

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Effective early childhood educators developing a methodology for improvement

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**EFFECTIVE EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS:
DEVELOPING A
METHODOLOGY FOR
IMPROVEMENT**

Volume 1

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
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Abstract

This research was embedded in the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Project (Pascal et al.,1995), a national evaluatory and development programme looking at the quality of learning experiences for 3 and 4 year olds in the varied range of settings which typify United Kingdom provision. It was, however, a separate and discrete study focused on the effectiveness of the adult, whatever her level of training, as an educator. It was a 'real world', inclusionary, interpretive, research enquiry using qualitative and quantitative paradigms.

The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a methodology to assess and improve the quality of educators working in a range of settings. A conceptual framework for assessing quality was developed. Also an observation schedule, 'the Adult Engagement Scale' focusing on three aspects of educative interaction: 'Sensitivity', 'Stimulation' and 'Autonomy' was created. Evidence was gathered using this scale and triangulated with other data, including participant interview, professional biography questionnaire and focused observation. The cohort consisted of 169 practitioners in 115 settings who worked with the researcher to collect the data. The practitioners had varied roles and backgrounds and were trained by the researcher in the methodology. They mainly worked in settings broadly representational of the four most frequent types of UK centre based provision; Reception Classes in Primary Schools, Nursery Schools, Nursery Classes and Pre-school Learning Alliance Playgroups.

The data generated by this strategy were analysed to consider the characteristics of an effective early childhood educator. The 'Adult Engagement Scale' was shown to be an effective means of assessment, development and improvement. The data revealed that an adult's ability to be an effective 'engager' was linked to her 'educative disposition', which included her 'professional self image and emotional well being'. The analysis showed that the educative categories of 'Sensitivity', 'Stimulation' and 'Autonomy' were hierarchical and progressively less well addressed. All settings scored relatively highly on Sensitivity. Those settings which were better at Stimulation generally had more qualified staff. Autonomy was least well addressed by all settings, yet appears to be the category most closely linked to adult effectiveness. Most early childhood educators are emotionally committed to their work yet feel undervalued. Universally practitioners in this study displayed a poor professional self image, and this was clearly linked to their ability to be effective as an 'engaging' educator of young children.

Key words: Early childhood; education; effectiveness; evaluation; learning; staffing.

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Alles, was wir an den Kindern ändern wollen, sollten wir
zunächst wohl aufmerksam prüfen, ob es nicht etwas sei, was
besser an uns zu ändern wäre.

Jung, 1932

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is entitled 'Effective Early Childhood Educators: Developing a Methodology for Improvement'. The term 'Educators' is deliberately used as an inclusionary word which seeks to encompass all those who work with young children in the varied range of centre based settings which typifies provision for three and four year olds in the United Kingdom. Social and demographic changes, differing patterns of working, economic pressures, changing patterns of family life and the competitive needs of nation states are increasingly institutionalising child rearing not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. The age of admission into formal state education is also becoming lower. The very nature of childhood is changing.

Recent research (see, for example, the overview by Sylva and Wiltshire,1993) shows that this is a crucially formative time in the social and educational development of children. 'Dispositions' and attitudes (Katz, 1995) established in these early years can have lasting effects not simply on educational achievement but also on an individual's integration into society (Schweinhart et al.,1993). These beneficial outcomes are, however, dependent upon the nature and quality of the provision. Early learning experiences impact on children's immediate (Shorrocks et al.,1992) and continuing educational experiences and on their life opportunities.

In these circumstances, it is important that parents, practitioners and policy makers are informed about what constitutes appropriate provision for our youngest children. Yet as Moser (1996) has suggested 'much policy determination is basically research free' (p72). Research, focused on the particular circumstances of early childhood educational provision in the United Kingdom, is needed to illuminate this rapidly expanding area. Ball (1994) claims it is a 'muddle' and a 'national disgrace'. We need to find frameworks for assessing and developing its quality. A key element in this quality must be the effectiveness of educators working with children in the multitude of different settings. It is this that my study hopes to explore.

I have spent more than 25 years involved with young children and their families, working first as an early childhood teacher and, latterly, as a early childhood teacher educator. I have a deep and personal commitment to the field and have chosen to focus on the practitioner who works with young children because I feel it is she who is the single most important variable in determining the quality of provision. Current opinion would seem to support this view (Moser, 1996; Woodhead, 1996; Millett, 1996).

There are many policy initiatives impacting on early childhood provision: the vouchers, the light touch inspection system, the desirable curriculum outcomes, baseline assessments, the nature of practitioner education. Many of these changes are in danger of being seen by practitioners as more informed by ideology than by research. This study seeks to examine one important element of provision, the effectiveness of the early childhood educator, in a rigorous and scientific manner, in the hope that rational debate about this and other issues

may be better informed.

The study has five objectives;

1. to review existing evidence on effective teachers/educators,
2. to develop a methodology to evaluate effective educators,
3. to trial and critique the use of this methodology as part of a democratised Evaluation and Improvement Strategy across a range of Early Childhood settings,
4. to document and analyse the interactive process of effective teaching and learning using the Scale in a range of early childhood settings,
5. to document the characteristics of career choice, training and experience of those who have become early childhood educators and explore how these characteristics impinge on the development of effective educators of 3 and 4 year olds.

There are five Research Questions which arise from these objectives:

1. what is the current state of knowledge on effective teachers/educators of young children?
2. how might effective teachers be evaluated and assessed?
3. Can early childhood educators self evaluate their educative behaviour? What does the evidence show and how might this evidence be used?
4. What is the relationship between effective teaching and learning? What factors affect this relationship?

5. What are the characteristics of those who currently educate young children? How do these characteristics affect the teaching and learning process?

Chapter Two explains the context of provision for three and four year olds in the United Kingdom. It does this firstly, through an examination of the terminology we use, believing that choice of nomenclature often reveals underpinning values, beliefs and attitudes. This chapter also looks at the peculiarities of the UK system of provision. A final contextualisation section discusses evaluation strategies in the UK and shows how this study is embedded in, but separate from, the 'Effective Early Learning Project', (EEL) a major national initiative to support early childhood settings in evaluating and developing the quality of their educational provision (Pascal & Bertram, 1995).

Chapter Three assesses some of the literature on effectiveness in educational and health studies, and critiques some of the Models that have been developed. It offers an innovative Model of a conceptual framework for evaluating early childhood settings, which identifies variables within each element of effectiveness; 'context', 'process' and 'outcome'.

Chapter Four focusses on the 'process' variables in assessing and developing 'effectiveness'. It surveys the literature on early childhood educators and describes the evolution of the concept of 'Engagement' and the use of the Adult Engagement Scale. The 'Engagement' style of an early childhood educator is rated by use of an observation schedule in three categories of interaction; Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy. Engagement is defined and each of its

categories is described. This chapter also presents another concept, 'Involvement', which describes and measures the intensity of a child's immersion in an activity. 'Engagement' and 'Involvement' are seen as being in a symbiotic and synergous relationship. 'Engagement' in adult educators is linked to their 'Professional Self Image and Well Being' and this concept is also explored.

Chapter Five outlines methodological issues. It discusses choice of paradigm, general method, the use of practitioners as participant researchers, the research cohort and issues of reliability and validity. It looks at qualitative and quantitative methods, computer analysis and ethical issues and speculates on the need of the research community to bring research into the 'classroom' and to find new and accessible ways of allowing practitioners to make systematic and rigorous judgments.

Chapter Six sets out and analyses the data with reference to the research questions postulated earlier using responses to interviews, questionnaires and direct observation. It maps patterns of practitioner deployment, motivation, experience, training, aspirations, educative behaviour across a range of settings for three and four year olds. It examines such things as roles, promotion and career opportunities for early childhood educators. It looks at stereotyping and gender, attitudes to work, motivation, type and range of experience and qualifications. It lays out some of the characteristics of early childhood educators and produces evidence of their effectiveness as self evaluators. Lastly, it explores supporting evidence for the concept of 'professional self image'.

The final chapter discusses some of the findings of the previous section looking at the substantive issues which emerge. It also makes recommendations for policy, research and practice which arise from these substantive issues. The evidence leads to the generation of a 'Theory of Adult Educative Dispositions' based on a more detailed understanding of Professional Self Image and Well being.

In this way the five research questions are seen to be comprehensively addressed. The essence of this doctoral thesis, therefore, is an exploration and an analysis of what characterises an effective early childhood educator.

Chapter 2: Contexts

There are three contexts I want to consider in this chapter. In the first section, I want to explore the meanings of some of the key words in the rubric and show how these are dependent on certain constructions and expectations. In the second section, I wish to explore the context of early childhood provision in the United Kingdom and show how the need for this study has arisen. Finally, I wish to show how the Effective Early Learning Research Project is seeking to address some of the issues of evaluating and developing early childhood settings and how my study of effective educators is embedded in, but separate from, that Project.

2.1 Explorations of Meanings

There is an established approach (Vygotsky, 1962; Frangos, 1996) of entering the debate on adults' and children's interactive learning through an examination of the cultural assumptions implicit in the words that are used. I shall do some textual searches and discourse analysis in later chapters, but here I wish to explore the paucity of shared meanings in Early Childhood Education. Early Childhood researchers are in need of definitions. What is 'early childhood'? What or who is an 'educator'? What is 'education'? What does 'effective' mean in this context? These seemingly simple questions are

enormously difficult to answer but, at least, if we can establish some level of agreement about the meanings of the terms we use, it may then be possible to initiate a debate on how an 'effective early childhood educator' might be created, might be assessed or might be professionally developed. There is, thus, a need to define the terms we use before we can debate the issues, and a need to seek answers to some of the questions which flow from those definitions. In this section, then, I intend to explore how our use of words limits our ability to think freely about provision for young children.

It might help this exploration to reveal some of the commonly held values, attitudes and beliefs about the education of young children in the United Kingdom by a close study of the very terms we use. The etymological examination of words can become absurd sophistry when taken to extremes but what I hope to show is that the very words themselves are symbols of the dilemmas and difficulties early childhood workers face. Words represent concepts derived from our experience and choice of word often reveals underlying attitudes and a subtext of power (Foucault, 1982; Warham, 1993). Not only do words carry a subtext of the dynamics of power but they contain different interpretations. Speakers and writers often place meanings in words which are heard or read with a different set of meanings by their audience. Often these differences in perception between an author and the audience are based on the differing experiences that each brings to the text. Within the field of early childhood, those interpretations and experiences may differ not only between early childhood workers from different or similar disciplines, but also, importantly, between the early childhood community and the important world beyond it, such as policy makers, politicians, parents, researchers. Some have

criticised the 'cosy' world of early childhood for being too precious (King, 1978; Bennett & Kell, 1989; Alexander, 1992). If we are to be advocates we must get better at speaking over the wall of this hidden garden. If the words we use can be interpreted differently by different audiences, it becomes more difficult to know what, precisely, each of us is saying or how what is being said is being interpreted. If 'play', for example, is thought, by those not part of the cognescenti, as the opposite of 'work', or 'teaching' is confused with 'learning', it becomes clear that meaningful debate must start with the debate of meanings. If the terms that are used are not clear to all, then communication amongst all the 'stake holders' (Moss & Pence, 1994) becomes problematic.

This is especially true in early childhood where issues are often debated from an entrenched perspective: be it those of national government, or local government, or ideological policy units, or equal opportunities lobbyists, or those concerned about the needs of the labour market, or even, since local financial management of schools, by the needs of 'cash-flow-vulnerable' primary heads faced with 'downsizing' and anxious to recruit their 'units of income' before others do so (Bertram, 1996). As Moss & Pence (1994) have indicated, one of the problems undermining real debate in early childhood is that too often discussion is attached to other agendas and not addressed as an issue in its own right. Thus, the debate on 'provision' for young children, when addressed from a labour market perspective or from the perspective of women's rights to paid employment outside the home, mostly concerns issues of 'quantity of provision' not 'quality of provision'.

If the powerful 'define the terms we use then they can frame the debate. A clear

illustration of this was Prime Minister Major's promise, at his party's Annual Conference in 1994, that every parent who wished it should have 'nursery' provision for their four year old. It is, perhaps, too late to insist, as former HMI Ensing (1995) has done, that we should define 'nursery' education with more clarity, a point re-emphasised by Blunkett (1996) in commenting on the introduction of a politically sensitive, market driven, voucher scheme for expanding provision in the UK as a means of fulfilling Major's promise,

The scheme transforms the definition of nursery education. For the first time parents will have no guarantee that their children will be taught by qualified staff; no guarantee of the quality of provision; no guarantee that children will not be packed into cramped and inappropriate premises. The voucher scheme reduces 'nursery' education to the lowest common denominator.

Blunkett, 1996, p.4

The research literature on gender and race issues has also raised our awareness of the importance of nomenclature in both defining our views and the views of others (Siraj-Blatchford, 1994). What words we choose and how, where, when, why and to whom we use them, matters. Words have negotiated meanings and are always set in a social context and sociology has shown the link between meanings and power. (Foucault, 1982) The words are the message but also the 'medium of the message'; how things are said, and the credibility and standing of the speaker can be as important as what is said. That too is part of the problem for early childhood workers. We must insist on the appropriate words and be positively assertive about their use (Bertram & Pascal, 1995).

Communication between educator, researcher, politician, parent and policy maker, seems to be problematic in the current UK debate on policy, practice and theory in early childhood education. We have difficulties understanding each other, firstly because of the lack of precision in the words we use, and secondly, because of the differing perceptions and attitudes each group brings to the dialogue. There are clear barriers between those who see themselves as the guardians of the 'early childhood tradition' of Owen, Pestalozzi, Froebel, MacMillan and Isaacs (Bruce,1987) and those 'outside', who are viewed as not sharing the values, understandings or 'grounded experiences' of the cognoscenti. There have been several attempts to address this by academics and others to make the debate accessible to a wider audience (EYCG, 1987; Pascal,1993; Gammage and Meighan,1995).

Recent research in the UK by those who might be seen as falling into this 'outsider' category has often been questioned by those who perceive themselves as 'insiders'. Bennett and Kell (1989) purported to show how children are often confused by early childhood teachers' intentions and purpose. King (1978) has shown how early childhood educators' beliefs and values can limit their expectations of their children. Alexander et al (1992), although focussed primarily on the achievements of older children, suggested that teachers were too malleable and too superficial in responding uncritically to doubtful theoretical dogmas. These kind of researchers have been criticised from within the mainly female early childhood community as uninformed male outsiders (Curtis, A et al.,1993). The 'outsiders', however, often see the work of the 'insider' as being patronising, simplistic, unstructured, lacking in rigour or high expectation, woolly, soft, precious or, worse, simply unimportant

(Alexander, 1992). Although some 'outsiders' clearly have agendas centred elsewhere, in the destruction of 'the nanny state' and the defeat of the 'tyranny of local government imperialism' (Lawlor,1995), there is an unhelpful posturing polarity in much of this. It may be that many decision makers and influential lobbyists seem neither experienced in, nor knowledgeable of, practice or theory in early childhood. Perhaps, early childhood workers, themselves, bear some responsibility. Lacking status or recognition, they are too agreeable and acquiesce too easily. Wanting to remain with their children they have avoided managerial status and been less influential in policy, as we shall see evidenced later. Gender, status and groundedness are undoubtedly key elements in the early childhood debate but they are often worn as long service medals that give an authenticity to rhetoric (Hurst,1994). There is a need to speak assertively for young children's needs and to reclaim the centre ground, but there is equally a need to acknowledge the voices of all the stakeholders and to establish rational argument.

If we are to get beyond positional rhetoric, we must turn to research, reasoned debate and clear articulation. Pascal (1989) suggests that all early year's practitioners must become better advocates for their profession by being confident, by being informed and by being articulate. We should be looking to overcome barriers, to reach out and inform, to promote and disseminate our ideas with scholarship and clarity. To do so we need to explore closely some of the words we use and what they reveal of our attitudes and beliefs. Let us examine each of the four words which are to be the central concern in this study: early, childhood, effective, educator.

