

*Preschool Education for Black  
South African Children:  
A Descriptive Study of 32  
Educare Centers*

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# *Preschool Education for Black South African Children: A Descriptive Study of 32 Educare Centers*

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*The education of young African children in South Africa was ignored during apartheid. In response, groups of African women, many lacking formal education or knowledge of early childhood education (ECE) practices, established private preschools called Educare centers in urban areas, townships, and rural homelands. In 1995, nongovernment organizations with assistance from USAID began training Educare teachers. An evaluation of 32 Educare facilities was conducted to assess the relationship of this training to improved ECE practices. Overall, the training was found to improve Educare teachers' ability to provide a healthy, safe environment and appropriate learning experiences for children. This article reports on that study, describing the deprived conditions found at most centers but also highlighting the incredible dedication of Educare teachers and staff.*

In most industrialized nations, the care and welfare of young children is seen as a basic social right (Lubeck, 1991). Throughout the industrialized world, preschool services are provided in a variety of settings including home-based care, public and private child care centers, worksite centers, and public schools. In new or developing nations, however, early childhood education—indeed, education generally—typically is provided to only a privileged few, not the masses. According to Pollitt (1984), explicit literacy-nurturing activities are not part of the early childhood experience of most poor children in developing countries. As these nations move toward more widespread empowerment of their populations, they usually experience the need to become more inclusive in their educational policies. At that point, policymakers in these nations, and the nations that support them, require information on how best, given limited resources, to implement and sustain educational programs for citizens ranging from the youngest toddlers to the oldest adult learners.

One major educational policy issue facing new and developing nations involves early childhood education (ECE). As these nations move to establish stable social and economic environments, their policymakers must consider the impact of ECE on national progress. In effect, they must determine the educational as well as societal and economic benefits for the nation when very young children are afforded meaningful learning experiences. Myers (1991) cautions that the schools, families, and social institutions in nonindustrialized, Third World countries differ from those in industrialized, Western nations in significant ways. The causal mechanisms that seem to work in the United States or Europe, he notes, may or may not work in nations where large classes, an inadequate number of school places, scanty instructional resources, and minimally trained teachers are the norm. Nonetheless, research indicates that the quality of early schooling has a significant effect

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on poor children's primary school progress and performance (Haddad, 1979; Heyneman & Loxey, 1983; Schiefelbein & Farrell, 1978).

For example, McKey, Condelli, Ganson, McConkey, and Plantz (1985) and Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikert (1993) report that children attending Head Start, an ECE program for poor children in the United States, showed both immediate and continual improvement in their intellectual and socioemotional performance and health. Zill, Collins, West, and Hausken's (1995) research links attending Head Start, prekindergarten, or other center-based preschool programs to higher emerging literacy scores. They further contend that the benefit of preschool attendance accrues to children from both high-risk and low-risk family backgrounds. Reporting empirical evidence about the effects of the School Readiness Language Development Program (SRLDP) for four-year-old African American and Hispanic children, Champagne (1987, 1988, 1989, 1990) notes that these preschool students' performance improved significantly on all subtests of the Cooperative Primary Preschool Inventory. Moreover, they continued to perform better academically on standardized tests of reading, language, and mathematics in grades one through three than did students without SRLDP experience.

Research on other high-quality ECE initiatives has documented the potential long-term benefits of such programs, particularly for disadvantaged children considered to be at risk of later academic failure (Berreuta-Clement, Barnett, Schweinhart, Epstein, & Weikert, 1984). Schweinhart et al. (1993) found that ECE had long-term positive impacts on children in their follow-up of former participants in an ECE intervention program through age 27. They reported that these young people had lower arrest rates, were more likely to be employed and have jobs with higher wages, and were more likely to be married and own their own homes compared to a similar group of children who did not participate in ECE programs. A series of evaluation studies conducted by Short and Biersteker (1984) followed the scholastic progress of a group of South African children who participated in that nation's Early Learning Centers (ELCs) until the children were between 15 and 17 years old. One of their findings was that ELC participation compensated for social-class differences in school readiness.

