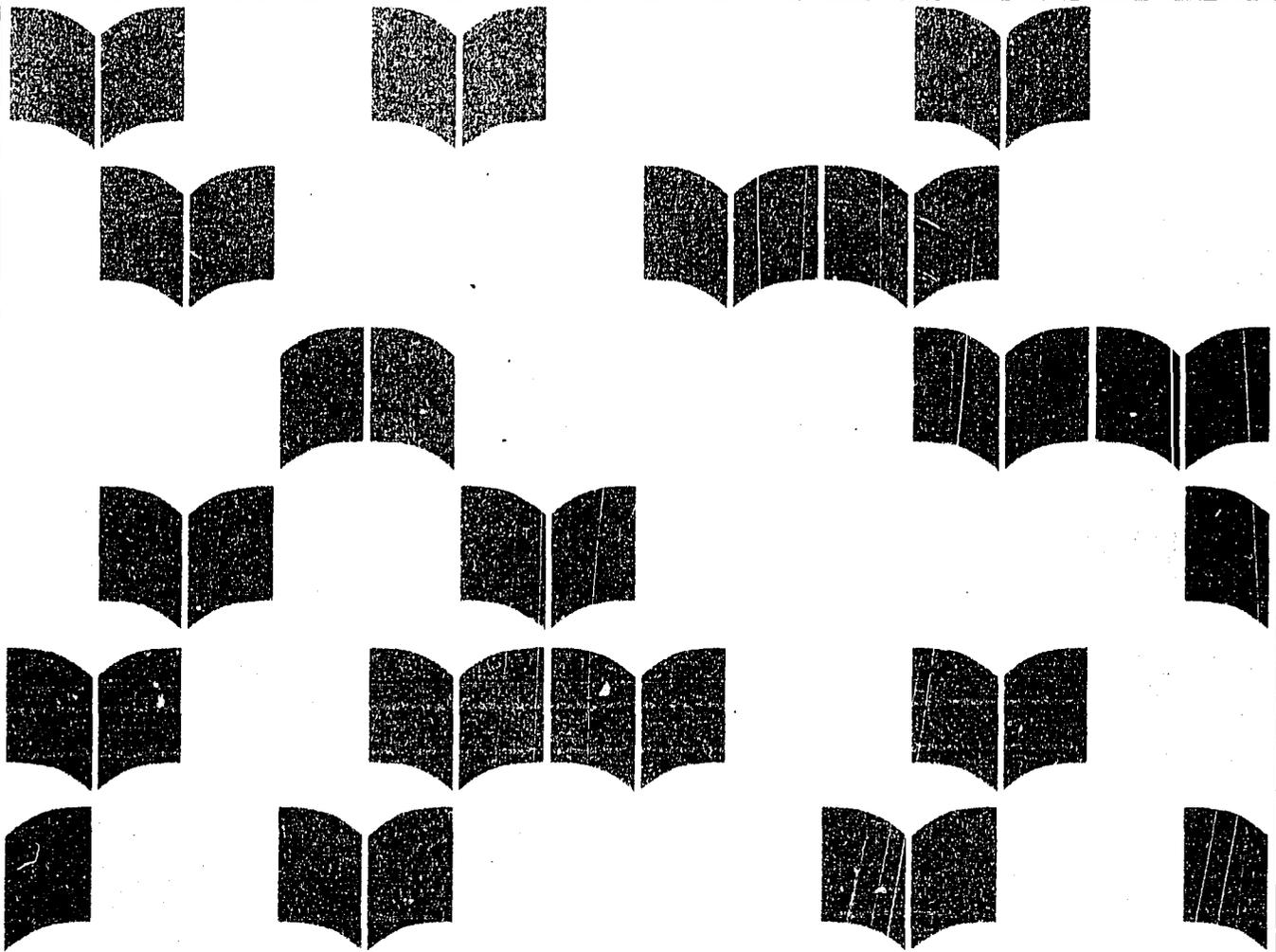


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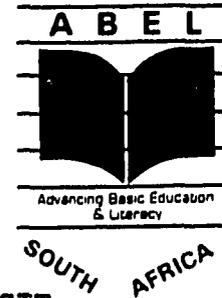
# REPORT TO TREE BASED ON ASSESSMENT FIELD VISIT