2.1.1 'Early'

'Early', Onions et al. (1932) suggest, derives from the Old Teutonic adjective 'err', meaning 'before'. It is rarely used nowadays but most will be familiar with the poetic 'err now' or 'err long'. We can view 'early' from two perspectives, negatively or positively. Either 'early' can suggest some immature form which awaits a more significant development, ('it's too early to say', for example) or, alternatively, 'early' can be viewed as being 'in good time', or 'before its too late', or 'timely', when potentials and possibilities can be spotted, encouraged and developed ('early to rise', for example). One meaning, then, gives 'early' a dismissive connotation of unimportant immaturity and the other, the implicit significance of essential foundation. 'Early', like many words, has a meaning which is dependent on the differing perceptions of the observer and the contextual differences of individual situations. The connotations that 'early' is 'before' or 'in preparation for' the main event has impacted on the status of early childhood. It leads to the view that early childhood is not a phase of development in its own right but is precursory. It is a brave child who can answer the oft asked question, 'What do you want to be?' with the assertion, 'To be?..... I am now!' There is a danger if we see young children not as they are now but as developmental prototypes of their future, or worse, deficit predictions of their achievement-inadequate future. It seems that political commentators on education policy rarely compare early childhood to the previous phase of infancy and make positive statements about progress. Yet, as Trevarthen (1979) has shown, it is in neonates that we can really discover the process of our biologically determined drive to learn and to link to significant adult mentors. The focus on young children's learning is predominantly in terms of their later years' attainment and, in particular, achievement in tests and academic

qualifications. Early childhood education thus becomes merely a necessary but relatively unimportant preparation. Differential funding and ratios can be seen as making that explicit and perhaps Moser (National Commission, 1993) is right to raise that as an issue and a necessary precursor to achieving appropriate recognition.

The different perspectives and interpretations of 'early', and the differing conceptual status which underpins them, can be seen as an analogous parallel for the positive view on the one hand, that many early childhood educators have of themselves and their work, their children's abilities and their families, and the deficit models, on the other hand, that they feel others outside their profession have of those things . These issues are at the very affective core of the debate.

2.1.2 'Childhood'

Society's perception of the nature of childhood is also at the centre of the debate. How do we define 'childhood'? Literary examples might offer some models. One definition might be chronological, that it is the period between birth and puberty. But we could equally define it as a *state* of development rather than a chronological *stage* in development. It could be described in terms of maturity of thought, as the Bible does,

'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child: but when I am become a man I put away childish things"

(1 Corinthians, xiii.11)

'Childhood' can be described as a social construct. Societies make different constructions of the concept at different times in their history and in different places. Victorian childhood as seen by Mayhew (1851) was clearly very dissimilar to the notions of a model family life that characterised some of the views on morality espoused by the former Secretary of State for Education in 1993. Rousseau in 'Émile', bound as he was by the Romantic notions of the 'noble savage', saw children as perfect until corrupted by malign outside influences (Rousseau,1762). William Golding, incidentally a former primary teacher, in 'Lord of the Flies' (Golding,1954) reveals a very different view of children's ability to order their lives than that portrayed by the young colonists of Ballantyne's 'Coral Island' (Ballantyne 1855) of which it was, in part, a pastiche.

Adult educators' constructs of the concept of 'childhood' reveal their own values and beliefs, and these underpin their interactions with children (Bertram, 1995). If we tend, like Golding (1954) to a 'diabolic' view of children, that is, that they are born with sinfulness which will surface if not kept under control, our treatment of children will be very different than if we tend to an Rousseau's 'angelic' view which would allow us simply to surround all children with love. The practitioner who tends to work from the 'diabolic' value base often has an entrenched fear that all children have a barely suppressed potential to get out of hand at the first opportunity, so a rigid discipline must be maintained at all times. As Whitehead (1995) remarks it often leads to a view of the curriculum that 'famous dead people and polished shoes will save us from original sin and enable us to compete in the market place' (p.28). The practitioner who works from the 'angelic' value base is much more likely to see her children flowering from within, providing only that she can maintain a loving and enriching

environment which keeps them safe from evil and corrupting influences. Such a view by infant teachers has been heavily criticised by King (1978) and Alexander et al. (1992) as demanding little of working class children, because of poor expectation and a patronising view of their home circumstances. This polarisation of the value base of early childhood educators' social construct of childhood is of course a caricature. The reality is that we all operate on some continuum of belief between the extremes of 'diabolic' and 'angelic' polarity. We may in fact show some short term variation in our position on this continuum but over time we will have a fairly strong and consistent view of our values in relation to children and we will also be aware that these values do not always coincide with the values of others. There is an established connection between an educator's beliefs, (about children, her own childhood and about her professional self image, and her effectiveness as a teacher), which will be explored in later chapters (Porteret al., 1983; Feeney and Chun,1985). Observations of the nature of adults' interaction with young children, analysis of their written answers to questions about their perceptions of their work and interviews with them will form the basis of the data collected for this study and substantiate the formulation of a conceptual framework and theory for looking at effectiveness in early childhood settings (see Chapters 3,4,5,6).

One of the tragedies in the current debate in the UK is the indication that the construction of childhood which many professionals in the classroom may have, seems to be totally at odds with the view that many policy makers and influencers have (Lawlor, 1995; Woodhead, 1995). There may be a connection between attitudes to child rearing and political predisposition in that the value base for these judgments is similar. Clearly there is never going to be

agreement about a universal view of childhood and from a Darwinian perspective, perhaps it is a necessary function for our survival and adaptation that there should be diversity of belief. Beyond the obvious, common, biological need for nurture, it may be that a variety of different child rearing, educational and social practices are compatible with a functional childhood and what children require above all else is consistency and bonding (Bowlby,1968). Views of childhood differ between countries, within society, within a country and between one societal sub-group and another. These differences are widening in the UK's modern pluralist society. Differences in childrearing practice are even apparent between families and even between siblings of the same family. Perhaps this is understandable; every childhood is different. Even the childhood of each identical twin is uniquely different. So everyone has a unique concept of childhood, and what it should or should not contain, derived from their own experience. Yet, the knowledge based on our own childhood experiences are at the very heart of our own social psychology, the core of our being and our interaction with others (Bettleheim, 1987). Our childhood is fundamental to our notion of self. To question the inherent values in our construct of childhood means we must question our own life history, our families' values and our fundamental self-concepts.

For educators dealing with young children, the ability to raise above the limitations of their own unique experiences as a child, to suspend value judgments and be able to make reflective generalisations about children, requires objectivity and a strong sense of one's own value. It seems almost impossibly difficult, given the centrality of our own childhood to our sense of self, to ask for objectivity. Yet there are clearly conflicts and dilemmas which need to

be resolved between personal principles and practice. Effective early childhood educators need to acknowledge and celebrate diversity and perspectives of child rearing which might question their own.

These are practical matters not mere theoretical quibbles. Responses by adults to curriculum issues on health education, an act of worship, 'common entitlement', gender, equal opportunities, notions of a 'core curriculum' (DES, 1992) and even a belief in a universal, systematic, sequence of cognitive development (Bredekamp,1992) are dependent on personal value systems. What appears as reasonable universal norms to some, may conflict with others' notions of uniqueness and individuality. A trained educator's perceptions of each child's needs, her own value judgment of what is appropriate for young children, the statutory requirements of regulatory bodies, the desires and wishes of individual families, communities and the wider authorities, may all, in fact, be in conflict. Part of the tragedy of the educational debate in the UK during the 1990s was that there is no search for consensus in the press or amongst politicians nor, alternatively, any acceptance of plurality, and the confidence and professionalism of the practitioner has been slowly eroded. Part of what I hope to show in the debate about the effective educational 'engagement' of adults (q.v.Chapter 4) with children is that it is dependent on educators developing a strong sense of professional self image and professional well being. In such a current climate, this is made more difficult.

The strength of personal conviction in teachers' decision making is fundamental. There is ample evidence that teachers, for example, revert very quickly, particularly in crisis management, to their own experiences as a child in

making classroom decisions. Elbaz's (1983) study described the 'practical knowledge' of one primary teacher, in which she distinguished between 'rules of practice', prescribing how to behave in frequently encountered situations, more abstract 'principles of practice,' the use of which depended largely on reflection, and 'images of how good teaching should look and feel', used intuitively. This intuitive teaching would, I suggest, largely come from individually established values, attitudes and beliefs.

'Childhood', and teaching and schooling in the industrialised world, is something on which everyone can comment because everyone has experienced it. Yet the uniqueness of their experience does not necessarily make them informed. The early childhood practitioner must make generalisations yet she must also be aware of the particular experience, her own, other adults and the children. She must also know that the generalisation is never exactly true. If 'childhood' is idiosyncratic, individual and particular, for all of us, both adults dealing with children and the children themselves, how then can the word be specifically defined? Perhaps there needs to be not a strict definition of 'childhood' but a conceptual framework which allows for the expression of individuality and interpretation.

2.1.3 'Early Childhood'

Notions of what constitutes 'early childhood' are even more tenuous and difficult to encompass in precise terms. Some of this difficulty is made apparent by the plethora of other similar but equally undefined terms. How is the phrase 'early childhood', for example, different from 'early years'? Pugh (1992) makes a call for 'establishing explicit principles to underpin our work'. As evidence of

this she cites the National Children's Bureau change of title for its Under Fives Unit to the 'Early Childhood Unit' making the point that in her edited volume (Pugh,1992) the eminent contributors have taken 'early years' to be 'usually seen as the years 0-8 whilst concentrating on years 0-5'. This ambivalence in nomenclature and definition is also illustrated by the research journal '*Early Years*', the preferred phrase for the journal of the U.K. 'Professional Association of *Early Childhood* Educators', a group that previously called itself 'Tutors of Advanced Courses for teachers of *Young Children*'. Are these *italicised* terms synonymous? A literature search of recent UK titles in the field reveals these words and others such as 'early learning', 'young children's learning', 'early education', 'early years curriculum' appear ubiquitously. Are all these words seemingly interchangeable? Why are we so vague about defining the age limits for these phrases or even exploring their meaning and differences? There maybe several explanations.

Perhaps, what we are seeing here is the difficulty we have in attempting to put chronological age limits on development in early childhood. Each child follows a unique pattern of development. It becomes difficult therefore to put precise labels on children's development.

Policy makers, whom one would expect to give precise definitions, are also vague. An explanation might be that much of the policy work on early childhood, certainly within the European Union legislation, has arisen from the equal opportunities dimension. Notions of 'early childhood' when approached from the perspective of addressing the needs of working parents perhaps do not need precise definitions because the primary focus is on the adults' need for

child care rather than the child's need for educational stimulation. The European *Early Childcare* Network, for example, was established as part of the Commission's Second Equal Opportunities Programme in 1986 (Balageur et al ,1991). The equal opportunities lobby has a perspective of children's early childhood as 'dependency' and therefore tends not to define the focus. Early childhood for those in the sociological and policy administration disciplines tends to mean 'preschool', a term which is meaningless in any comparative debate, as it is rarely explicitly defined (Moss & Pence, 1994).

A similar, though different, emphasis comes from other areas of policy concerned with the changing labour market and the needs of industry. Childhood dependency is an issue for employers, who want access to women as a relatively cheap work force, but they are not, Robert Owen (1849) and Charles Handy (1994) excepted, generally, interested in the development of the young child or defining the concepts. It is acknowledged by government statisticians that the 'green shoots' of the UK economic recovery are based on the sharp increase in women's part time employment in the service industries, which is taking place at the same time as a relative fall in full time employment in the traditional male industries of mining, shipbuilding and foundry work. In Merseyside, for example, in 1996, 60,000 more women than men were in employment (figures quoted in Channel 4, programme 'Genderquake' broadcast 23.07.1996). 'Early childhood' provision for industrialists is an issue of labour supply not an important area of educational policy (Bertram and Pascal, 1988). The issue of early childhood provision from this perspective, therefore, means that quantity is more important than quality and the that focus is the parents' or carers' needs not the child's. 'Early childhood' is thus defined

in terms of dependency on the parent and the specifics of age or stage of development or what form the provision might take are immaterial. If 'early childhood' is important to Government as an equal opportunity issue or a workforce issue, precision of definition are unnecessary.

A further confusion of terms comes from the very existence of a varied range of providers within different sectors, controlled and evaluated by different systems. This means definitions are blurred, particularly in the UK where this diversity is at its greatest (Clark, 1986). There are few opportunities for practitioners from different sectors to talk and resolve their differences, so a climate of diversity and competition has encouraged a growth of separate development and a lack of shared meanings. It, incidentally, been has been one of the intentions of the dissemination phase of the Effective Early Learning Project that this should be addressed.

Attempts have been made to substitute 'early childhood' with 'pre school' and several private and voluntary providers in the UK have begun to use this as an alternative term. The problem with this is that 'pre school' has connotations like those we discussed when considering the use of the word 'early', that suggest that the real event happens later, i.e. 'school'. It also has no universality or consistence. There is a great deal of diversity in the statutory age of admission to school, both within the UK and internationally (Pascal et al 1989; McGurk et al.1996). The young children of most industrialised countries begin formal schooling 2 or 3 years later than the majority of children in the UK (Olmsted & Weikart, 1989). It is interesting to note that in early childhood research this difference sometimes makes cross-national comparisons of provision difficult

(Moss, 1994). Most of the research evidence that has been collected on outcomes of quality provision for young children has been collected in countries where there is relatively late entry to formal schooling compared with the UK (eg Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Beruffta-Clement et al, 1984; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993; Andersson, 1994). 'Preschool' as a term and as a means of delineating research is not constant either as a descriptor or in reality. Yet, words are significant, and the belief persists that 'preschool' is different and closer to real 'school' than something called 'nursery' or 'playgroup'. But all these terms might be describing the identical educative experiences of identical four year olds. The danger for me is that the use of different labels implies in some way that these settings are different and that children within them will be treated differently because they are perceived as different kinds of children. This is part of the debate I am trying to uncover in exploring this issue of definition.

Any definition of 'early childhood education' should not only consider its chronological limits but also what it contains and the length and quality of the experience. Even putting time limits into a definition of early childhood suggests that we are assuming that it must be in some way uniquely different from what follows or what went before. We have accumulating evidence in the UK and in the US that summer born children are at a disadvantage to those born in the same year, but admitted earlier, (Sharp,1995) but there is little evidence on the optimum length of time young children should experience early childhood education or the most appropriate time for admission or transfer. There is little research evidence to suggest that truncating the length of provision is beneficial, but there is some evidence to suggest that too short a period (Andersson,1994) or a too formal curriculum, (Schweinhart et al,1993; Olsen

and Zigler, 1989) or too soon a start, (Spodek, 1982), might be detrimental. The phenomenon that has become apparent throughout the world is the fact that the institutionalising of upbringing is encompassing younger and younger groups (Dahlberg et al., 1994) and that this has led to a focus on nationalistic competitiveness and a return to 'basic skills' instruction which many see as inappropriate (Olsen and Zigler, 1989; Spodek, 1982; Osborn and Millbank, 1987; Walsh, 1993; Kärrby, 1990).

Part of the problem, as Kelly (1994) has indicated, is that definitions of early childhood vary. If we take the US model of defining Early Childhood as 'from birth through age 8' (Bredekamp, 1992), it presents difficulties for UK early childhood workers who are conscious of the nominal divide at 5 years between statutory and non-statutory provision. That this division is entirely arbitrary is made evident by the reports of Hansard at the time of the Education Debate which preceded the introduction of statutory education in the UK. After tracing the historical and political history of the decision that state provision in the UK should begin at 5 years of age, Stretzer (1964) concluded that the age of admission was not based on any psychological principle or any pedagogical imperative but was 'the accidental result of the exigencies of Parliamentary procedure and of general unconcern!'. It was clear that Members voting on the matter at 9 p.m. were keen to get off to their dinner (Woodhead 1989). Cynics (Drummond, 1989) have said that the tradition of early childhood policy decisions being taken by men in suits with no real knowledge or experience of the subject, continues to flourish today.

If there is debate about when statutory provision begins and about defining

when 'early childhood' should begin, then there is also debate about when it should end. At what age should we recognise that children are moving to the later years of primary education? The inadequacy of the situation, especially in the continuing attempt by some settings to give the same kinds of curriculum experiences to their youngest children as those that they offer for older children, has long been known. The Hadow Report (Board of Education, 1931) said,

'Our psychological witnesses stated that it is certain that at the age of seven there is no change or crisis which in any way corresponds to the crisis or change at puberty. Nevertheless, a child of four or five differs very noticeably from a child at the age of eight or nine. The difference is not merely one of amount of intelligence, it is also a difference of quality or kind.'

(para 58)

The Hadow Report recommended therefore that 'there should be separate schools for children under 7'. The continuing debate about the admission of children, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland at the age of 4, or even 3 years of age, shows how little the question of appropriate age phasing of provision has been resolved in the UK (Drummond, 1989). The term 'rising fives' is an astonishing linguistic device to describe four year olds and evidence in itself of the underlying confusion.