On the other end of the spectrum, outcomes related to the lack of early childhood education have been reported by Taylor (1989). He noted that almost one-quarter of Black<sup>1</sup> South African children who enter grade one do not reach the second grade the following year. More egregiously, many of these children later disappear from the formal schooling system altogether. A consequence of this high dropout rate is the comparably high incidence of functional illiteracy evidenced among adult Black South Africans, estimated at 25%. Further, the variable and random educational opportunities available to Black children in the rural and homeland areas of South Africa cause these children to face great difficulties in pursuing formal education and to be frequently ill-prepared for it (Whisson & Manona, 1991). The seriousness of these findings are exacerbated by statistics which show that fully 18%, or 6.4 million, of South Africa's population consists of children of preschool age, 83% of whom are Black (Atmore, 1993).

The Republic of South Africa is one of the most developed countries on the African continent. Its urban cities and towns, where the majority of White South Africans live and work, are replete with modern conveniences. Paved roads, public transportation, plumbing, electricity, telephones, trash collection, and other services are commonplace. On the other hand, the conditions endured by Black South Africans, the majority of whom reside in the rural resettlement and homelands areas located away from urban areas,

<sup>1</sup>In this article, the term "Black," when used as a racial identifier, refers to people of African ancestry in both the South African and American contexts.

believe these claims. These areas, marked by their overwhelmingly impoverished physical conditions, could not be described as developed by any stretch of the imagination. Most modern conveniences such as telephones, bathrooms, running water, paved roads, and street signs are absent.

Differences in the quality of education offered to White and Black South African children, as evidenced by the enormous disparities in the types of buildings, equipment, books, and teachers available to each group, are likewise easily observable (Morrow, 1990). These disparities can be attributed to decades of unequal state funding of education by race during the apartheid era. As Collins and Gillespie (1993) report, during the early 1990s every White child's education was funded to the tune of (Rand) R3,082 annually, compared to only R764 for each Black child. In this context of paltry expenditures for Black education generally, preschool education for Black South African children obviously did not rank by any means as a priority on the government's agenda.

Persons from different segments of South African society saw the situation differently, however. The void in preschool education for the vast majority of Black children led several women from that nation's Black communities to organize preschools called "Educare centers" in the rural homeland areas and townships. The Educare concept was derived from three preschool models: the nursery school, the day care center, and Head Start (Whisson, 1992). The nursery school model was originally conceived to accommodate middle-class mothers by freeing them from childcare duties, thereby allowing them to attend to social activities. The day care center model evolved primarily as a means of providing care for children while their mothers worked. Head Start was designed to compensate for the educational stimuli impoverished children lacked at home, so that those children would not later reproduce a "culture of poverty" in the school setting. Despite their divergent foci, each of these models is undergirded by an emphasis on learning through play and child-centered learning.

The efforts of the women who served as teachers and administrators in the Educare centers were met with myriad obstacles. In many instances, these women had no formal training in early childhood education. Indeed, most had not themselves completed secondary education, and few had any formal knowledge of child development. Most did not have a vision of what a preschool should be like prior to their involvement in the Educare movement, much less specific background in the various preschool models. Their objectives were primarily influenced and informed by their own experiences in school, which, more often than not, consisted of teaching and learning that adhered to a rigid format in which children were rarely encouraged to ask questions and were expected to be silent most of the time. Additionally, the impoverished township and rural settings in which many of the centers are located are not conducive to quality educational practices. Yet, these community women were motivated to organize ECE centers and become Educare teachers because of their love for young children and their awareness that children need assistance if they are to lead healthy and safe lives and get ready for formal primary schooling.