Prepared by:  
Julie Reddy

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P.O. Box 32195  
Braamfontein 2017  
12th Floor, Auckland Hse  
c/o Smit & Biccard Sts.  
Braamfontein 2001  
Tel: (011) 403-4253/4  
Fax: (011) 403-1565



**REPORT TO TREE BASED ON ASSESSMENT FIELD VISIT  
(OCT 22 -25, 1991)**

**TO:** Snoeks Desmond, Director (TREE)  
**FROM:** Julie Reddy, ODS (ABEL Project)

**A) SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1) ISSUE:** Should a new administration person be hired? Will s/he solve Tree's administration and managing of premises problems? Related to this issue is a proposal from TREE management staff to restructure some positions and people within the organization.

**REC:** TREE has R2000 a month in its budget to hire an additional person. In light of current staffing concerns ie; repositioning the receptionist and upgrading two trainers, it is recommended that the most equitable use of the R2000 a month would be to hire a new administrative person at an initial salary of R1000 a month to manage the Durban premises.

The interview with the receptionist revealed that in addition to her reception duties, she would like to become more involved in conducting sewing training workshops. It is recommended therefore that a new receptionist be hired on a half-day basis (mornings only) and paid out of the above remaining funds (approx. R500 month). The current receptionist can be trained to conduct workshops in the mornings and perform reception duties in the afternoons. The remaining funds can go towards upgrading the positions and salaries of the two trainers.

**2) ISSUE:** Employment contracts and conditions of service at TREE have historically been determined on an ad hoc basis and are very vague. Also, employment practices within the two branches (Durban and Pietermaritzburg) are inconsistent. This issue has evolved into a critical concern of TREE management and staff.

One key issue that needs to be addressed is compensation for overtime. Currently Durban does not compensate its staff for working seven days a week. PMB without official approval gives its staff one day off for working on weekends. This has caused some resentment among the Durban staff. Another issue that needs to be examined very objectively is the question of school holidays. Many staff members at TREE feel that they should be given time off during school holidays as compensation for the poor salaries paid by the organization. Apparently other similar organizations that are involved in early childhood education and training follow this policy.

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Essentially TREE/PMB has taken the initiative to establish its own policy governing certain conditions of services (adapted from Grassroots and BELC). Employment practices relating to pension, sick leave, vacation, and UIF benefits have been documented. This was done without the approval of Durban MANCO or EXCO. PMB has also prepared a standard letter of appointment that outlines the conditions of service governing its employees.

**REC:** Clearly there needs to be some consistency in the employment practices of the organization. TREE needs assistance to develop and document its conditions of service and to specify guidelines relating to benefits, vacations, holidays (ie: official national holidays vs struggle days vs school holidays), leave, maternity benefits, sick leave, overtime, seniority, loans, pension, medical aid, etc.

Prior to eliciting external assistance in this regard, TREE might want to approach SAAECE for copies of employment contracts and conditions of service of other organizations involved in early childhood education and training in South Africa. Moreover since TREE/PMB has already established a relationship in this regard with BELC and Grassroots, TREE could elicit the assistance of these organizations directly. This would provide the organization with basic guidelines and suggestions about issues that needs to be included in the formulation of its conditions of service. Based on this preliminary investigation by TREE, an external consultant can be brought in to assist in documenting and verifying the organization's employment contract and conditions of service. Ultimately however, only the management and staff at TREE can negotiate and decide on specific conditions of service.

**3) ISSUE:** Generally the salaries paid to TREE employees are below the minimum and supplemented wage levels as determined by the University of Natal. Clearly the differing attitudes about work and differing levels of commitment to the work of TREE between management staff that basically volunteer their time or accept a nominal salary (all white) and staff members who work at TREE to earn a living (mostly Black staff although there are exceptions) have contributed to the low salaries traditionally paid to TREE employees.