Kelly (1995) claims that there is a tendency in the UK for some to equate early childhood with 'preschool' or 'nursery' as, for example, does the National Commission on Education (1993), but these terms themselves are often grossly confusing. Blenkin et al (1996) report on a questionnaire study she sent to

Headteachers and teachers which were returned from several primary, and even, first and infant schools on the grounds that 'we have no early years pupils' (Blenkin et al.1996). That nomenclature is significant in policy making is also clear from several recent highly publicised use of terms. One might question the political rationale or expediency behind the Preschool Playgroup Association wish to be now known as the Preschool Learning Alliance, or how the Prime Minister can claim the voucher initiative will offer 'Nursery Education' (sic) for all 4 year olds whose 'parents wish it'. The former HMI, Jean Ensing, recently called for a clear definition of Nursery Education (TES, 22.11.1995) precisely because she felt politicians prefer to be able to use the term loosely, appearing to offer something of recognised high quality but funded at such a low cost that it would be unattainable.

Some of the reluctance to use specific terms in the UK debate must arise from the diversity of provision. Admission to school is not standardised. Local Education Authorities have different school structures; Nurseries, Infants, First, Junior and Primary all with differing age phases. Sometimes these differences can be intra- as well inter- LEA. The range of different providers, State, Voluntary, Private, Education, Health and Social Services, also adds to the difficulties of unifying or reaching agreement about the terms used.

Comparisons with other countries, which also have diversity, are illuminating. The NAEYC (Bredekamp, 1992) has no difficulty addressing early childhood as 'birth through 8', yet the individual states of the USA have differing admission policies and different program agencies. The Japanese, of course, count their children's age as one year at their birth. Perhaps early childhood education

should be defined as beginning at conception. Certainly many Californian parents think education of their young should begin in the womb. The European Early Childhood Education Research Association has suggested that 0-8 years seems the most appropriate age range for defining their area of interest in early childhood education. Portugal, Spain and Greece organise their provision within their educational policy in three 3 year cycles, 0-3, 3-6, 3-9 years, and the years 0-9 are considered early years (Pascal et al. 1994).

There are difficulties, then, in defining both the younger and the older age limit of 'early childhood education'. Some wish to distinguish separate different phases within early childhood. The World Bank, (Young, 1995) which has since 1985 recognised the 'extraordinary socioeconomic significance of quality early childhood programs' world wide, for both developed and developing countries, divides early childhood into 3 distinct developmental phases: 'Infants: birth to 1 year, Toddlers: 1 to 3 years, Preschoolers: 3 to 6 years'. The clear implication is that the World Bank sees 'early childhood' as being 'preschool' but school admission at 6 years is simply the majority practice of most of the state education boards in the US.

Developmental age is a continuum and therefore we cannot talk of discreet ages to define 'early childhood' but we still need to work out terms by which we refer to our work. There are no absolutes in our definitions and ultimately we must answer from a subjective philosophical stance, but other disciplines seem to feel that there is a woolly softness in the approach of early childhood educationalists and researchers when we cannot even define our field of study (van Kuyk, 1995).

It seems improbable that policy can be determined, research focused or principles of practice established, when we cannot even define the terms we use. Clearly differences of terminology will imply differences in reality and practice. But what young children need is often consistency in their care and education. It may be that the name given to the kind of provision they are placed in is less important than continuity of experience. The danger in diversity is that certain types of provision will be seen as, say, providing 'care' and other types as supplying 'education'. Given that much of this provision is part time, there will be children who are coping with a range of different regimes and models at a time when they are developmentally trying to order their world. The Hadow Report, as long ago as 1931, claimed 'the psychological evidence indicates that what is really injurious to a sensitive child is an abrupt change in methods of teaching, in discipline and in general environment' (Board of Education, 1931, para.53). Consistency in practice and definition is therefore important.

2.1.4 'Effective'

Effective is usually linked to efficiency (effort/reward) and economical (cost/benefit) as the 'three E's of management' (Handy, 1994). It is a composite of two Latin words, 'out' and 'to make'. It has several meanings. It can mean that something has been designed or trained to be effective, and is in a state of preparedness, ready for operation. It can be used also to imply that someone has the quality of being effective, of being fit and competent doing their work. Finally, it can mean to produce an effect, which can be measured by looking at operational outcomes. In highlighting these two different definitions we are mirroring the research debate about 'effectiveness'. Should we make judgments on effectiveness by looking at input variables (what you start with), at

process variables (what happens), or at outcome variables, (what you come out with) or some part of all three. Kyriacou (1994) states that the framework Context-Process-Product has 'provided the basis for almost all research on effective teaching reported over the last few decades' (p11). I shall be critiquing his theoretical model and others', later, when I postulate a conceptual framework arising out this study. Kyriacou has lists of variables for each of the three domains of the effectiveness framework and notes that 'Many of these outcomes can be translated into variables based on tests, such as external national examinations and attitude tests; other variables are based on more subjective forms of assessment, such as teacher's opinion.' (p.11)

There are problems here for early childhood educators who may not have the same level of acceptance of psychometric testing as those whose research activity is focussed on much older children. In particular, they may see their effectiveness as, for example, resting more on inculcating and encouraging what Katz (1995) has called 'dispositions to learn', curiosity, persistence, eagerness, enthusiasm and so forth. Dahlberg et al. (1994) also complain of the 'academization of early childhood education'. We will examine these later in greater detail in later chapters, but at this point perhaps what we need to say is that deciding which particular effects are more important than others is a subjective value judgment and as such is neither absolute nor definable. Provision for young children may have completely differing implications for children from different backgrounds. 'Effectiveness' would then depend on perspective. An illustration of this can be seen in some of the sociological studies of provision in the US. Early childhood provision in the US has always and continues to be based on the social class of the family, and that in effect,

there is a stratification in provision, “children of different social class backgrounds not only do not mingle in day care centres but are often are often in quite different types of child care” p190 (Wrigley 1991). She notes a ‘major bifurcation of the child care market’, with middle class children attending preschools or child care facilities with trained teachers and low income children frequently in family day care with untrained providers. Spodek (1989) suggests historical reasons for this. Traditionally, care for poor children was focussed on overcoming family deficiencies, particularly in areas of personal hygiene, nutrition and morality and it was custodial in nature. One in every 35 inner city NY children in the 1890s was in a public orphan asylum. Working class families were seen as at risk. Some of this perspective can be seen in the work of the MacMillan sisters working in England before the First World War (Steadman,1988). If ‘effectiveness’ is seen as social engineering or intervention for one group, and early development and stimulation for another, does this interfere with our view of children and what is an effective provision for them? There are already calls from the Left in this country for working class children and those from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds to be given strong, disciplinary and direct instructional curriculums because this ‘suits their culture’. ‘Effectiveness’ is thus a relative term dependent on perspective. We need to find a definition of ‘effectiveness’ which allows for diversity.

2.1.5 ‘Educator’

‘Educator’ is another composite Latin word meaning to lead out or lead forth. Many commentators have expressed the view that education is different to teaching. ‘The question is not what to teach but how to educate’, said Charles Kingsley (1863) in the Water Babies. An educator, then, is one who, or that

which, educates. The inanimate educator, 'that which educates' was of course very much what Wordsworth predicated in *The Prelude* (1805) in which he saw Nature as the guiding hand in our development. Interestingly, the acknowledgement of the importance of non-human educators is again coming to the fore of the debate with the new information technologies. Much of formal institutionalised schooling may disappear when interactive computer terminals are widely available to all children, but the one group for whom it will be always important to learn in a social context, is the very young.

'Educator' was originally an exclusively male word, the female term being 'educatress'. It is considered politically correct, now, for the male form, as in *author/ess*, to be used for both genders. Other European countries tend to have more gender designation in their languages, and several have no term, in the male form, for early childhood educator. It seems ironic today when there is a great deal of antagonism to men working with young children to reflect that Froebel began his first school with only male educators. I have spoken elsewhere of my concern to expand the access of men to young children (Bertram, 1986, 1991, 1994) and agree with post-modernist feminists like Phillips (1993) that this is one of the key areas which society needs to address. White, working class boys are underachieving in UK schools (Woodhead 1996). In the absence of other models of men as carers, many have adopted a model of masculinity which is based on a caricature taken from film and television portrayals (Stearns, 1990). Perhaps, in the absence of male carers in the home, what is needed is a model of masculinity which is supplied by male, caring professionals. Support for this can be seen in the European Commission Equal Opportunities Directive (EC 1994), which saw that men as well as women

should be encouraged to participate in the upbringing of children. The recent addition to the Social Chapter of the European Union on the issue of paternal leave at birth from which the UK (Portillo, 1995) is the only abstaining member state, is an example of this principle being addressed through changing policy. My personal preference would be for the term 'educatress' to be universally used and that it should apply to all practitioners, male and female. It would make a strong statement about the gender inequalities in early childhood.

In England, the widely acclaimed Rumbold Report (DES 1990) used the term 'educator' throughout its text, whether referring to teachers or non-qualified early years workers. 'We believe it to be vital that all who work, or are involved with young children recognise the importance of their educational role and fulfil it.' This term was similarly defined in the RSA Start Right Report (Ball, 1994) as 'all the adults (including parents) who contribute to, and are involved in, the education of the young'. p.103 The inclusion of parents as 'educators' acknowledges their importance as the primary educators of their children and as 'significant others' who establish dispositions to learning (Lazar and Darlington, 1982). Moss and Penn (1996) have written about the ways in which professionals can create in parents feelings of inadequacy and dependence by negating the parental contribution. She postulates that professional educators may not be necessary for the care of young children and considers the primary function of provision should be care. Her interests seem to focus more on the needs of the parent, particularly the working mother, rather than the child.

The debate about 'care' and 'education' is also contentious. Thyssen (1992) feels that in our rush to force children through academic hoops we neglect the

more fundamental needs of young children, particularly such issues as their prosocial behaviour. He prefers to talk of the care of young children than of their education. Pascal et al 1989) suggest that it is more justifiable to include care within a concept of education than vice versa, and that as there is more status in 'education' than in 'care', that should be the preferred term. The distinction between care and education is dubious and most commentators suggest that provision should incorporate both. Some have postulated a hybrid form, 'educare' (David 1993) which incorporates notions of education and care.

Thus, this short examination of each of the component parts of our title, 'An Effective Early Childhood Educator' reveals some of the difficulties in attempting definitions of such words. Perhaps the only word that is indisputable is the indefinite article. There is not one definitive, homogeneous kind of 'effective early childhood educator'. We must conclude that there are no absolutes and no certainties but also realise the limitations of relativity. Perhaps any study in the humanities means this ambiguity is inevitable. In Ausubels' (1968) terms, the 'messiness' which characterises human activity ensures we cannot talk in absolutes. In beginning this attempt to define, and find a means to assess, the 'effective early childhood educator', I am aware of the subjective nature of my judgments; but I hope that I may make a worthwhile contribution to the debate as one participant in the negotiation of meanings that lie at the heart of agreement. A process that Wells (1985) describes as, 'The negotiation of meaning and purpose in the joint construction of an inter-subjective reality'. There may be limits to relativism in seeking global answers about young children' development and it is interesting to see how far programmes

developed in the West can be addressed to the needs of young children in the majority world (Weikart, 1992). Clearly all children have a basic physical need for nurturing (Pringle, 1972) and all children too must have companionship which is stimulating and offers models (Trevvarthen, 1979). But beyond that it might be difficult to sustain a common frame of reference for development, which despite the Piagetian (1971) framework, is culturally determined. If we are to agree on meanings we must ensure that definitions do not become constricting and limiting. They must be constructed as frameworks that accept different value bases and are capable of being contextualised to individual circumstances. There must be room for more than one vision of an 'effective' practitioner. Paradoxically, the definitions then become indefinite and liberating. My concern is for 'an' indefinite effective early childhood educator not 'the' definitive answer. We have considered how little agreement there is about the meanings of the terms 'effective', 'early' 'childhood' or 'educator'. Thus we are left with a rubric which seeks to explore 'an indefinite undefinable'. From such an uncertain basis I am confident that I can add, in the following chapters, a more concrete realisation of the concept. Before that, however, I wish to explore the context of early childhood educational provision in the United Kingdom and identify its particular characteristics.

2.2. Exploring Early Childhood Provision in the United Kingdom

In this section, I want to look at the unique features of British early childhood educational provision to show how the context of that provision has given rise to the focus for this study.

National statistics for education and care provision in the UK conceal a wide

local variation in what is available (Audit Commission,1996). Compared to our neighbours in continental Europe, there has been little coordinated Government policy in this area and, as a result, education, health and social service agencies, voluntary bodies and private businesses have all developed separate approaches and, added to that, a great variety of ad hoc arrangements by parents have led to fragmentation and lack of coherence.

It is symptomatic of the 'muddle' (Ball, 1994) that even reliable statistical evidence of the extent and nature of provision is difficult to obtain (Moss,1995, Audit Commission,1996). Yet the UK has some of the best and some of the worst provision for young children in the world. Let me begin by listing some of the features of early childhood provision which I feel make us distinct from others .

2.2.1.Children start school sooner in the UK than in most countries.

The age of statutory admission to school is five years but schools are increasingly admitting children at the age of four years (Cleave & Brown, 1991). In Northern Ireland the legal age for compulsory attendance is four years, although mostly this is part time, half day attendance. In Scotland, on the other hand, it is unusual for any four year olds to be in formal school.

Most of the 84% of four year olds who receive some form of public funded educational provision are in 'reception' classes in primary schools. They will attend full time for about six hours a day and are likely to be in class sizes of 25-35 pupils with one graduate level teacher, who may been trained originally to

teach secondary school, as we shall see later. Pascal (1990), in a survey of reception classes in a large English city, found there were more teachers who had been trained for secondary school teaching working with four year olds than there were teachers who had been trained for that age range. Many early years' educators are worried that this school based provision focuses too narrowly, too formally and too soon, on inappropriate attempts to deliver a nationally prescribed curriculum which, they feel, excludes the children's real needs and interests and is not matched to their level of development (EYCG, 1989). Public funded provision 'outside school hours' and holiday care is minimal for the over fives (less than 1%).

In addition to publicly funded school based education for four year olds there is some publicly funded educational provision for three and four year olds. Those three and four year old children (26%) who live in areas where there is public funded 'nursery' school provision, are mainly situated in urban areas. They are likely to enjoy staff ratios of between 1:10 to 1:15, in purpose built buildings with graduate, nursery trained staff supported by appropriately trained ancillaries. Most children will be attending part time for four hours a day and, usually, there will be an active and exploratory curriculum with opportunities for movement, choice and play.

2.2.2 Provision for children before they enter the state funded system is patchy, diverse, underfunded and uncoordinated.

Most three and four year olds outside the the school system will attend play centres (40% in 1986). They are run mainly by parents and volunteers. Only one in four of these centres or 'Playgroups' is assisted by public funds and, even

where they are assisted, grants on average cover less than half the costs. Attendance is on average for six hours a week. They are housed in buildings that are likely to have other predominant functions, such as village and church halls. Training courses for their staff vary from 10 to 120 hours and we shall explore some of the adults' perceptions of their work and career in later chapters.

Privately funded provision for three to five year olds currently amounts to 3%, although this is an area which is likely to expand following new Government 'voucher' initiatives, as we shall describe later.

Other centre based provision is funded by Health and Social Service agencies. This is often targeted at those who have special needs or whose families are seen as 'at risk'. For children from birth to two years only 2% will have access to publicly funded provision. Most of those children whose parents do not have access to relatives or friends willing to help, will be cared for outside the home by family based carers called 'child minders', who should be registered with local authorities. In reality many of these carers have their own children and look after the children of others for a small fee informally and do not register (Audit Commission, 1996). Current Government policy continues to be one of choice and diversity in relation to pre-school provision at a time where demand for places has increased substantially due to changing social and economic conditions (Holtermann, 1995). Policy emphasises the shared responsibility of parents, businesses and local communities and promotes continued diversity in any expansion. This lack of central direction and nationally laid down standards serves to perpetuate the inequalities and insufficiency of provision which

families with young children face in the UK today. In this context, provision for under fives in the UK remains patchy, diverse and, in comparison with other European countries, at a low level. In fact, it has been called "a national scandal" (Ball 1994).

Recently the Government has given a 'cast iron commitment' to provide access to centre based education for all four year olds whose parents want it. It is doing this through the mechanism of a voucher scheme, an idea apparently adopted from the USA, which will allow parents to make their choice of where to spend £1,100 for each child aged four years. The vouchers will not be means tested but will be available to all. There is a stipulation that vouchers can only be spent in approved settings. There is a proviso, also, that the provision must have an educational commitment and a mechanism for validation and 'light inspection' is being put in place (OFSTED, 1995).