Teacher training was deemed essential to intervene and change this fixed view of educational practice to a more child-centered approach. In support of the community-initiated Educare centers, and in the absence of support from South African government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as ELRU (the Early Learning Resources Unit), Grassroots Educare Trust, and Small Beginnings assumed responsibility for training Educare teachers. These organizations devised inservice teacher training programs, based primarily on the Head Start model, that addressed the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and school-readiness needs of young children. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded several of these programs through

its Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project, which provides technical assistance to Third World countries in the area of education.

Instruction in teacher-directed activities comprises the bulk of the basic or foundational Educare training course funded by USAID and sponsored by NGOs throughout South Africa such as TREE (the Association for Training and Resources in Early Education) headquartered in Durban. In this course, novice teachers are shown how to develop and direct a daily program of activities, such as music and story circles and discussions on weekly themes, that reflect and respond to children's developmental status. They learn about school readiness activities that will enable children to flourish in kindergarten and the primary grades. They are taught how to break out of the "teacher-talk" mode and encourage children to speak for themselves and communicate their own ideas. They also learn how to create and maximize the spatial arrangements of the Educare classroom, and are shown how to create many of the indoor and outdoor toys, games, furniture, and furnishings needed from waste materials at minimum cost.

The Educare teacher training program outlines a comprehensive, scheduled routine of developmentally appropriate daily activities that meet children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. This routine involves the following activities:

- (1) exercises that encourage positive interactions between students and teachers (e.g., talking and responding, sharing, helping each other, playing together, and resolving conflicts without fighting);
- (2) vocabulary, counting, story telling, and singing and chanting exercises in African and English languages;
- (3) exercises that show children how to express their thoughts and ideas, talk about their problems and fears; ask and answer questions, learn about themselves and the surrounding environment; and
- (4) participation in outdoor play and indoor movements to develop large and small muscles.

Candidates in the more advanced training courses receive instruction in health, nutrition, and safety as well as management skills such as interpersonal relations, self-evaluation, and work team coordination. They learn how to enlist material assistance and support for center activities from parents and others within and outside the school community. They also learn how to perform bookkeeping and other administrative tasks vital to the operation of the Educare center.

Psacharopoulos (1995) maintains that program impact cannot be determined without baseline data. He further suggests that without baseline data, later comparisons of the effects of a program on participants versus the effects of the absence of the program on control groups are difficult. Unfortunately, few educational programs in developing nations include the collection of baseline data or the use of controls as part of their design. This was true for the Educare centers. Study of the impact of the USAID-sponsored Educare teacher training program thus demanded another strategy: a quasi-experimental approach using a contrastive groups design. Using this approach, program impact could be determined through contrastive comparisons to determine differences between two groups of teachers: (a) those who received advanced inservice Educare training; and (b) those who received basic Educare training or less.

This article reports selected case study and general findings from a large-scale, systematic study of USAID-funded, NGO-sponsored teacher training at several Educare centers located throughout South Africa. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine whether or not this training had made a favorable impact on teacher performance along the following specific dimensions:

- (1) organizing classrooms for learning and social development;

- (2) providing stimulating classroom and outdoor play environments;
- (3) providing safe and healthy environments for children's learning;
- (4) attending to children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs;
- (5) facilitating positive teacher-child and child-child interactions; and
- (6) facilitating the acquisition of school readiness skills.

The evaluation was guided by the following research questions:

- (1) Is there a difference in the instructional behaviors of teachers who received advanced Educare training and those who received basic or less training?<sup>2</sup>
- (2) Is there a difference in the classroom and yard environments of advanced Educare trained teachers and those who received basic or less training?
- (3) Is there a difference in the behavior of children taught by teachers who received advanced Educare training compared to those whose teachers received basic or less training?
- (4) What are the implications of developing, replicating, and increasing access to the Educare model for policy, practice, and the future training of ECE teachers in South Africa?