Interviews with salaried TREE staff revealed consistently that employees were most dissatisfied with the low salaries they were being paid and the reasons given by TREE management to justify this. Illustrative comments from interviewees included, "Salary is not an extra in my life, it needs to be budgeted", and "I think the problem of TREE is that they want to empower people outside more than their staff".

**REC:** Clearly the salary structure at TREE needs to be upgraded. It is recommended that a two year plan be developed by TREE management for upgrading salaries atleast to the minimum/supplemented living level and that this be included in future funding requests. It might be to TREE's advantage to compare it's salary structure with that of other

similar organizations involved in early learning/pre-school education and training and base part of its salary upgrade request on this comparison.

4) **ISSUE:** Existing job descriptions are too brief and outdated. Line management responsibilities and allocations at TREE (Durban in particular), are vague and unspecified. This has resulted in confusion and frustration among lower level staff regarding reporting functions and accountability.

**REC:** The process of updating the job descriptions is crucial and has already been initiated. Using this as a basis, TREE management should reassess its staffing structures, and clearly define its line management functions. Updated job descriptions that clearly defines line management responsibilities and allocations should be handed out to all employees and their supervisors for their comments/additions. Once the job descriptions have been verified by the employees and supervisors final copies should be handed out to all staff members for their personal reference. It is perceived that this process will not only alleviate some of the frustration related to reporting functions and accountability but equally important will provide TREE management with a set of clearly defined guidelines for evaluating employee performance and the its recruitment and/or replacement of new staff members.

## B) GENERAL ISSUES AND BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

1) **ISSUE:** Many of the founding members of TREE (who happen to be based in Durban), sit on both the management committee (MANCO), and the executive governing body (EXCO). Since the organization was founded, EXCO has assumed the responsibility of decision making on policy and employment practices of the organization. Some staff members see this as a conflict of interests and view these founding members as the major obstacle to progressive employment practices at TREE.

This situation has contributed to increasing tension between TREE/PMB and TREE/Durban. PMB feels left out because it believes that its requests and concerns are not adequately represented on the Executive board. The fact that many representatives on Manco Durban (ie; management committee) also sit on the Executive committee has led the PMB staff to perceive that TREE/Durban has an unfair advantage when it comes to decisions making about policy issues.

**REC:** TREE very definitely has to devise a planned process with which to deal with the question of power transformation. The process should include a re-examination and transformation of the existing structure and composition of EXCO.

It is recommended that firstly, TREE should try to get more outside people onto EXCO, preferably individuals with expertise in the areas of finance, general management and human resource development. Furthermore, it needs to actively recruit leaders from the black communities to join EXCO. These moves can initiate a process of change from the present "in-culture" structure of EXCO to a more representative body.

Secondly, effective as soon as possible, TREE needs to separate the management and executive functioning of the organization. Most definitely EXCO should cease responsibility for the day to day functioning of the organization. Basically the role of an executive committee is to deliberate on the following areas:

- mission statements.
- the budget.
- employment of Director/s.

2) **ISSUE:** The organization is top heavy and white dominated. There is a perception among many white staff, specially in the Durban office that current Black employees (with possibly one or two exceptions) do not have confidence in their own decision making and/or the qualifications to take on management positions.

**REC:** This is another key area that needs to be incooperated in a planned process for the transformation of power within the organization. Given the current political climate in South Africa and the nature and scope of TREE's commitment to empowering the Black communities with which they are involved, there is no excuse for perpetuating the current white dominating

management structure of TREE. Clearly the organization needs to initiate a concerted effort to examine and provide staff development training and promotional opportunities, particularly in the field of management, for its Black employees.

3) **ISSUE:** It is crucial for TREE to deal with the organizational differences and tensions between TREE/DBN and TREE/PMB. Although the organizational ties have not been formally severed it is very apparent that both branches have been operating as separate autonomous units. It is timely for TREE to seriously consider and define the relationship and linkages between the two branches because the director of TREE/PMB, who also happens to be the driving force behind this unit, is resigning shortly.