2.2.3. The position of children in society in the UK continues to worsen.

The educational provision for young children cannot be considered without wider reference to the context of the society within which they are living. Recent studies by Richard Wilkinson (1994) and Sally Holtermann (1995) for Barnardos, and the Rowntree Foundation Report (1995) have highlighted the effects of increasing inequality on children in the UK. These reports make disturbing reading and highlight the social and psychological effects of poverty on family life and the development of the young. It is in this broad context of increasing social inequality, with, in some areas of the country, as many of 46% of young children growing up in households with no earners, that we must set

any further development of education and care for the young child. Any move towards establishing universal nursery education must be placed in a context of wider care and services for the young child.

The need for provision, therefore, has never been greater. However, the reality of current provision for the under fives falls far short of meeting these urgent needs. The availability of high quality education and care for the young is a lottery, dependent on such factors as place of residence, age of birth and family income. Where provision is available, young children within the UK are learning in a vast array of different education and care settings, which go across the public, private and voluntary sectors of education, social services and health provision, and include local authority nurseries and primary schools, day nurseries, family centres, playgroups (pre-schools), private kindergartens, workplace creches and nurseries. Each of these settings operates with different aims, funding, resources, staffing and quality control procedures. This diversity also means, in reality, that the quality and effectiveness of the early learning experiences they offer is variable and difficult to judge.

2.2.4 The need for quality in providing centre based education and care.

We have never been better informed about the need for quality in providing for young children. The lack of appropriate provision in the UK must be set alongside the increasing volume of valid evidence from the US, France and Sweden (Schweinhart et al 1993, Plaisance 1992, Andersson 1994) which demonstrates that high quality preschool education can have a significant and long term effect on children's learning and can lead to better social behaviour

and more productive citizenship. Research has clearly shown that investments at this stage in high quality early learning experiences pay dividends as children grow through the schooling system to adulthood (Sylva et al, 1993; Ball, 1994). In view of this emphasis on the importance of quality, concern has been expressed from many quarters, and in many recent reports (DES, 1990; Pascal, 1990; National Commission, 1993; Ball, 1994; Moss, 1994; House of Commons, 1994), as evidence has accumulated of the poor quality of early learning experienced by many young children in some settings at this critically important time of their development. The poor quality is due to many factors - poor physical accommodation, lack of equipment and facilities, unsuitable expectations and objectives, inappropriate curriculum, poor staffing ratios, inadequate monitoring and, perhaps most importantly, lack of appropriate initial and ongoing staff education and development.

The pursuit of quality in education and, in particular, in early childhood education, is currently high on the political and social agenda in the UK. A series of major national reports (DES:Rumbold Report, 1990; National Commission on Education Report, 1993; Ball's RSA:Start Right Report, 1994; House of Commons, 1994) have argued strongly that educational provision for three and four year olds should be expanded. Each report has stressed the importance of high quality in this expansion and has specified in some detail what this should entail, at both a policy and practical level. The reports highlight the need for a national system of quality review and assurance and for a coordinated strategy of evaluation and improvement in early childhood settings. There are a number of initiatives at present which indicate that action is underway. Following John Major's 'cast iron' commitment to universal nursery

education in November 1994, a Task Force was set up at the Department For Education to put this policy in place. The chosen strategy of a Voucher system is due to be expanded across England and Wales early next year, following the initial 12 month trial with four local authorities. The Labour Party have also established an 'Early Years Inquiry Team' which aims to develop 'a policy of integrated, coherent and comprehensive provision of early years services' which ensures that 'all three and four year olds whose parents wish it have access to quality nursery education'. These initiatives should be welcomed but will take time to implement fully. There is agreement that long term, and carefully planned, development is required at a national level. However, given the financial constraints, it is also clear that these long term targets will come too late for many children who need more effective early learning experiences immediately.

This factor has meant that demand for expansion has been accompanied by pressure for the development of procedures to facilitate quality evaluation and improvement in all under five settings. Recent reports have pointed to the urgent need for the introduction of strategies to improve the quality of existing provision, but as the RSA Report points out,

The diverse pattern of provision in the UK....makes it difficult to ascertain and monitor the quality of learning experiences offered to young children. There is a lack of thorough and systematic quality review, and a need for appropriate and rigorous procedures for quality development and assurance for all centre based early learning. One of the purposes of a national evaluation of the diversity of provision would be to enable parents to make informed choices. At present, there are no incentives to encourage the evaluation of quality and the pursuit of strategies of improvement.

Para 6.12 RSA Start Right Report 1994

The Effective Early Learning Research Project (EEL) addresses these issues directly and is taking action to influence this situation so that more children in the UK have opportunities for high quality and effective early learning. The work of this project will be outlined in the following section, giving a more focussed context to the particular circumstances of my study.

2.3 Exploring Early Childhood Evaluation in the UK

British experience of evaluating early childhood provision is not extensive. As I have outlined, we do not have a coordinated and coherent system of provision for young children and this has led to the development of a diverse and complex plethora of early childhood settings, many of which are rarely monitored and evaluated at all. Added to this is the paucity of funding available for the development of evaluation strategies and for evaluation studies in the early childhood field. However, with the recent political focus on developing provision for young children and the fashionable emphasis on value for money and accountability which permeates all policy initiatives, there has been an increase in evaluative activity. Some of the evaluative initiatives have a clear focus on measuring or assessing quality as part of a policy for quality inspection or assurance. Examples of these include the British Standards BS 5750 or BSEN/ISO 9000 Scheme (BSI, 1991), the OFSTED Inspection Framework (1995) and the PLA Accreditation Procedures (PPA, 1993). Other evaluative initiatives are geared towards quality improvement or total quality management, developed as part of a providers commitment towards raising standards in their provision. Examples of the latter include the Thomas Coram Self Evaluation

Materials (Mooney et al, 1994), the Strathclyde 'Evaluating Ourselves' Project (Wilkinson and Stephen, 1992) and the Effective Early Learning Project (Pascal, Bertram and Ramsden, 1994 a; Pascal et al. 1995). Of all of these schemes the Effective Early Learning Project (EEL Project) provides the most comprehensive, extensive and well trialled evaluation study in early childhood ever undertaken within the UK (Williams, 1995).

In the rest of this section I shall draw upon the experience of the EEL Project to discuss how quality in early childhood is being defined in the UK, how it is being evaluated within a strategy for improvement, what we have learned through the Project about effective evaluation and what are seen as the key issues faced by those concerned with developing future strategies for quality evaluation in early childhood services. This will set the context for my particular study of the effective early educator. I also want to explain how my study is embedded but separate from the larger study, the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Research Project of which I am co-director. There will be many issues raised that will require more detailed examination in subsequent chapters but here, as in the previous sections, I am setting the context for this particular investigation.

2.3.1 The EEL Project: Aims and Approach

The Effective Early Learning (EEL) Project began work in May 1993 and is just completing its third phase of operation. This Phase has involved an extensive dissemination programme for the EEL Evaluation and Development process, and a comparative analysis of quality in different types of early childhood setting. The Project grew out of the urgent need for procedures to facilitate quality evaluation and improvement in the diverse range of settings in which

under fives are being educated in the UK. It also responded to the lack of a substantial empirical data base on the quality and effectiveness of early learning offered in these settings. It focuses particularly on provision for three and four year olds as these children currently are in a wider range of provision than any other age group, but has applicability throughout the early childhood years (and even beyond). The Project is operating throughout the UK and is being carried out by a team of practitioner researchers, directed by Professor Christine Pascal and based at Worcester College of Higher Education.

The key aims of the Project are:

1. To develop a cost-effective strategy to evaluate and improve the quality and effectiveness of early learning available to three and four year old children in a wide range of education and care settings across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
2. To evaluate and compare rigorously and systematically the quality of early learning provided in a diverse range of early childhood education and care settings across the UK.

The Project provides a clear and targeted strategy for change and improvement which builds upon the existing range of provision for young children and attempts to extend the skills and expertise of all those who work with young children. It brings together education and care provision, and includes those in the voluntary, public and private sectors. It centres round the development and application of an innovative and cost effective set of "Evaluation and

Development" procedures which may be used for training, institutional development, monitoring and review in all early childhood settings. The development of quantitative and qualitative instruments to evaluate the quality of provision in different settings is also a key feature of the Project.

The project therefore has two interlinked, and complementary elements; that of research and development. A main thrust of the Project's work is to develop and improve the quality and effectiveness of young children's learning. However, this process of evaluation also provides a wealth of detailed qualitative and quantitative data from early childhood settings across the UK. Data on such things as training, staff ratios, curriculum, facilities, teaching styles, interactions, daily programmes, planning and assessment procedures, equal opportunities, home/school partnership and quality control procedures has been collected which will allow a comparative evaluation to be made of different kinds of provision and also validate a set of research instruments for quality monitoring and review of early childhood services.

The links between the research process and practice are therefore clear in this Project. The Project is grounded in practice; the research being informed by, and informing, practitioners. The role of researcher and practitioner has become blurred in the process. All the members of the research team are practitioners by training and were able to take on this role within the settings they worked. This gives them credibility within the settings and helps to break down some of the distancing and mystique which sometimes surrounds "research". It also ensured that the knowledge generated by the Project had a powerful and direct application to the realities of life in these early childhood settings.

2.3.2 How Quality is Defined in Early Childhood Education

“Quality” is a much over used word that is in danger of losing meaning in the political rhetoric and invective of our times. Philosophers, from the time of Plato and Aristotle, have engaged in debate about definitions of quality or excellence. Attempts to identify key elements in any definition of quality, be this related to early learning or any other aspect of life, have proved to be problematic and contentious. The difficulty lies in the concept of quality itself. As early philosophers pointed out, quality is a subjective and personal notion. When Plato discusses the concept of beauty, for example, he argues that it can only be understood after exposure to a succession of objects that display its characteristics. It is only understood when reflecting on the quality of those experiences. As Pirsig (1974) also points out,

Quality is neither mind nor matter, but a third entity independent of the two....even though quality cannot be defined, you know what it is.

The EEL Project is therefore based on the belief that ‘quality’ is a value laden, subjective and dynamic concept which varies with time, perspective and place (Pascal and Bertram, 1994a; 1994b). This belief has grown out of our experience which has shown that to lay down precise, fixed, static definitions of quality is inappropriate. Rather, we have found that evaluation is more powerful, accurate and valid if it grows out of the shared and agreed perspectives of those who are closest to the experiences being assessed. The notion of quality as being centred in experience and enlightened awareness is not a romantic notion. Business gurus such as Handy (1994) and Peters (1992) support it. Japanese car manufacturers recognise that quality does not come from

manuals and targets sent down from on high but by empowering the individual operative to take pride in producing work of the highest quality. They make judgments about that, with support and help from external moderators and with continual training. The 'intuitive feel good' approach as Williams (1995) calls it, has a very hard nosed and rigorous edge, and has been tested by some of the most demanding managers in the world of industry and commerce. Other factors in defining quality which we feel need to be taken account of are those of time and place. Quality is not a fixed point on a scale, it changes over time. What may be high quality at one time, in one set of circumstances may not be viewed as high quality at a later time, or in a different place, or in different circumstances. A definition of quality therefore has to allow for its dynamic nature.

However, I am also mindful that there are aspects of practice and provision which provide a core set of conditions which favour high quality early learning experiences. There is a wide consensus about the essentials of quality in early childhood provision. These are amply discussed in much of the literature in the field and also outlined in several UK national Reports (House of Commons Select Committee, 1989; Rumbold Report: DES, 1990; Ball: RSA Report, 1994; House of Commons, 1994). The consensus also extends worldwide. In the US, the Carnegie Report (1994) and the NAEYC Guidelines on Developmental Learning (Bredekamp, 1987) also affirm these same core elements of quality provision. New Zealand and Australian early years experts concur (Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group, 1988). The EXE Project in Belgium (Laevers, 1994) and the world wide HighScope Programme (Berutta-Clement, 1984) can also be seen to fit these core values. There is thus a strong, historical, comparative, diverse grouping of early childhood expertise which

shares this view of high quality, and agree over the areas that must be evaluated for it to be achieved.

2.3.3 Developing an Evaluative Framework for Quality

Although I have stated that I embrace an approach to defining quality which is dynamic, developmental and allows for differing value bases, it is also clear to me that to be successful, an evaluation project needed to employ a clear and systematic framework for its activity. The EEL Project, therefore, developed a framework for evaluating quality which builds upon the consensus about what constitutes quality in early childhood and also the knowledge base we have about effective early learning. It is flexible, and allows for individual interpretation, but is framed around a number of clear “domains” or “dimensions” of quality practice which allow for comparability and cohesiveness within the Project as a whole. The framework employed in the EEL Project (Pascal and Bertram, 1994a; 1994b; Pascal et al., 1995) may be taken as a development of other evaluative frameworks for early childhood used within the UK and abroad, as we shall see in Chapters 3 & 4. Also, in the period 1993-1995 we have worked with over 2000 early childhood practitioners from a range of different settings and backgrounds. Their comments and feedback have been of immense value in grounding, modifying and shaping the materials and, in particular, the ten dimensions of quality. Broadly speaking, the dimensions cover the breadth of issues that practitioners, researchers (see for example, Donabedin, 1980; Rosbach et al., 1991; Kryiacou, 1994 and Munton et al., 1995) and policy makers (see, for example, Rumbold: DES,1990) any evaluation of quality must embrace. The conceptual framework underpinning these dimensions and issues of reliability and validity will be explored in detail

in subsequent chapters but it may be helpful at this point to set out the dimensions themselves. The framework has the following ten dimensions, which are not discrete but interact with each other:

* Aims and Objectives:

This dimension refers to the written and spoken statements of policy within a setting in which the aims and objectives of the provision for learning are made explicit. It also focuses on issues such as how the policy statements are formed, who is involved in their formation and how they are communicated to involved parties. The extent to which these aims are initiated, shared, communicated and understood by all the involved parties needs also to be considered.

* Learning Experiences / Curriculum:

This dimension is concerned with the range and balance of learning activities provided and the learning opportunities they present for young children. The curriculum is interpreted very broadly to embrace children's all round cognitive and social development. It includes a consideration of the extent to which the activities and experiences offered provide learning opportunities in language and literacy, mathematics, science, technology, physical, human and social, moral and spiritual, aesthetic and creative areas of experience. It may also include reference to the National Curriculum (or its equivalent) and SCAA's Desirable Outcomes, where this is appropriate. When considering issues of continuity and progression, the extent of differentiation within the learning experiences offered to cater for individual needs, is also addressed.

* Learning and Teaching Strategies:

This dimension is concerned with how the experiences and activities are

organised and structured to encourage learning and discovery. The extent of children's independence and autonomy and the rules which govern behaviour and participation are considered. Who is participating in the activities and what roles are being adopted by adults and children are key issues. The competencies being displayed by the children in their actions are also highlighted here.

* **Planning, Assessment and Record Keeping:**

This dimension looks at how learning is planned, and issues such as who is involved in the planning process and how far the planning builds upon previous assessment of children's activity. The assessment of children is considered and the efficacy of the methods of recording their activity and experience are noted also. This may include Records of Achievement, Baseline Assessments and such things as standardised tests. Access to and the sharing of records and the use to which they are put, falls within the considerations of this dimension.

* **Staffing:**

This dimension focuses on the opportunities for involvement of staff in children's learning. Issues of staff deployment, ratios, management policy and attitude towards learning are relevant. Opportunities for staff development and training, are noted. Careful note is also taken as to the way the staff interact with the children and the way they support the children's learning.

* **Physical Environment:**

This dimension looks at the context in which the learning occurs. The use of space, both inside and out, to create an environment for learning is considered.

The availability, condition and appropriateness of the learning resources are documented.

* Relationships and Interactions:

This dimension looks at the how the children and adults interact. How far and in what ways relationships are expressed and developed in the activities are considered. The social rules and codes of conduct which operate are seen as significant. The opportunities for self initiated learning and the degree of staff intervention would fall within this dimension. The involvement of the children, and their interactions in the activities, is highlighted as a means of reflecting on the quality of the educational experience they provide.

* Equal Opportunities:

This dimension refers to the way in which the setting and the learning experiences within it reflects and celebrates cultural and physical diversity and challenges stereotypes and the extent to which learning experiences of children with special educational needs are inclusive. The equipment and the activities are scrutinised with regard to issues of race, gender, disability and social class.