#### AN EVALUATION OF EDUCARE

A framework for studying the impact and effectiveness of Educare teacher training was derived from ECE research conducted principally in the United States. This research suggests a focus on certain areas or variables, including: (a) the preschool environment (Saracho & Spodek, 1994); (b) preschool children's educational and developmental needs (Christie, 1994; Mboya & Mwamwenda, 1994; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978); (c) preschool children's educational accomplishments (Champagne, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990; Zill et al., 1995); (d) teachers' professional development (Cohn & Rossmiller, 1987; Ebhohimen, 1988; Mwamwenda & Mwamwenda, 1989; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1982; Whitebook, Howes, & Phillips, 1990); and (e) teachers' job commitment and satisfaction (Manlove, 1993; Rosenthal, 1991; Webb & Lowther, 1993).

Data collection was guided by the indicators of quality for ECE delivery delineated in the *TREE Foundation Course Manual* (TREE, undated). These indicators include the following characteristics of a quality Educare environment and experience. A good Educare teacher, for example, is believed to:

- (1) demonstrate a loving attitude toward children (e.g., shows enthusiasm with and affection for students; hugs them and smiles at them frequently; expresses joy openly in the presence of the children through laughter; engages in conversation with students);
- (2) serve as a positive role model for students (e.g., has and utilizes a good vocabulary; takes a calm approach to most circumstances; facilitates and resolves conflict, uses positive discipline; shows respect for adults and children; praises and rewards good and appropriate behavior);
- (3) be physically able to interact with children (e.g., to run, sit on floor, bend down to their level; able to organize and manage group activities);
- (4) make wise use of limited resources by converting waste materials into usable furniture, toys, and equipment for center use; and
- (5) serve as an efficient manager and administrator, who can enlist the support of parents and others to achieve center goals.

<sup>2</sup>For the purposes of this study, advanced training was defined as being enrolled in or having completed one of the following: a series of three inservice courses, the TEC 1 course, or the advanced course offered by the sponsoring NGO. Basic training was defined as being enrolled in or having completed the NGO's beginning or foundational Educare training course.

An Educare center student who is ready for primary school (kindergarten) is said to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- (1) successful participation in Educare learning activities and routines (e.g., student learns through play; cleans up area after playing with toys and/or learning materials);
- (2) the ability to listen attentively and follow directions;
- (3) knowledge of appropriate hygiene and toilet routines (e.g., washes hands after going to toilet and before eating; uses good table manners when eating);
- (4) the ability to interact positively with teacher and with other children during activities (e.g., resolves conflicts without fighting); and
- (5) the ability to develop ideas and communicate them to the teacher and other children.

Appropriate conditions for the physical structure of an Educare center include the following:

- (1) it must be neat, clean, and in good repair with proper lighting, ventilation, floor covering, windows, and roofing;
- (2) it must be of adequate size to accommodate the number of students enrolled;
- (3) it must be adequately furnished and supplied with child-sized tables, chairs, and other learning materials, toys, and displays;
- (4) it must offer at least four indoor areas: (a) a make-believe or fantasy area (furnished with articles that can enable children to pretend they are in a home, hospital, or primary school setting); (b) a hands-on play area with building blocks and other manipulatives; (c) a creative arts area with paper, paints, crayons, scissors, and so forth; and (d) a learning area with books, puzzles, and games (e.g., matching, counting, threading, etc.);
- (5) children's art and written work must be prominently displayed along with relevant school and community notices, schedules, and other information;
- (5) the building must provide adequate, clean, child-sized toilet facilities<sup>3</sup>;
- (6) if meals are to be prepared and served onsite, the kitchen must be clean and equipped with a stove, sink, utensils, broom, mop, and bucket; and
- (8) the outdoor or yard areas must be fenced in, clean, and free of litter, rocks, and other dangerous items; these areas should be equipped with tires, balls, swings, and sandboxes.

