

Editorial

Special Education for young children below typical school commencement age is a relatively recent phenomenon. Apart from services for children with sensory loss where, for example, the wisdom of providing early language training for children with hearing disability has long been recognised, it was not until the mid 1970's that Early Intervention Special Education Programs were established, initially as university demonstration projects (Pieterse, Bochner & Bettison, 1988). Those early projects have developed in many ways from the early models, which were often derived from overseas examples. Influenced by these, other community organisations soon established their own Early Intervention Centres in cities and provincial centres. More recently, a wide range of service delivery models has been recognised including programs offered by generic pre-school or child care facilities, those offered by Education, Community Service or Health Department agencies, and those designed for families in isolated communities (see this issue).

This issue of the Journal results from the announcement and call for papers made just 12 months ago to produce a Special Issue which is devoted to the examination of recent developments in the field of Early Childhood Special Education. Contributions selected for the Special Issue include an interesting mix of review papers and reports of research from a number of Australian states. I am indebted to Moira Pieterse, formerly of Macquarie University's School of Education and to Joy Goodfellow, formerly of the Institute of Early Childhood Studies at Macquarie University, for their assistance in the editorial processes with this issue.

A review of research on efficacy in Early Intervention makes up the first paper in the Special Issue. Kemp and Carter's paper draws attention in useful detail to the kinds of questions we should be asking of Early Intervention research beyond the simplistic question about effectiveness.

Johnston, McAlpine and Wheeler report on the transition process from Early Intervention service to pre-school for over 100 children situated in either New South Wales or Victoria. Evaluation of this process and factors contributing to its success or otherwise are identified and a number of key implications for handling this transition in practice are indicated.

The difficult question of providing Early Intervention support to families in rural and isolated areas is reported by Moore and Sargood's investigation of the use of the telephone for this purpose. Combined with

other service delivery components, this technique was able to show considerable promise.

Hawke and Hayes report a follow up study on the progress of children who had moved from an Early Intervention Program during a three year period. While this study found favourable recollections by parents of their children's experiences at the Centre, a number of difficulties were reported in the level of support available in the regular schools in which most former Early Intervention students were subsequently placed.

A very specialised form of Special Education is reported by Margaret Dowrick in her survey of Conductive Education in Australia. This very influential approach to the education and development of young children with disorders of motoric function has been adapted for use in a variety of programs in Australia. Dowrick has examined the implementation of Conductive Education in Australia and identified important issues to be addressed in further evaluations of the method.

Reading Recovery has been one of the most influential approaches to providing assistance to young children with reading difficulties in many parts of the world. The report by Wheldall, Center and Freeman provides a very detailed evaluation of this approach, indicating some concerns about maintenance of children's progress and generalisation or "spill-over" effects of the method to other low progress children.

It is hoped that this Special Issue will make a useful contribution to debate and to the development of Special Education at the early childhood level, while also meeting the needs in a more substantial way of members of the AASE and the NZSEA, with these particular interests. In similar vein, it is intended that the Number 2 issue of the Journal in 1994 will also be produced as a Special Issue. To that end, Jeff Bailey and Don Rice, both former Editors of this Journal and both from the University of Southern Queensland at Toowoomba, have agreed to serve jointly as Guest Editors of a Special Issue on Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. See Notice, this issue, for further information.

Reference

Pieterse, M., Bochner, S. & Bettison, S. (1988). *Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities: The Australian Experience*. Sydney: Macquarie University Special Education Centre.

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