* Parental Partnership, Home and Community Liaison:

This dimension focuses on the nature of the partnership with parents and the ways in which they, and other members of the local community, are involved in the learning process. The extent to which the learning builds upon and reflects the children's home and community environment is explored. Links between the setting and other early childhood settings are also noted.

* **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

This dimension looks at the procedures by which the quality and effectiveness of the learning processes and provision are monitored and evaluated. Who is involved in these processes, and how the results of this process are acted upon, are considered.

2.3.4 Approaching Evaluation Democratically

Another underlying conception is a 'democratic approach' to quality evaluation (Pfeffer and Coote 1991). As quality evaluation is a value laden enterprise, we believe it is best achieved through the active involvement of participants in the process. Thus, the evaluation process is viewed as something 'done with' participants and not 'done to' them. The subjectivity of the definition is thus acknowledged and the shared perceptions of quality are celebrated as central to the debate about quality in each particular setting. Quality is defined by the shared reflections and agreement of experienced practitioners, parents and children. It is validated, moderated and scrutinised by those closest to the learning experiences being evaluated, that is by those who would normally perform the function of advisor and inspector. The EEL Project is therefore firmly founded on democratic principles and the team have worked hard to establish a feeling of partnership and shared ownership of the whole research process. (Although I am aware of the limits to this ideal and will discuss later the distribution of power within these relationships). Our philosophical commitment to this approach was reinforced with the hope that it would also help the "Evaluation and Development" process become a major vehicle for the professional development of the practitioners. This too will be addressed later when considering the methodology of the research in terms of 'real world',

evaluatory, participatory action (see Chapter 5). It is also hoped that the process of evaluation and development would ensure that the individual settings would become more responsive, more fit for purpose and that those within them would be empowered by the participating. (Pfeffer and Coote, 1991).

2.3.5 Developing the Evaluation Process

Although little work has been done on the evaluation of early childhood programmes, we in early childhood education should not fall into the trap of feeling we have to start from scratch in our search for effective evaluation strategies. There is much experience we can draw upon, and a growing wealth of literature on Educational Evaluation, School Improvement and the wider field of Total Quality Management. There is also much in this literature to reassure us that quality evaluation need not be a threatening process but can be achieved in a positive, empowering way. Looking across the literature we have found substantial agreement as to the strategies which appear to facilitate effective quality evaluation and improvement and those which do not (Hopkins, 1986; 1992; Louis and Miles, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Goddard and Leask, 1992; Scheerens, 1992; West-Burnham, 1992; Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993; Sallis, 1993; Handy, 1994). These common strategies reveal that:

- judgments about quality need to be made,
- an outside perspective is required but that the assessed and the assessor should know and trust each other,
- evaluation should emerge from an open, honest and collaborative dialogue using a shared vocabulary,

- this dialogue should be generated over an extended period of time,
- the dialogue should have a clear, systematic and agreed framework and format,
- the evidence for evaluation is gathered together and shared together,
- the evaluation process should lead to action plans,
- the action should be followed through, supported and monitored,
- the settings should take ownership of the process and its outcomes,
- all participants in the process should be encouraged to make a contribution which is acknowledged and valued,
- compulsion and hierarchies do not work. Collaboration and participation do work.

These common characteristics of effective quality evaluation and improvement provided us with a basis from which to plan further evaluative action in the field of early childhood. This consensus, and the experience of four years development work on the Effective Early Learning Project, have convinced me that any quality evaluation and improvement process for early childhood should adhere to the following six principles of action.

1. Adopting a dynamic, developmental approach which views the processes of

evaluation and improvement as inseparable.

2. Utilising procedures which are shared, democratic and collaborative.
3. Implementing a bottom up process which is opted into and not imposed.
4. Creating a rigorous, systematic and agreed evaluative framework which is implemented over an extended period of time.
5. Ensuring the action is supported and has outcomes which are monitored.
6. Aiming to develop a process which empowers and develops practitioners, parents and children.

2.3.6 The Evaluation and Development Process

Building on the above principles of action, quality is evaluated using the EEL framework by taking the participants through a systematic and rigorous four stage process of 'Evaluation and Improvement'.

- Stage 1: Evaluation - during which researchers and participants work together to document and evaluate the quality of early learning within the setting.
- Stage 2: Action Planning - during which participants meet together to identify priorities for action and to generate an action plan to implement this.
- Stage 3: Improvement - during which the action plan to improve the

quality of provision is implemented.

Stage 4: Reflection - during which participants are encouraged to reflect upon the Evaluation and Development process and to review the impact of the action plan in the light of experience.

During the Evaluation Phase, the quality of practice in relation to each of the 10 dimensions of quality are carefully documented and evaluated using a number of research methods in which the Project participants are trained. These include detailed observations of children and adults, interviews of parents, colleagues and children, documentary analysis and a number of questionnaires. One of the key and innovatory features of this Project is that it allows a detailed, rigorous quantitative and qualitative assessment to be made of the quality of educational provision across a wide range of different early childhood settings. This process of quality assessment has been enhanced by the utilisation of two key observation techniques which measure the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes. These two methods are:

- The Child Involvement Scale: which measures the level of involvement (deep level learning) of the children in the activities offered
- The Adult Engagement Scale: which measures the qualities of effective teaching demonstrated by the adult.

The social psychological underpinning of these techniques and their methodology are detailed by Laevers (1994). As these two techniques are so

central to the Project's action a short summary of their content and the way we have used them is outlined below.

The Child Involvement Scale is an observation instrument which aims to measure the level of a child's 'involvement' in an activity. We were attracted to it because it is child focussed and it attempts to measure the processes of learning, rather than to concentrate on outcomes. We have also found it to be grounded in a common sense (and theoretically underpinned) view of effective early learning which all the practitioners in the Project have found accessible and easy to use. It is based on the notion that when children are learning at a 'deep level' (Laevers, 1993) they display certain characteristics, which Laevers summarises in the concept of 'involvement'. This concept is linked directly to children's exploratory drive and also captures the level of concentration and motivation of the child. Laevers argues that the level of involvement a child displays is a key indicator of the quality and effectiveness of that learning experience. Involvement levels are deduced from the presence or absence of a number of 'involvement signals' which include:

- Concentration
- Energy
- Creativity
- Facial Expression and Posture
- Persistence
- Precision
- Reaction Time
- Language

- Satisfaction

Laevers 1994

After a three day training programme using video clips of real life situations, adults are capable of reaching high levels of inter-researcher agreement on their judgments, as we shall see when we consider methodology in more detail in Chapter 5. Children's involvement can be graded on a scale of 1 to 5; Level 1 being given when a child displays No Involvement and Level 5 being given when a child displays Intense Involvement. Working in conjunction with Laevers, the Worcester team have utilised an English translation of the instrument (Laevers, 1994) which has been used successfully within the Project and which we believe has the potential for much wider application.

The Adult Engagement Scale (Bertram, 1995) provides the second part of the quality assessment process. This instrument is also based on a method developed by Laevers EXE Project but, as I shall show in Chapter 4, I have modified it quite substantially for use in the EEL Project. This evaluative instrument provides an assessment measure of the quality of an adult's interactions with a child. The instrument is based on the notion that the style of interactions between the educator and the child is a critical factor in the effectiveness of the learning experience. The EEL project identifies three core elements in a teacher's style which shapes the quality of such interactions:

SENSITIVITY: This is the sensitivity of the adult to the feelings and emotional well being of the child and includes elements of sincerity, empathy, responsiveness and affection.

STIMULATION: This is the way in which the adult intervenes in a learning process and the content of such interventions.

AUTONOMY: This is the degree of freedom which the adult gives the child to experiment, make judgments, choose activities and express ideas. Also, how the adult handles conflict, rules and behavioural issues.

These two quantitative research methods provide hard data of the effect of action on the learning in each setting, as scores obtained in the Evaluation stage can be compared with scores following the Improvement stage. Interestingly, although we term this data 'quantitative' they are both attempts to measure 'qualitative' aspects of the teaching and learning process.

All the qualitative and quantitative data collected are then collated into a detailed and carefully structured 'Evaluation Report' of the quality of early learning within each setting. The case study is then fed back to the practitioners in the study setting for validation by the contributors. When agreed this is used to develop and implement an Action Plan for the improvement of practice within the setting. At the end of the Development stage the two assessment instruments (Involvement and Engagement) are carried out again and compared with the previous results to capture any changes in the quality of learning engendered by the Improvement process.

2.3 7 Lessons Learned About Evaluation in Early Childhood

Experience of evaluation projects in the UK, and in particular, the EEL Project, has taught me a lot about evaluative processes and their potential for improving the quality of provision for young children. More than anything else it has

deepened my respect for the professionalism and commitment of those who work with young children. It has also provided some clear indications of how high quality and effective early learning may be achieved in the UK. Although the EEL Project is still at an early stage in reflecting on the process of evaluation there are some clear and tangible issues deserving further consideration which are emerging. These include the following highlighted points.

*** Evaluation and Improvement is possible and desired in all settings**

We have been impressed by the commitment and energy all the practitioners involved in the EEL Project have displayed to improving their practice and the quality of early learning they offer. All sectors and providers expressed a great desire to develop their knowledge and expertise and were very open to evaluative strategies which would facilitate this. We had participants from all sectors of the early childhood world and all were excited and positive at the prospect of working together to evaluate and improve their provision. In fact, there was much good will and desire to work across the sectors in a multi-professional way which has resulted in different providers in a local area networking and supporting each other.

In all the settings we have worked, we have documented clear and identifiable changes in practice. These changes cover many different aspects of their practice, from the physical environment, the curriculum, relationships with parents, organisation to developing the role of play in learning. Improvements in the quality of the early learning experiences offered can be claimed in all settings that have completed the cycle of 'evaluation and development'. This is

very strong evidence of the power of evaluative processes as a vehicle for change.

*** A democratic approach is effective but requires some external support**

In the Effective Early Learning Project we have tried to ensure that quality is defined by the shared reflections and agreement of experienced managers, practitioners, parents and children. The definition is validated and scrutinised for accuracy by those closest to the experience that is being evaluated. The Project is therefore firmly founded in democratic principles and we have worked hard at putting in to place a process which depends on partnership, collaboration and teamwork. Other UK quality evaluation initiatives have adopted a similar inclusive, collaborative approach - (The PLA Accreditation Scheme, 1993 and the Strathclyde Project, 1992). Others have tended to view the process as being more effectively carried out by an external team of 'experts' who come into an early childhood setting and implement the quality evaluation process - (the British Standards Scheme, 1991 and the OFSTED Inspection Scheme, 1995). However, we believe that if ongoing quality evaluation is viewed as part of a complex set of continuously evolving relationships between providers, children and their families, then it is crucial that approaches adopt a participative, collaborative mode of operation. For us, this is a key issue to be addressed by those concerned with developing quality. We have found that parents, children and practitioners need to be encouraged to work in a mutually open, honest and supportive partnership which is directed towards ensuring the highest quality of early learning experiences possible.

*** Evaluation and improvement should go hand in hand**

We are convinced that quality evaluation, inspection or accreditation should not be separated from the development process. It also appears helpful if those who evaluate quality are also involved in the improvement process. The need for continuity and for the extended dialogue that accompanies and follows on from the evaluation process must be facilitated. Those who evaluate quality need to feed in to the development process.

It has also become clear that self evaluation and development are less effective than externally validated self evaluation and development. Settings needed the support, advice and encouragement of an outside perspective to move themselves on. The settings found the democratic approach, in which all practitioners were involved, attractive, as it gave them a feeling of self worth and professional responsibility. Yet, they all indicated that the outside support was critically important at key points in the evaluation process. The level of this support varied according to the setting and the issues they chose to tackle. We felt this was appropriate as some settings were more developed than others and more used to handling the kind of process we were taking them through. There was a consensus of opinion, however, that whether or not the setting was providing high quality or not, all needed to continue to develop and an external source of new knowledge and opinion was invaluable.

*** The evaluative framework used must be rigorous but flexible**

There are three issues which need careful consideration in developing evaluative frameworks. Firstly, to be effective any evaluative framework must be rigorous, systematic and based upon the best knowledge we have about

effective teaching and learning in the early years. This will involve the development and utilisation of accessible and practicable techniques for gathering and analysing evidence on which to base the evaluation and the training of practitioners in employing them. At the heart of these techniques should be focussed observations of adults and children within a setting, but they will also include a range of other qualitative and quantitative methods of gathering information. The model of practitioner as researcher should therefore be viewed as central to the quality improvement process.

Secondly, while the framework itself has to be robust and transferable, it also has to be flexible so that each element within it can be interpreted to meet the particular context in which it is being applied. The diverse range of early childhood settings within the UK, and the need for these to be responsive to the families and local community they serve, has demanded that there is room within any quality framework for it to be applied in a range of different ways. This flexibility should allow individual settings to offer parents real choice whilst reassuring them that the core elements of quality are being addressed.

Thirdly, all those participating in the evaluative process must be aware of this quality framework and agree on its validity and applicability to their particular context; in effect, a triangulation of agreed perspectives. Where dispute arises as to the relevance or appropriateness of any aspect of the framework, the effectiveness of the whole process is threatened. The evaluative framework being used must have credibility and acceptance amongst all members of the organisation which is being evaluated. This requires good communication, time for everyone to familiarise themselves with the framework, and opportunities for

an open dialogue about it.

*** The need for time**

Experience has also taught us that a 'dip stick' approach to quality evaluation and improvement severely limits its effectiveness. In order to obtain a comprehensive, truly representative and valid picture of the quality of provision in any one setting, which can be used as the basis for fundamental improvement which will have a lasting impact, a long term time frame has to be used. The Effective Early Learning Project's evaluation and development process takes between 9 to 12 months to go through just one cycle of focussed development. Other schemes also have an extended time period for their implementation eg the Strathclyde Project took over 12 months and the PLA Scheme has no time limits. We have found it is important that the process of quality improvement is not viewed as a short, sharp blast of activity which can be done periodically and then put on one side. Rather, we would promote a model of on going, professional activity directed at a constantly rolling cycle of evaluation and improvement. In this way short, medium and long term goals can be planned for, and worked at systematically, and at a pace which individual settings can manage within the normal ebbs and flows of their activity. We have found this to be not only pragmatic and realistic, but also motivating for those involved because they feel in control.

*** The need for evaluative instruments which assess process as well as outcomes**

Evaluating the quality of the processes that go on within any early childhood setting is a very tricky task. It is not easy to identify the constituent elements

within a quality experience and to gather “hard” evidence about changes in these. We are only just beginning to understand the subtle qualitative nuances, interpersonal relationships and factors which constitute effective teaching and learning at this stage, but it is clear that these are the critical factors in determining a quality education or not. As a result of this lack of well developed techniques, process measures do not seem to carry the same attraction to those who evaluate quality in early childhood. Outcome measures which can provide tangible and often quantifiable evidence are often seen, mistakenly in our view, as preferable. This is despite the fact that the outcomes of educational inputs in these early stages may not be evident until the child reaches maturity.

Yet, we would be wrong to polarise the debate. It is important that we focus our attention on the development of evaluative instruments which can assess the quality of any early childhood programme. Some of these instruments may focus on educational outcomes and these would include a child’s social competence, emotional well being, behavioural characteristics, linguistic skills, mathematical competencies, amongst them. However, given the emphasis placed upon learning processes at this stage (DES, 1990), we urgently need to develop evaluative instruments which provide reliable and accessible evidence of the quality of these processes. These measures are beginning to emerge and to be utilised within quality improvement schemes. For example, the Involvement Scale (Laevers 1994) and the Engagement Scale (Bertram 1995), used within the EEL Project focus specifically on the quality of the learning and teaching processes. More work clearly needs to be done to develop assessment techniques, and also to convince decision makers of the validity and reliability of such process measures. It is interesting to note that amongst the

quality schemes currently available to early childhood providers, few are really addressing the issue of monitoring the impact of improvements on the quality of teaching and learning at all.

*** The process can result in professional development of practitioners**

One of the primary aims of the EEL Project was to use the “Evaluation and Development” process as a cost effective and targeted process of professional development for the participating practitioners. All participants were trained in the observation and data gathering process, and shown how to interpret the data and use it for developing an action plan for improvement. The aim was to generate in each study setting a ‘research community’ and to encourage the practitioners to use their new skills to investigate and review their practice more systematically and rigorously.

Practitioners have reported changes in their thinking and understanding of their practice. In particular, they report that they are observing the learning process more critically and more regularly and using this information to inform their planning.