Prior to conducting the study, the evaluation team met with the NGO directors at a conference in Cape Town, reviewed with them the study procedures and instruments, and worked out other logistical details. With their cooperation, visits to the 32 centers were made during February 1995 by two teams composed of a consultant from the United States (the author, a former Head Start teacher and kindergarten teacher in the United States), South African IEQ staff, and teacher trainers from each of the NGOs. The NGO trainers were critical to the data collection effort in many ways. They knew how to get to the centers, many of which are located in distant townships off the main highways and on unmarked roads without street numbers. They also served as translators, filling in the gaps when a dialogue between teachers and children occurred in an African language.

Given that none of the centers had telephones, the teachers did not know that the evaluation teams were coming to observe their classes and interview them. However, they were all cordial and receptive to the teams upon arrival. Site visits lasted for approxi-

<sup>3</sup>It must be noted that many of the Educare centers, similar to many of the buildings and homes in the township and rural areas, do not have indoor bathrooms. Indeed, toileting facilities are quite limited; only nine centers were observed as having clean toilets. Some centers have no toilets, and the children must go to the bushes to relieve themselves. Nonetheless, the TREE manual specifies that whatever toilet facilities are available, typically some sort of outhouse structure, must be well-kept and hygienic by relative standards.

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mately 60 to 90 minutes. During that time, team members made observations of teachers and children as they participated in large group, small group, and free-play activities in their classrooms and play yards; sketched the layout of the classrooms; took photographs of the centers, teachers, and children; and administered the evaluation instruments. Before the end of each visit, the head teacher was interviewed.

Data were organized by the indicators of quality for ECE delivery outline in the TREE manual. Recognizing that the number of observations were small, themes based on the site visits and interviews were derived and summarized. Frequencies of responses were tallied, and content analyses of room arrangements were conducted. Differences between the two groups of teacher trainees, basic and advanced, were determined by computing the percentages of positive outcomes for each group along the dimensions of the indicators.

## CASE STUDIES AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### The Centers

Educare teachers in USAID-funded, NGO-sponsored teacher training programs in the geographical areas of East London, Queenstown, and Durban participated in this evaluation. Thirty-two centers were visited, and the head teacher at each site was interviewed.

Marked differences were evident in the physical structures of the centers visited, ranging from thatch-roofed *rondevales* (traditional African roundhouses) and iron-roofed makeshift huts with neither electricity, indoor water, nor indoor cooking or toilet facilities, to multiroom buildings with indoor flushing toilets or outdoor toilet rooms, kitchens with stoves and sinks with running water, and lots of windows for lighting or electricity. Other centers were housed in large metal containers, a gutted bus, a private home, and a church social hall. The size of the classrooms and the number of children in the centers limited and varied the possibilities for implementing the suggested room arrangements. Small, one-room huts or *rondevales* that housed large numbers of children generally did not have space for distinct learning areas. Even in what would be considered more spacious facilities, the extremely large numbers of students in attendance, ranging from 50 to 250 children, sometimes limited access to the learning areas. Table I delineates the variety of characteristics noted among the centers.

Thirteen of the centers enrolled children ranging in age from two to six years old; 12 centers enrolled children between ages three and six. Only four of the centers took infants. Girls outnumbered boys at the centers by approximately two to one.

All but one of the teacher trainees (head teachers) interviewed as part of the evaluation study were female. Most were moderately young; almost two-thirds were evenly divided between ages 26 to 35 and 36 to 45. The majority of trainees had not completed secondary schooling; grade 10 (standard 8) was the highest level of education attained by 34% of the sample. Teacher trainees are not admitted to Educare teacher training courses unless they are already employed in an Educare center. Generally, the trainees were either the owners of the centers or the sole teachers.

At 18 of the 32 Educare centers visited, 56% of the teachers had received or were receiving advanced inservice training; at the remaining 14 centers, 44% had received or were receiving basic or less training. Only two teachers had not yet attended an Educare training course. Nine (28%) teachers had attended three courses and four (12%) had attended four; however, only 8 (25%) teachers had completed three courses and only two (6%) had completed four courses. Six (19%) teachers had not completed a single course, yet most of the teachers (81%) indicated that they had completed the courses they began.