Related to this issue is a proposal initiated by Durban staff to move the High Scope training program that was founded and historically based in PMB to Durban. This proposal was motivated by the impending departure of the Director of TREE/PMB. One explanation offered in support of the proposed move was that accommodation is already available in Durban without additional cost to TREE (PMB High Scope currently runs their training program at a rental facility owned by AE). Another is that all the full-time high scope trainers are currently based in Durban and this requires that both trainers and trainees from Durban have to be transported to PMB.

PMB staff argue however, that the training should remain in PMB because not only has the planning for future training sessions already been done but more importantly, that the mechanics of High Scope are already in place in FMB. Furthermore there is a common feeling especially among PMB staff that the facilities available in Durban, are very inadequate. The PMB group feels that the nominal fee paid for accommodation at PMB is an excellent investment because the facilities, food and atmosphere provided at the AE facility have received excellent reviews from the trainees in the evaluations.

**REC:** Since the branches are based in two different areas and are already functioning independently of each other it is suggested that firstly, the formal ties between the two branches be cut. It is recommended that TREE/DBN and TREE/PMB should operate as franchise operations with a common name and common board of trustees. Durban Manco should not interfere in the functioning of TREE/PMB and future planning should be done autonomously. Secondly, Over the next three to six months TREE/DBN should assume responsibility for assisting PMB in its period of transition thereby ensuring the viability of TREE/PMB. Assistance should be given to PMB to recruit a new Director and to find full-time High scope trainers for PMB.

Given the continuing growth of the High Scope program it is anticipated that at some future date, Durban will have to start initiating its own high scope training program to meet the needs of the regions in which they are operate. Separating the branches and thereby the training programs should be viewed as

an anticipatory action by TREE. It is also recommended that TREE Durban examine closely and objectively the arguments of TREE/PMB about the inadequacy of its accommodation facilities. Staff from Durban can gather useful insights from a comparative examination of the importance Durban and PMB trainers/trainees attach to training and accommodation facilities. This information can easily be gathered by interviews and course evaluations.

4) **ISSUE:** Fundraising is another contentious issue. There is debate whether the fundraising activities should be centralized. Currently Durban and PMB raise their own funds and allocate it's use independently. The issue of control and autonomy is a key concern of PMB staff. PMB staff argue that under the present structure of EXCO and the current management structure of TREE Durban, centralized funding won't work. There were also suggestions that there needs to be more negotiation and consultation on the preparation of funding proposals.

**REC:** If the above recommendation that the two branches break their formal ties is carried through then it is anticipated that the funding problems can be resolved through a process of negotiation and consultation between TREE/PMB and TREE/Durban.

5) **ISSUE:** A disturbing phenomena at TREE, particularly apparent in the Durban branch was the racially denigrating use of language among some of the white staff. This has clearly created some tension among certain white and black staff. Furthermore, the paternalistic attitudes and racial stereotypes of some of the white staff has to be dealt with especially in light of TREE's commitment to empowering the black communities. Finally the lack of multicultural media materials, particularly with reference to pictures and posters displayed on the walls and puzzles was cause for concern.

**REC:** In light of the sensitive nature of dealing with this issue it is suggested that external intervention is necessary and that the Director of TREE Durban should not be solely responsible for dealing with the above issues. TREE needs to elicit the assistance of an external reference group, preferably members of other similar organizations like BELC and Grassroots and outside consultants to provide workshops on racism and multiculturism for all of TREE staff (Margaret Irvine is one possibility because she has dealt effectively with this issue previously). This will guard against undermining the Director and given her style of management will provide her with a source of power.

Materials in the resource centre should be sensitive and representative of the racial groups that TREE serves. The dominance of white faces in the pictures used in resource materials that target predominantly black communities perpetuates the notion among Black children that maybe they are not good enough to be represented in pictures. It is absolutely necessary for TREE to take a critical approach and show consistency in

achieving its goal towards promoting multicultural early  
childhood education and training.