*** The process empowers the practitioners**

Part of professional development should be about becoming more confident, having an awareness of practice, having a rationale and being able to articulate this. Evidence (see chapter 6) is emerging that practitioners who are working with the EEL methodology are empowered by the process. Taking responsibility for evaluating their practice, being given the tools to undertake this, and the means to move their practice on, has given the practitioners a sense of self

worth and control over their professional lives. They report higher self esteem and a growing belief in the importance and complexity of their work. They are also able to communicate this to those to whom they are accountable.

I believe that strong and confident practitioners working in an open and self critical context provide the right conditions for long term development and change. It is exactly these conditions that the EEL process aims to encourage so that working together for improvement becomes part of the ethos for early childhood settings of whatever type.

In this final section of this chapter I have laid out the context of the wider EEL study in order to show, in subsequent chapters, how my particular focus is embedded within it. Evaluation and improvement of the quality of early childhood settings is the wider issue and, within that, one of the crucial, if not the crucial, aspect is the evaluation and development of the educative adult. Before examining in closer detail the literature and theory which underpin my view of an effective early childhood educator, I shall explore in the next chapter, the literature and conceptual framework for evaluating educational quality in early childhood settings.

Chapter 3

The Conceptual Framework:

3.1 A Model for Effective Learning in Early Childhood Settings

The conceptual framework for the Effective Early Learning Research Project (EEL) is the base within which this current study on the effectiveness of the early childhood educator is nested. Before looking at the concept of adult 'engagement', the suggested key element in the effective educator, therefore, it is necessary to consider the genesis and development of the conceptual model of the EEL Research Project itself and its framework for evaluating effectiveness in developing and monitoring learning in early childhood settings. The model has emerged from a prolonged period of discussions with colleagues and practitioners, and from wide reading of the literature on evaluation, quality audit and control in business management, health studies and education. (Donabedian,1980; Hopkins 1986; Louis and Miles, 1991; Rossbach et al, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Goddard and Leask,1992; Scheerens, 1992; West-Burnham, 1992; Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993; Sallis, 1993; Handy,1994; Kryiacou, 1994; Laevers,1994; Munton et al,1995; Pascal and Bertram, 1996).

3.2 Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economic Audit

The conceptualisation focuses on the notion of 'effectiveness' which, perhaps, needs to be explained in more detail. Effectiveness is here distinguished from

efficiency or economic audit. Collectively they have been termed the three E's of business administration or 'Total Quality Management' (Handy, 1994).

'Economic audit' describes the desire for monitoring financial costs and benefits. Although there are now numerous studies which show the social and economic gains which arise from quality early childhood provision (Barnett, 1993, Schweinhart et al. 1993), this is not the primary concern here.

'Efficiency' describes the process of minimising the input effort and maximising the output gain. Perhaps some of the initiatives of the UK Government in the 1990's can be seen as attempts to improve efficiency by reducing input effort - the abortive 'mum's army' of one year trained replacements for teachers, the Teacher Training Agency's reappraisal of entry requirements and routes for early childhood staff, the School Curriculum Advisory Authority's minimalist outcome measures, the 'light touch' inspection organised by security firms, the weakening of regulations and regulatory bodies, the neo-liberal ideology of the 'nursery' voucher scheme - could all be interpreted as attempting to reduce input effort, at least Government efforts (DfEE/SCAA, 1992, OFSTED, 1995). Contrarily, it may be that these measures actually increase the need for effort from those burdened with delivering the provision and who must attempt to cope with this multiplicity of change. From any perspective it seems more difficult to explain how this is justifiable in any measure of output gain or quality enhancement of service as recent reports have indicated (TES, 1995).

The third element of Total Quality Management, 'effectiveness', is more focussed on notions of 'fit for purpose' (Pfeffer & Coote, 1991). Economic and efficiency issues may be said to be primarily concerned with value for money

and minimising effort but effectiveness can be seen to be addressing issues substantially about outcome. In balancing the relative importance of these three elements, there can be conflict and a too greater emphasis on the former two might damage the latter. Indeed, wide spread dissatisfaction with Health Service initiatives have lead to questions about how appropriate the values of the market place are to public service organisations (Hutchinson,1996).

To be effective as a business organisation it must be apparent that the purpose of the organisation is being achieved. This of course will usually be identified with regard to production and profit and the approval of the shareholders. In education, however, it is clear that the debate about 'purpose' is, at base, one which is dependent on the philosophic stance of the observer. The purpose of education, and therefore its measurement is interpreted according to one's relative and subjective values. We will return later to discussions about the limits of relativity in assessing effectiveness but clearly market definitions are simplistic. It is also apparent that 'achievement' is another relative term and that what counts as achievement and how it might be measured is another debate in which there are no absolutes. The problem, therefore, is not only to develop a model for effectiveness but to ensure that it is universally appropriate.

3.3 The Limitations of Models

Before beginning an analysis of some established models it is important to note that models are only theoretical means of structuring ideas. They seek to put frameworks on reality to enable elements of the general picture to be isolated. This allows a more detailed examination of each of the component parts. Models and theories are also attempts to explain relationships between

component variables, (Popper,1959). The reality is often much more complex; to use Ausubel's term, settings which are attempting to develop learning are often complicated, in research terms, by their 'messiness' (Ausubel, 1968). Characteristics do not exist discretely but impact on each other. The effect of one particular variable may be influenced by other variables. For example, size of setting may have a differential effect on boys than girls because, generally being more conforming, girls are more likely to cope with the increased formality and whole class teaching which accompanies large class size. Thus there may be a relationship between the gender balance within the setting and the effect of class size. These two variables could not therefore be validly viewed as discrete.

3.4 Issues of Methodology, Power and Purpose

A discussion on effectiveness frameworks needs to acknowledge issues of methodology, power and purpose in order to reveal the differing possible interpretations. Methodological issues centre on how effectiveness can be evaluated; issues of power and purpose centre on who asserts what effectiveness is and how it should be measured. The locus of the debate on effectiveness in early childhood education now seems to be moving towards *how* the variables of effectiveness can be measured (Bertram, 1996) and *who* decides what is deemed to be effectiveness. What is it that is considered to be the significant learning or behavioural outcomes from this provision? What is its purpose and who makes that judgment? (Bruner, 1996). The first question is an issue for the refinement of technique and research instruments; the second question is more to do with philosophical and sociological issues. Let us

consider these two issues.

3.4.1. Issues of methodology:

There are difficulties with outcome measures in assessing the effectiveness of young children's learning (Bertram, 1996). They may, for example, be only capturing surface and short lived effects. The first indications of the differential effects of the three types of provision in the oft-quoted US High Scope Perry Preschool Project (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993) did not become truly apparent in the learning behaviours of the children until some five or six years after they had completed the programme. Further, those differing effects are still continuing today. The long term, dormant effects of provision may therefore not be captured by measures of attainment which are more easily applied to older children and which can be applied in paper and pencil tests within the short term. The 'Desirable Outcome' measures announced by the DfEE (DfEE/SCAA, 1995) have generally been greeted with disappointment by early childhood organisations, who perceive them as too simplistic and naive (Pugh, 1996).

Many local authorities in the UK now use profiling or base-line assessments of young children when they first enter statutory provision (Emery, 1993) but there are doubts about their veracity. Reports, significantly timed for the last day of most schools' academic year (Guardian, 19.07.96) indicate that the Government is moving to introduce baseline testing for all entrants to state schools within a year. There has been criticism from some quarters, that we lack instruments which are sensitive, valid and reliable for finding out what children of this age know (Laevers, 1994). For example, one common question in these profiles that teachers are to complete might ask, "How often does the child talk to the teacher?" There is an attempt here to make some judgment about the child's

language competence but as Wells (1985) has shown children often use a different language pattern in home and school, and in any case this question might be revealing more about the teacher than it does about the child. In addition, Donaldson (1978) has shown how some of Piaget's work with the developmental patterns of young children's thinking was flawed because the questions were not contextualised in an accessible way; they were not 'embedded' and therefore children misunderstood them. Young children are delightfully idiosyncratic and lateral in their thinking. An appropriate answer to a question might well fit logically into their view of the world but not be 'correct'. Young children have uniquely individualistic thought processes and often have a means of conceptualisation and expression that is hard to capture in standardised tests and is not capable of being reduced to norms.

Another problem with testing young children is the social and affective context of the testing. There are reports that some local authorities are prepared to put their 4 year olds through tearful encounters in order to test their competence at paper and pencil tests on entry, (Emery,1993). It is questionable how valid these tests are given the emotional turmoil that many children may experience in doing them.

Most of this simplistic testing of young children focuses on what is thought to be appropriate academic achievements. This is seen as not only of benefit to the individual but crucial for employment and the economic success of the nation. Even if we accept this utilitarian perspective of education, there are reasonable doubts that the focus on these 'desirable outcomes' will realise Government expectations. It may well be, for example, that Handy (1994) is right in

emphasising the importance of adaptability in the individual. Workers will need to transfer abilities to differing contexts in future employment markets and that will be the key to success. Handy's view is that workers will need to be flexible and that they should be educated to take responsibility and to make decisions not simply to be passive recipients of instruction. Gardner (1991) view of different, multiple, intelligences is relevant here. Katz (1987,1995) refers to 'dispositions to learn' and claims that acquiring this attitude to learning may be more important in the long term than merely acquiring knowledge.

Clearly, what is seen as significant outcomes, what is described as effective, that which we choose to measure and what is thought to be appropriate ways to measure it, are all culturally determined.

Finally, outcome assessment for young children may be too late. On going assessment of process variables allows teacher to adjust their performance to maximise the child's potential. Waiting until children have completed the process means any benefit to that child will be negligible. Many researchers in early childhood would prefer therefore, to emphasise the importance of context and process variables, especially in the absence of funding for longitudinal studies. Even with longitudinal studies, there are inherent difficulties in attempting to isolate the myriad variables that such studies would require. Thus, perhaps what is needed is a more scientific approach to the evaluation of process.

3.4.2 Issues of power and purpose:

Bruner (1996) suggests that education in early childhood is bound by three 'antinomies'. Antinomies are contradictory conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable or necessary. They offer the uncomfortable paradoxes of

intellectual contradictoriness which, Bruner suggests, provide fruitful ground for both confusion and reflection. He suggests three which are at the core of the debate on education:

- individual realisation versus the cultural preservation,
- a talent centred versus a tool centred culture,
- particularism versus universalism.

Bruner (1996) explains,

There is no way to get the full measure from both sides of an antimony We need to realise human potential, but we need to maintain a culture's integrity and stability. We need to recognise different native talent, but we need to equip all with the tools of the culture. We need to respect the uniqueness of local identities and experience, but we cannot stay together as people if the cost of local identity is the Tower of Babel.'

Bruner, 1996, p.7

Bruner (1996) is doubtful of the notion of 'cultural deprivation', which he sees as attempting to supplant a white middle class view of the world on the culture of others. Feuerstein agrees,

It is not the culture of the individual that is depriving but it is the fact that the individual is deprived of his own culture that is the disabling factor

quoted in Sharron, 1987

Like Vygotsky (1978), he argues that education is not incidental to what the child will become. The teacher is a special mediator who systematically shapes children's learning. Both Feuerstein (1980) and Bruner (1996) reject the passive role that Piaget (1971) postulated; the notion of a slowly unfolding biological process of development in which at best all education can do is to provide an

appropriate environment within which the child can fulfil his/her potential.

Lipman (1988) also agrees with the idea of 'commitment' from the adult and questions the Piagetian view that childish thought is devoid of logical necessity and genuine implication. Lipman's focus is on thinking, especially reasoning, rather than knowledge, as the priority for young children. He claims that young children bring to school an eagerness to learn which gradually fades because it is not recognised and encouraged.

We blame their failure on their family background, their economic conditions, we blame it on all sorts of things except what the school does to them.

quoted in Sturgeon, 1990

Lipman complains that instead of concentrating on what children cannot do, teachers should strengthen children's capacity to inquire. In reality what happens is that the children who are in greatest need are given 'basic skills until it comes out of their ears and it doesn't solve their problems at all'. He suggests that schools should capitalise on the treasures that children bring to school - their curiosity, their sense of wonder and their hunger for meaning. Lipman suggests that it is schools' failure to nourish this need which sets so many children against school. For Lipman the answer is to adopt the Socratic method of dialogic inquiry conversing with even (or especially) very young children in a spirit of reasonableness and openness.

'The education system (needs) to radically redefine its assumptions and make thinking rather than knowledge its priority'.

Minnis, 1990, p.37

Lipman argues that the skills necessary to higher order thinking are acquired

within the context of learning language. Young children learn these skills in conversation, by listening and by talking. Thinking skills are the tools of philosophy and doing philosophy gives children the opportunity to acquire, practise and fine-tune them. Lipman's 'Philosophy for Children' assumes that even very young children are capable of critical and reflective thinking. He takes children beyond mere conversation. In philosophical dialogue children are encouraged to be logical, to give good reason and to act wisely. Philosophy begins with wonder and ends in good judgment . Thinking and learning are not the ends but the means. Lipman wants settings to develop the idea of Socratic dialogue into the concept of the Community of Inquiry. In these kinds of settings young children learn to cooperate intellectually, thinking is seen as internalised dialogue. They become accomplished inquirers and very accomplished at arriving at judicious results. But this solidarity of intellectual purpose does not imply uniformity. Creativity and individuality are encouraged by respecting difference. Children discover their own reasonableness, and intellectual improvement thus leads to ethical improvement.

Children can only learn to make good judgments through a *process* of discussion, governed by rules of reason. The adult's modelling and support for these discussions is probably more important than the subject of discussion itself. Teachers ask genuinely open ended questions which give children the opportunity to practise their thinking skills. In the 'Community of Inquiry' what matters is that an atmosphere of give and take is generated. The adult sets an example by providing a model of intellectual responsibility, then invites the

children to take responsibility for their own thinking and, in a large sense, for their own education. This process recognises the affective dimension. To be an effective thinker means having the confidence to articulate your thoughts. Through speaking and having others listen, self-esteem grows. Yet research in the UK has highlighted the paucity of language discussion in the classroom (Wells, 1985; Tizard and Hughes, 1984). Woodhead's (1996) reported address to the Institute of Directors in July 1996 shows that policy makers in the UK have a more didactic model in mind,

..he said children should be stretched and challenged by active, direct teaching. In one in five primary lessons too many were bored. Too many teachers also encouraged them to believe there were 'no right answers' and their views deserved respect however little they knew.

Guardian, 16 07 96, p4

The notion of an 'enabling culture' which works to counteract the debilitating effects of alienation, helplessness and aimlessness is espoused by other US researchers (Paley, 1990; Brown, 1994). Bruner proposes

we stop thinking of deprivation and starting thinking of participating within the culture, of teaching children how you operate within a group

Bruner, 1996, p.12

This idea of giving real responsibility to groups and encouraging the development of their discourse has been very practically addressed in the UK by Bennett (1987) and can also be seen as a central element in Alexander's (1992) suggestions for improvement in the quality of child-child and child-adult

interaction arising from his Leeds study. At the end of each week in Brown's settings a class-ethnographer reported to the group on the class' progress that week, and the children debated about whether the report was right.

Bruner (1996) recognises the legitimacy of this,

school is not just a place for subject matter teaching but also a place for reinventing, refurbishing, refreshing the culture in each generation...what I propose is we stop thinking about deprivation and start thinking about participation within the culture, of teaching children the task of how you operate within a group. They need to recognise that negotiation is the heart of life and that someone will always claim for you the right to interpret for you what you mean. Consequently, I conceive preschools serving a renewed function within our changing societies. It entails building school cultures that operate as mutual communities of learners, involved jointly in solving problems with all contributing to the process of educating each other. Such groups provide not only a locus of instruction, but a focus for identity and mutual work.'