**TABLE I**  
*Number and Percent of Positive Characteristics Noted in Educare Classrooms (N= 32)*

CHARACTERISTIC	CENTERS IN WHICH NOTED	
	NUMBER	PERCENT
A clean classroom	23	72%
Child-sized tables and chairs	21	66%
Places for children to lie down	24	75%
Clean bathrooms (toilet area)	9	28%
Colorful decorations on the walls	24	75%
Books for children	25	78%
Toys/games for the children	24	75%
Educational materials	21	66%
Distinct learning areas	18	56%
A safe place to play outdoors	30	94%
Kitchen facilities	21	66%
Serves breakfast	17	63%
Serves lunch	20	65%
Serves snacks	11	34%

Forty-seven (15%) teacher trainees took their last training course in 1994; three each (9%) indicated that they had taken their last class in 1992 and 1993, while 6 (2%) completed their courses in 1990. Classroom management, how to enlist parent and community involvement, and health and safety information were viewed by the sampled teachers as the most important topics covered in the training by 27%, 22%, and 22% of our sampled teachers, respectively. Topics that received lower nominations were administration/management (11%), how to handle children (9%), child development (9%), and materials development (6%).

**Case Study #1: A Center Led by a Teacher with Advanced Training—  
The Nomzano Educare Center (Zwelidinga, Queenstown)**

The Nomzano Educare Center is located in a rural, semi-desert area quite a distance from the coast. The surrounding land is used principally for cattle ranching. The center serves 144 preschool children, 84 boys and 60 girls, but on the day that our evaluation team visited, only 108 children were present. The staff consists of the head teacher, Ms. Mboya,<sup>4</sup> a mature woman in her forties with a standard 6 (the equivalent of eighth grade in the U.S.) education; one assistant teacher; and two women helpers.

Ms. Mboya informed us that she had been teaching at the center for five years, during which time she had never received a salary. She reported that she liked the children and preschool work, but had concerns about the limited finances available to run the center—specifically, the lack of funds to pay her salary. She told us she had attended twice-weekly training courses at the Khululeka Centre (an NGO-sponsored inservice training center) in Queenstown for two years, making her an advanced teacher in terms of our evaluation criteria. She completed her last course in June 1994. In her view, the courses in materials development, classroom management, and parent and community involvement were most helpful to her as a teacher.

<sup>4</sup>Pseudonyms are used to identify the teachers interviewed for this study.

On the day that our evaluation team visited the Nomzano Center, Ms. Mboya was garbed in the local, traditional African mode of dress, featuring multiple layers of printed cloth, wrapped loosely around the body and head. The children, most of whom came from one-room homes with no running water or electricity, were dressed in clothes that were neat and clean. When we arrived, they were seated on the floor in a circle while Ms. Mboya led them in chants, songs, and number and alphabet games. She knew how to involve all of the children in learning activities, and called upon boys and girls equally. When the time came for free-play activities, she joined the children in their games. Later, in the fantasy area, she helped them as they pretended to pour tea for each other.

Ms. Mboya's responses, language tone, and actions toward the children, and those of her assistants, were warm and friendly. They frequently hugged and touched the children as they interacted with them. For example, when we arrived we noticed that one very young preschooler was crying. It was the beginning of the school year, and the child had not yet adjusted to being away from his mother and wanted to go home. Ms. Mboya went to this child and hugged him while talking quietly to him until he was soothed.

Without benefit of luxuries, this four-room center, the former residence of a teacher, presented an example of an outstanding learning environment. Its walls were painted bright green, and each of the rooms had multiple windows that yielded lots of light. Lacking the funds to purchase commercially built furniture, Ms. Mboya had applied her training in resource management to create, with her assistants, sturdy and colorful classroom furniture out of paper and starch. They had painted these self-made tables and chairs bright white trimmed in red. Three of the rooms contained toys and learning materials. One housed the learning area, with a series of science tables on which were placed objects such as rocks and plants with printed labels. This room also contained a theme table, a table with puzzles (handmade by the teacher and her assistants), and a table with library books; small rag rugs (teacher-made) were scattered on the floor. Another room served as the fantasy area, replete with play furniture, tables and chairs, a bed, and cupboards filled with dishes, eating utensils, hats, and dolls. The third room was the hands-on play area, with painted cans and other articles to show colors, sizes, and shapes as well as number and counting game materials. The fourth and largest room, where the entire school assembled for ring activities, contained no furniture. With 108 children present the day we visited, this room was crowded. If all 144 children had been present, it would have been extremely uncomfortable.

The large play yard outside the center was completely fenced around. This area was clean and well-equipped with teacher-made toys. Pieces of wood substituted for blocks, plastic bottle halves served as sandbox scoops, and tin cans were used for the ball toss game. Play trucks were made from boxes, with small round cans for wheels. This makeshift play environment engaged the children and their imaginations quite thoroughly, and they appeared quite happy during their playtimes.

#### **Case Study #2: A Center Led by a Teacher with Basic Training— The Elukhanyisweni Educare Center in the Newlands**

The Elukhanyisweni Center, located in a highland area township near the coastal city of East London, is run by a lead teacher, two teachers, and a parent volunteer who serves as the cook. The day that we visited, it was cold and misty. Given that most township parents do not send their children to school when the weather is bad, only 12 of the 55 children enrolled were present: 6 boys and 6 girls.

The lead teacher, Ms. Nduna, was a mature woman with two years of teaching experience and a standard 9 (11th grade) education. She informed us that she had completed

only one basic Educare training course at the Community and Child Development Centre (CCDC) in East London in December 1994, and had benefitted most from the course's coverage of classroom management and administration. On the day of our site visit, Ms. Nduna was simply but neatly clothed in a plain dress and flat shoes. The children were dressed for the cold weather, with layered sweaters and jackets that, while tattered and frayed, were neat and clean.

We observed Ms. Nduna as she taught the children in a ring. She too called upon boys and girls and praised all of the children equally. She first led the children in a song about brushing their teeth, then she talked to them about the weather. She encouraged the children to ask questions and to continue talking. When a child responded correctly to one of her questions, she encouraged the other children to applaud for that child. She concluded the ring exercises by leading the children in a chant that helped them learn their numbers in English.

The center is located in a donated, one-room *rondevale* until a permanent preschool can be built. The exterior of the *rondevale* was crumbling, dried mud covered with chipping light-blue paint. The roof was constructed of rusty corrugated iron. Other buildings in the vicinity were painted the same color and appeared to be in the same condition. It was dark inside the center's *rondevale* as the only light entering the single open room came from two small, round window-holes and the doorway. The concrete floor was covered with linoleum. Posters, including the daily schedule, and charts adorned the walls. Learning equipment such as tables, chairs, paper, pencils, or crayons were nowhere visible, but there were toys, games, and books throughout the room. Small tables placed around the walls comprised the various learning areas. The room was not large enough for the children to have desks and chairs; however, there were two adult-sized chairs and a shelf for storage of teaching materials. Ms. Nduna told us that in warm weather, the children work and play outside as much as possible. The yard was fenced, but to her dismay it had not been cleared enough for the children to play in. The grass was tall, and junk was scattered all about. In contrast to most of the Educare center yards that we visited, which were either locked or monitored by an adult to keep them free of uninvited visitors, pigs, chickens, dogs, and local residents roamed the yard freely. On the day that we visited, practitioners of native medicine, with their faces, arms, and legs painted white and carrying long walking sticks, came into the yard to view the children's activities.