Bruner 1996,p.13

The centrality of negotiation and the acknowledgement of the right of all participants to express views on the curriculum, and its context, is obviously critical to any debate about the effectiveness of teachers and we shall be exploring this further in the following chapter. Suffice for the moment to say that it contrasts strongly with current preoccupations of many Governments in industrialised countries who are seeking to compete in the world market place by creating a work force which is geared to their nationalistic demands. Handy (1994) has suggested that the only thing we can be certain of in the future is that the rate of change will increase and that a view of education as merely a fixed body of transferable knowledge need to be questioned. On the contrary, what is needed are people who will have the ability and the appropriate attitude to

transfer their learning skills from one field to another as demand and supply changes. The rather narrow view of education as simply the precursor of employment and the idea of a fixed common curriculum which gives 'entitlement' to all, seems as far from Bruner's vision as it is from Handy's. Yet some would claim, it was used as justification for the introduction in England of a highly centralised and formalised curriculum; written, statutory and publicly tested, which deskills teachers and demotivates children (Blenkin & Kelly, 1992, Gammage & Meighan, 1995; Hurst, 1994; Bertram, 1996) . Some of the debate concerning these issues is becoming almost xenophobic. The Director of the UK Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, SCAA, at a European Conference they hosted in London in February 1996, suggested teachers should attempt to celebrate 'Englishness' more as there was a danger of school children 'losing their national identity'. He was challenged by a member of his audience. Dr Tate had commented that Greek and Roman culture could be seen as central to English culture and that they and the Scriptures should have a greater profile in schools' curriculum to ensure English children knew of their culture. At this point a Greek Professor of Early Childhood and a philologist, who had lived through the Nazi occupation of his country and the repressive Junta of the 1970's, rose and said that nowhere in Greek Literature was there a celebration of 'Greek-edness'(sic), only of humanity (Frangos, 1996). Dr Tate pursued his theme of the lack of 'English studies' at the Annual conference of the Geography Association in London a few weeks later. His comments gave rise to a sub-editor's ironic headline in the next day's paper, "Geography is too foreign", (Guardian, 12. 04. 96)

The perception that a curriculum should not be bound by one view of the culture

is also seen in the philosophical stance that many commentators approaching early childhood provision from disciplines such as sociology and administrative policy take. They express concern that professionals, especially educators, are deskilling parents and undermining them by offering notions of 'best practice' which excludes the fundamental capabilities and needs of parents, and often of their children too, by institutionalising upbringing and offering one best model of practice. (Dahlberg & Åsén, 1994, Munton et al, 1995, Penn and Moss,1996). Their argument recognises the inevitability of the process of globalisation, modernisation, urbanisation, the emancipation of women and the educational institutionalising of younger and younger children. They question the nationalistic interests of Governments and economic competitiveness as the prime rationale for a country's educational policy. Similarly they view the concomitant 'excellence' movement (Olsen & Zigler,1989) in education as giving rise to very limited ideas about outcomes and express concern that it gives rise to a simplistic view that tested reproduction of knowledge is replacing programmes which rely on a more holistic and dynamic notion of child development. Re-emphasising Bruner's antimonies, they see standardisation replacing pluralism and global hegemony displacing group identity. Their plea is for a common framework which allows for diversity but at the same time they recognise that there may be underpinning principles that we must all share and recognise. One factor, of course, that all have in common is children(!), but perhaps there are universal absolutes and core values which we should seek to enshrine such as equal opportunities and rights. (Joseph et al, 1994) To that extent it can be seen that there are also limits to the relativistic viewpoint as there are to the determinist viewpoint, and perhaps, here, we have another antimony.

If we view conceptual theories of early childhood provision and practice through Giroux's (1989) notions of polity, we see a locus of citizenship:

Within this locus, students and teachers can engage in a process of deliberation and discussion aimed at advancing the public welfare in accordance with fundamental moral judgments and principles. To bring schools closer to the concept of polity, it is necessary to define them as public spaces that seek to capture the idea of critical democracy and community.'

Giroux, 1989, p.20

Bourdieu (1991) also offers a view of young children participating in exchanges that make a culture possible. A kind of symbolic 'market where they bring their excellencies and receive distinctions, they become members of an exchange in order to be recognised as members of a culture'. Bruner says,

We cannot be condescending to children. We must accept them from the start as members of the culture and give them opportunity to make and remake the culture in each generation.

Bruner, 1996, p.12

The empowerment of the community can of course only come about if the 'students and teachers' are themselves empowered. One cannot be asked to share power unless one has access to power. In this regard we see the relative lack of power and status for the study of early childhood, (Pascal, 1992), the positivistic view that 'scientific' quantitative paradigms and psychometric testing are the only appropriate research methods (van Kuyk,1995) no matter how inappropriate they may be for gaining insights into young children's education, and the low status of workers, parents and the children themselves as part of the problem. The 'domestication' of an undervalued and low status profession also has gender implications in an area where practitioners are predominantly

women (Freire, 1995). The discourse on early childhood is never power free between equal partners. The lack of effective power or an effective voice is something which practitioners themselves must address. To some extent, the qualities that make them good at their work, the ability to listen, empathise and to care, do not provide them with the tools to be assertive advocates. It is ironic to see how closely the situation Montessori was describing at the turn of the last century is still applicable at the turn of the next century,

Today we hold the pupils in school, restricted by those instruments so degrading to body and spirit, the desk - and material prizes and punishments. Our aim in all this is to reduce them to the discipline of immobility and silence - to lead them where? Far too often toward no definite end. Often the education of children consists in pouring into their intelligence the intellectual content of school programmes. And often these programmes have been compiled in the official department for education, and their use is imposed by law upon the teacher and the child. Ah, before such dense and wilful disregard of the life which is growing within these children, we should hide our heads in shame and cover our guilty faces with our hands!

Montessori, M. (1912) *The Montessori Method: scientific pedagogy as applied to child education in the 'children's houses'* [Translated by A.E. George] Heinemann, London, pp.26-27.

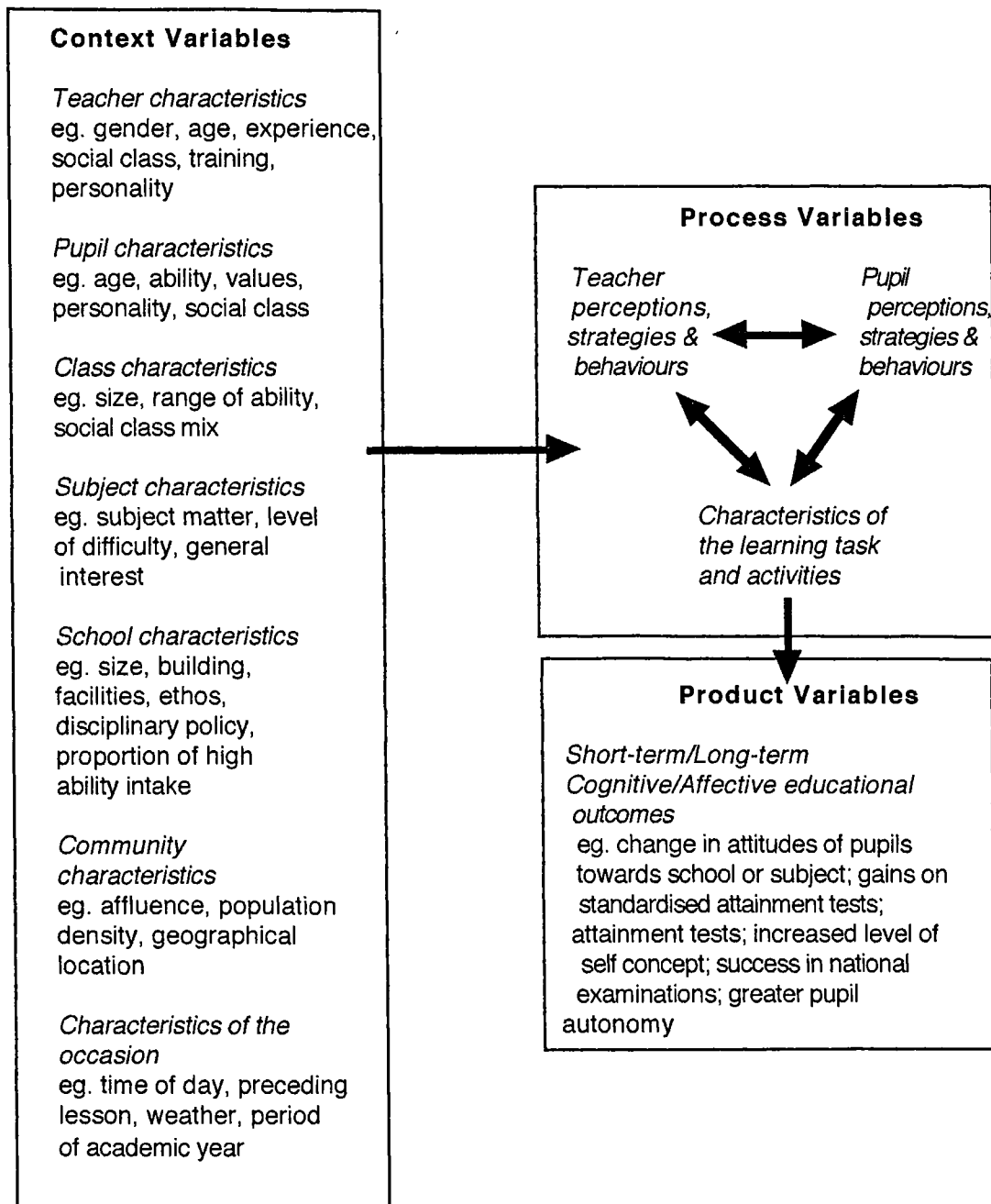
3.5 Models of Effectiveness

Having considered some of the limitations regarding models and some of the issues in defining 'effectiveness', we can now move to a consideration of some of the models themselves.

3.5.1 The Kyriacou Model

Kyriacou claims that there has been general agreement about the efficacy of the 'context - process- product' model amongst educational researchers over the last 15 years (Kyriacou 1994). Context here refers to the

Figure1, Kryiacou (1994) p.10: A basic framework for thinking about effective teaching



environmental variables of the setting. Process refers to the interactions within the setting and product describes the outcomes. Effectiveness is gauged against each category. The figure (Fig.1) above, taken from Kyriacou (1994), sets out three categories of effectiveness; context, process

and product, and gives some examples of the characteristics, behaviours and outcomes, respectively, associated with those categories.

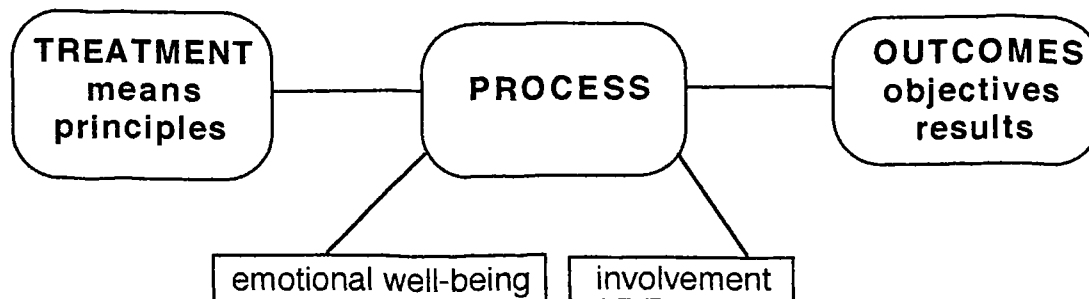
Kyriacou's focus is 'effective teaching' and he adopts a temporal division of effectiveness in the three categories of variables, but he does not seem to clarify whether the unit of examination in 'effective teaching' is the school, setting, classroom or individual or all of these. The perspective of the model is important to its interpretation and there seems to be little attempt at an 'inclusionary' view of effectiveness. It would be difficult, for example, to discover where allowance for the role of the parent is in this model, yet in early childhood education, this would be considered an important element in effective teaching.

Nevertheless, the Kryriacou model does make an important contribution in framing and identifying the key three elements found in most considerations of educational effectiveness.

3.5.2 Laevers' Experiential Model

Laevers' (1994) model although showing some similarities, for example, the three elements, takes a different approach to Kryriacou on two points (Fig.2). Firstly, in attempting to measure effectiveness, he sees *Process* as the most important category of variables in effectiveness. He looks to observable physical signals in the child as an indication of deeper cognitive and emotional development. He sees this as the key *Process* measure. Secondly, he reveals his philosophical stance by focusing on the paramount needs of the child rather than the needs of the group, or indeed of the adult, or the parent, or the wider world, as any of the other arbitrators of what is important in outcomes. Laevers avoids having to consider the external

Fig.2: Laevers' EXE-Project Model; emotional well-being and involvement as process variables.



variables by focussing exclusively on the child. Laevers (1994) prefers the psychological term 'treatment' for context variables and 'outcomes' instead of 'product'. From his perspective, the treatment variables might include factors such as classroom environment, teacher style, the content of the programme, teaching methods, teacher/pupil ratios and so on. His main focus, however, is on process variables which he suggests should refer to 'dimensions of pupil or student activity within the educational setting'. He cites 'time on task, level of cognitive thinking, amount of written output, evidence of divergent thinking or meta-cognitive activity' as examples. Laevers essentially is approaching the issue from the viewpoint of social psychology, so, for him, it is the child's potential for development and emotional well being which is the focus, and not the school's development, as in Kryiacou's model.

From the EXE point of view we would not focus first on the teacher's practice, nor on what the outcomes are of a certain educational setting but would ask this question, "How are the children doing? How is Simon doing? How is Hannah doing?" More concretely, we would explore, to begin with, the degree in which children feel at ease, find an atmosphere in which they can be spontaneous and are satisfied in their basic needs such as the need for attention

and affection, the need for social recognition, the feeling of competence.'

Laevers 1994, p.161

This process on pedagogical intervention and support Laevers calls the preservation or reconstruction of 'emotional well-being'. Like Pringle (1975), Laevers sees this as a necessary condition before learning can take place. His other central process variable is linked to the exploratory drive and urges teachers to set up a challenging environment which favours the development of 'involvement' within the child. Involvement is seen as the crucial factor in process and Laevers offers a definition of this key concept, which he sees as a 'conclusive criterion for effective education'.

Involvement is a quality of human activity that can be recognised by concentration and persistence; is characterised by motivation, fascination and openness to stimuli and intensity of experience, both at the sensoric and the cognitive level. It involves deep satisfaction and a strong flow of energy at the bodily and spiritual level. It is determined by the exploratory drive and the individual pattern of developmental needs. The fundamental schemas reflect the actual developmental level and that development is taking place.'

Laevers, 1994; p.162

In recent discussions with him, however, he has acknowledged the strength of Kryiacou's model for looking at school effectiveness, that is looking at the setting as the unit of evaluation not the individual child. (EEL/EXE,1996). Laevers' main focus is on the process variable because he feels neither 'treatment' nor 'effect' variables are entirely reliable in making judgments about early childhood outcomes.

'Although the effect side is all that matters when it comes to an evaluation of the educational system, this approach to the problem gives rise to some difficulties. First there are the problems

associated with validity and reliability of the instruments especially for young children... further longitudinal research suggests that some effects show up only after years.. and finally, if we were to find some settings more effective than others, we would still have to go back to the treatment variables in order to establish the conditions that are decisive in the genesis of desired outcomes. Because of the complexity of the educational process and the many intervening factors, including the home environment, the identification of these important treatment factors is in itself a work of interpretation and full of uncertainties. Bearing in mind all the inconveniences linked to the treatment and effect variables, the process variables offer some interesting perspectives. Without a doubt the child's action is a more precise point of reference for assessing quality than the teacher's efforts.....To be precise we need to find process variables that, like the treatment characteristics, can be registered here and now, but at the same time can be regarded as indicators of the processes that engender the desired outcomes'

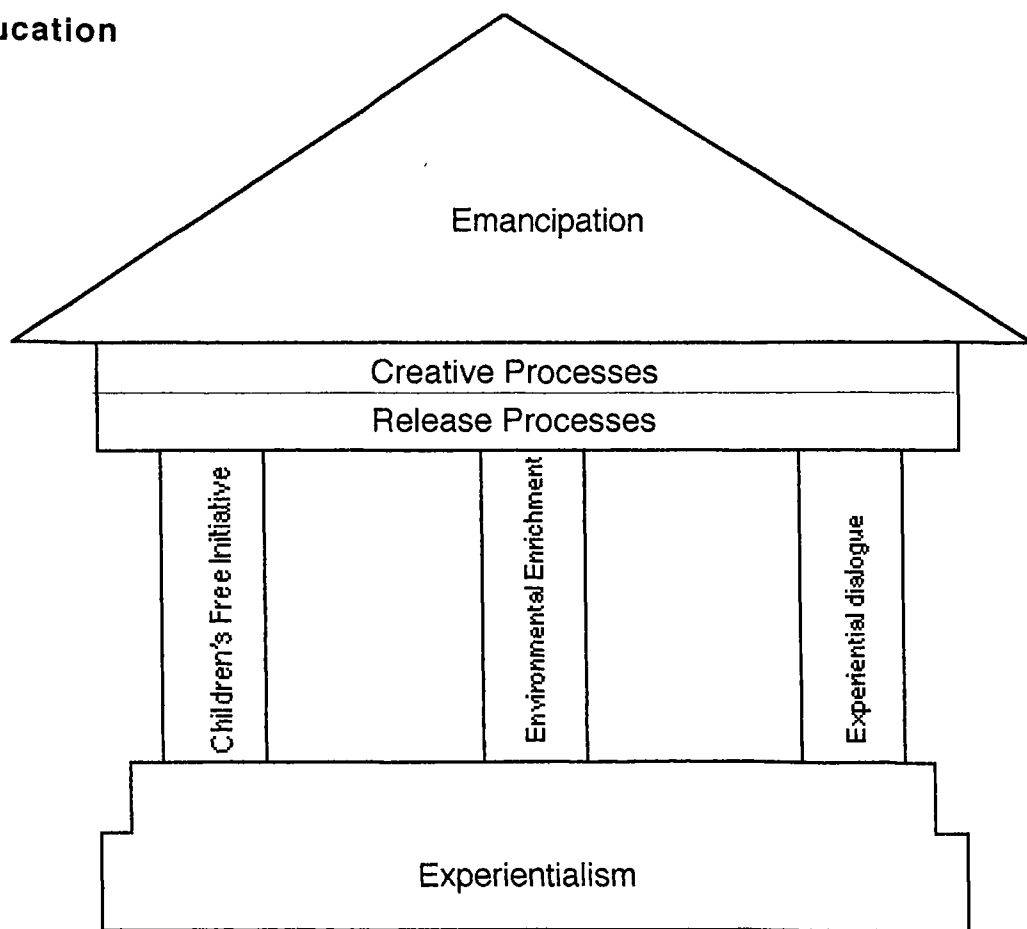
Laevers (1994) p.160

For Laevers, then, the issue of effectiveness is located in the development of the child's attitudes to learning and the opportunities that are created for 'deep level level' learning to occur. The concept of 'Involvement' is thus the central process variable and Laevers (1996) has developed an observational scale (The Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children: LIS-YC) as a research instrument to measure it. Research blindness, McNamara's (1980) 'black box' within which the important interactions occur unobserved, is seen here, not as a reluctance to examine the classroom or setting's interactions but as a lack of understanding of the inner workings of each individual child's mind. For Laevers, the basis of learning rests on experientialism. Experiential learning is a 'stream of experience', a 'collection of physically felt meanings'. The teacher's role is to tune into that experience in the child,

experiential education is completely dependent on the ability to trace the reality of a child's felt meanings through his expression, words and gestures, to reconstruct his/her experience.'