### General Observations

The following findings emerged from analysis of observation and survey data drawn from the entire sample of teachers ( $N=32$ ) participating in the evaluation study.

*Teacher-Child Interactions.* No difference was observed between the two groups of teacher trainees for such teacher-child interactions as calling on boys and girls equally in the classroom. Although the number of teachers observed giving some form of praise was moderate, only slight differences were noted between the two groups in terms of providing praise to all children equally and involving all children in classroom activities. The advanced teachers exhibited this behavior more often than those with basic training. Teachers with advanced training quietly reminded misbehaving children of the rules more frequently than did their basic training peers.

*Utilization of Resources.* Teachers in both groups demonstrated equal resourcefulness in getting food, toys, yard equipment, money, and assistance for their centers.

*Composite Indicator of Teacher Management.* A composite indicator was developed to assess the impact of Educare training on teachers' management abilities; a two-by-two

contingency table illustrates the results (see Table II). Both groups of teachers evidenced knowledge of appropriate center management; however, most of the advanced teachers received a positive rating on this indicator compared to fewer than half of the teachers with basic training. A much larger percentage of teachers with advanced training followed a daily schedule than did those with basic training; however, all of the teachers posted their daily schedules on the walls of their classrooms. Additionally, the advanced teachers' classrooms were overwhelmingly more appropriate in terms of room arrangement and furnishings.

*Classroom Environment.* Very large differences favoring teachers with advanced training were noted with regard to classroom environment. A great deal more of the advanced teachers' classrooms had child-sized tables and chairs, distinct learning areas, age-appropriate educational materials, and colorful wall decorations. Moderate differences favoring teachers with advanced over basic training were noted for adherence to a daily schedule, classroom cleanliness, and the presence of toys and games for the children. The smallest differences between the two groups were observed for the presence of children's books in the classroom and bathroom cleanliness.

*School Readiness.* The greatest opportunity to determine the extent to which Educare teachers focused on school-readiness was during the class circle or "ring" activities. Forty-six instances of school-readiness activities were identified. Thirty-four (74%) of these activities were observed in the classrooms of the advanced teachers compared to 12 (26%) observed in the classrooms of teachers with basic training. About one-third of all such activities focused on language development, combined in many instances with practice in speaking English. Health-focused, mathematics, and science readiness activities were also observed. Both groups of teachers were observed engaging their students equally in group socialization activities such as singing and chanting.

#### CONCLUSION

It is through further research that the knowledge base about early childhood education in nonindustrialized/Third World countries will expand and be able to assist policymakers in their decision making. The findings from this study yield some tentative indications that teacher training in early childhood education makes a difference in the quality of learning environments, teacher-child interactions, resources, and school readiness activities provided within the Educare preschool setting. However, more money is needed for ongoing training and follow-up support of Educare teachers. The number of children enrolled in Educare centers is increasing. More and better trained teachers are needed. Without adequate funding, the quantity and quality of training will decline and the quality of teachers' practices will deteriorate.

Mboya and Mwamwenda (1994) contend that a new South Africa cannot be realized or sustained until education, particularly for the Black population, is recognized as the

TABLE II  
*Effects of Educare Training on Teachers' Management Ability*

COMPOSITE MANAGEMENT INDICATOR	ADVANCED	TRAINING LEVEL	
		BASIC	TOTAL
Positive (+)	16 (89%)	6 (43%)	22 (69%)
Negative (-)	2 (11%)	8 (57%)	10 (31%)
Total	18 (100%)	14 (100%)	32 (100%)

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foundation and source of the nation's manpower. One of the goals of the Educare program is to successfully prepare Black South African students for a primary education. Without the opportunities for school readiness provided by Educare centers, many Black South African children who come from homes that cannot provide readiness activities will have difficulty making the transition to primary school. Government policy development should consider the priority and financial resources needed to support and scale up early childhood education in general. More specifically, new educational policies should support the maintenance and expansion of Educare centers and their teaching of school readiness skills.

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