Laevers, 1996, p.29

Fig.3 Laevers (1996) The Basic Concepts of Experiential Education



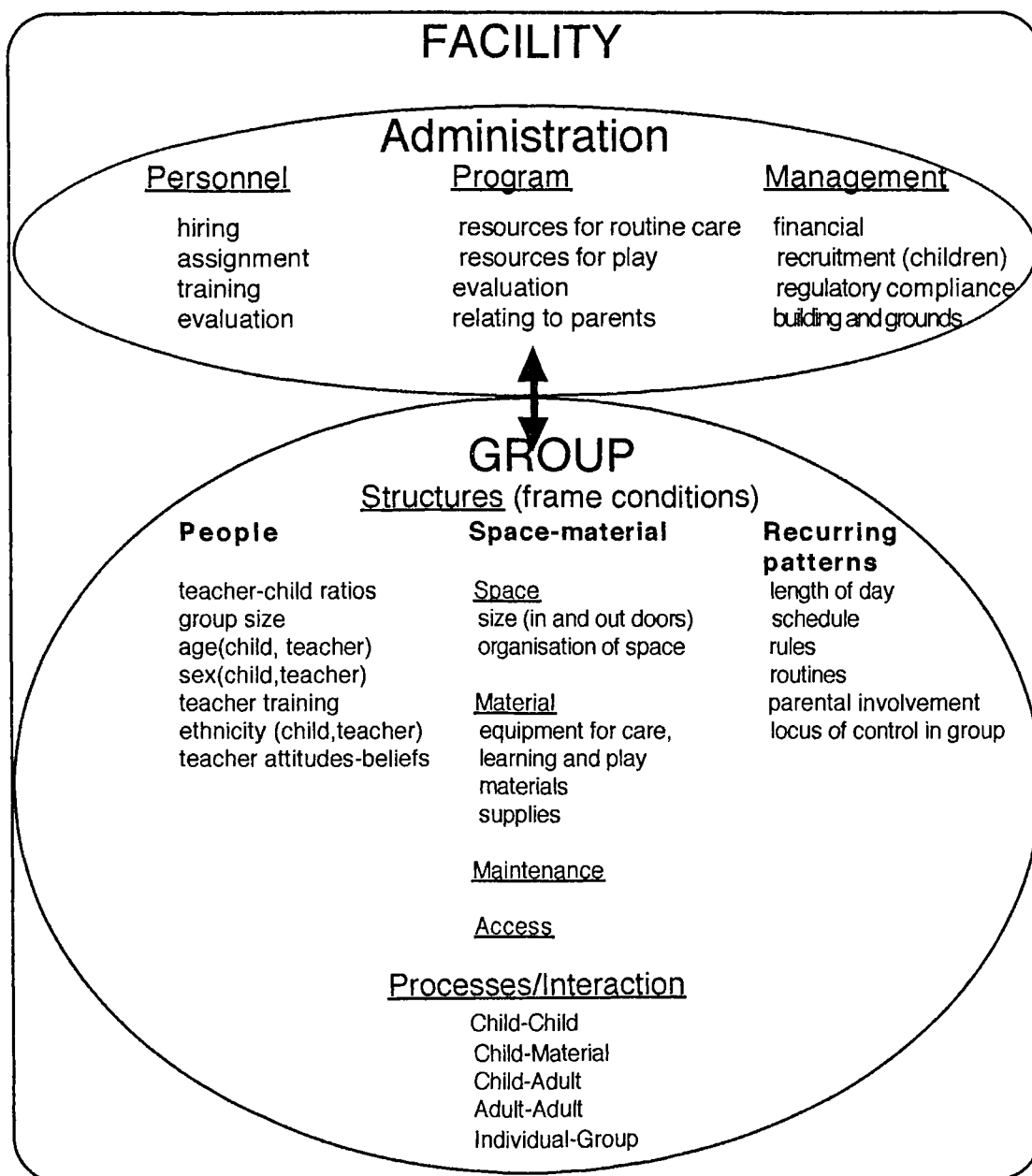
Laevers (1996), p.30

Laevers 'temple' framework shows the constructed links between his concepts, (Fig.3). The fundament is experientialism on which rest the supporting pillars, the 'practical principles' children's free initiative, an enriching environment and experiential attitude and dialogue which establishes a deep and insightful relationship between the child and the adult. Release processes allow children to exchange negative emotional feelings, self-doubt, inadequacy, alienation etc. for positive qualities such as vitality, openness and a sense of belonging. The creative processes encourage children to take initiative, be inventive and resourceful. The ultimate goal, the pediment, is the achievement of emancipation and peace. Laevers has developed many practical and concrete materials to assist practitioners in achieving this seemingly idealistic goal (Laevers, 1996).

Laevers model has been very influential in the development of the process variables which form part of the Bertram/Pascal Model. A particular strength of the Laevers' model is that it puts the child at the centre of the focus on effectiveness of process.

3.5.4 Rossbach Model

Figure 4. A “theoretical model” of quality assessment (Rossbach, Clifford and Harms, 1991)



Rossbach and others (1991) provide a 'theoretical' model of quality assessment in day care settings. It is an important model to include, here, because the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, ECERS (Harms and Clifford, 1980) from which it is derived is claimed (Munton et al.) as the most widely used, standardised instrument of choice for researchers working in the field of quality of early childhood provision. It claims to be based on an ecological approach and describes the *structural* elements such as the physical environment, materials, schedule, ratios and people in the setting. *Process* elements are described as observable processes or interactions involving both people and materials.

Munton et al. (1995) critique the Rossbach et al. model claiming it is a descriptive rather than a theoretical model. (Figure 4). They follow Popper's (1959) view that the purpose of a theory is to explain relationships between component variables and that theory should be used to answer the questions of *how*, *when* and *why* and that description merely answers the question *what*.. Munton and his colleagues also suggest that the context and process variables that Rossbach lists are derived from the ideas of academic researchers interested in the cognitive and social development of young children and may represent a view of 'quality' that is not universal.

There has been much debate about the limitations of the US derived ECERS as a research tool for European or other cultures in recent times (Karby, 1995) and this perhaps confirms the criticism Munton et al. are making. Yet, even if it does not have the three elements of effectiveness identified in Kryiacou's model it does offer an attempt to give more detailed elements of context variables ('structures') and some interactive process variables. Its other strength is that it

is also focussed specifically on early childhood settings.

3.5.5 The Munton et al. Deconstruction Model

Concepts of quality evaluation from other disciplines seem to take a similar stance to Kyriacou and Laevers in identifying three aspects of effectiveness. Munton et al. (1995) assert that quality assurance in the field of health care has been dominated by Donabedian's model (1989). This model again suggests the three categories of variables; structure, process and outcome. Structure refers to the resources used in the provision of care, the stable environment within which care is provided. Westerling (1992) defines structure as 'the material and human resources' (p.492). Process refers to the activities that constitute the care within the setting. These are described as largely behavioural and therefore, the 'less stable' elements of care provision. Finally, outcomes are described as the consequences to health of care provision, the "almost limitless set of phenomena that correspond to aspects of physical, physiological, psychological and social health" (Donabedian, 1982, p.4). Munton et al are keen to address the inclusionary issue (Dahlberg et al, 1994; Pence and Moss, 1994) and to confront the exclusionary 'expert' vision of quality in early childhood settings.

Using a model derived from Maxwell's (1992) six dimensions of quality in health care, Munton et al. propose six dimensions of quality in day care; effectiveness, acceptability, efficiency, access, equity, and relevance. Effectiveness is seen as a technical issue to be judged by 'child care experts'. Acceptability is based on the consumer's judgments. Efficiency is cost related to quality. Access is concerned with 'identifiable barriers' such as cost, waiting lists distance. Equity is about relative fairness of treatment and Relevance is about quality issues in

Figure 5: Munton's Deconstructist Model of Assessing quality in day care.

Effectiveness	Structure	Process	Outcome
	Staffing levels, Training, Equipment, (fine/gross motor) Access to play space/outings etc.	Group size, Stimulation of children Educational input Range of experiences Children's activities Stimulation of language/reasoning	Developmental optimums achieved (eg. language/ cognitive development)
Acceptability	Environmental safety, Child centred environment, Friendly atmosphere, Provision for parents to express their views	Children's progress noted and discussed with parents, H&S procedures followed, Positive staff/parent interactions.	Evidence of parents being followed up and their opinions being canvased. Safety /health record
Efficiency	Avoidance of extravagance in structure, equipment and staffing.	Staffing, Child/staff ratios Use of temporary staff as cover for illness etc.	Costs for comparable childcare
Access	Opening hours, Availability of places, Advertised vacancies.	Number of applications for places turned down.	What happens to children refused a place because the facility is full.
Equity	Policies on providing care for children with special needs.	Presence of special needs children.	Is there any evidence of bias in outcomes.
Relevance	A broad range of aims that reflect needs of parents and local communities.	Links between nursery and parents, local professionals and local schools.	How much difference does day care make to children and parents.

Munton, A.G. et al, (1995) p.19-20

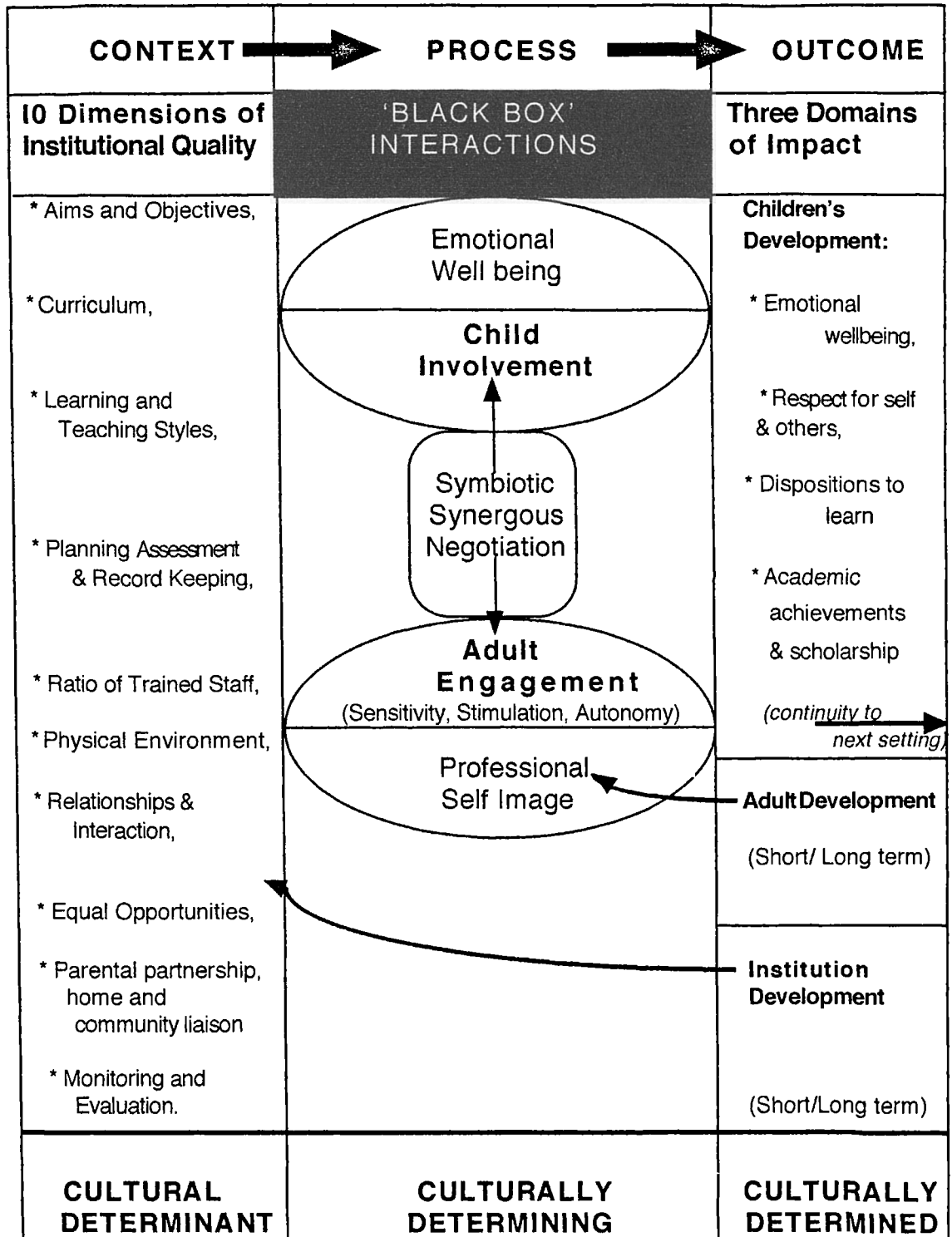
population and society. The concern of Munton et al was to map a multi-dimensional view of quality day care in a matrix with the three classifications of quality, as in the figure 5 above.

The intention to widen the perspectives on quality should be welcomed. It is important that a model should have validity and applicability to a wide range of users and providers, especially given the variety of contexts which characterises the UK context. This model (Figure 5) makes explicit the multidimensional nature of quality and allows for differing views to be incorporated. It attempts to deconstruct the concept of quality and allow stakeholders to make explicit their different definitions of quality. It may be that some of the fine-grain of the quality dimension/categories outlined by Munton and his colleagues needs to be examined. Some of the panels are in danger of being banal and some fall into the very trap the authors were wishing to expose, when their own values, beliefs and attitudes become apparent in what they choose to select as significant.

3.5.6 The Bertram/Pascal Model of Effectiveness

Bertram and Pascal (1996) take a more pragmatic view than Laevers and offer a more fully developed model than Rossbach or Munton but accept and incorporate aspects of their work (Figure 6). Their unit of evaluation is not the development of each child's mind, though this is clearly important, but the development of the whole setting. They are not as concerned with policy (although their work has policy implications) as with practical support for practitioners in assessing their own settings. They offer a model of self evaluation and development which is validated in several crucial ways, which will be identified later. The model works at the level of institutional 'setting', a term which perhaps needs some explanation. 'Setting' is the term used by the U.K. Department for Education and Employment (OFSTED, 1995) for a variety of schools, nurseries and playgroups, including state nursery schools; state

Figure 6: A Conceptual Framework for Developing Effectiveness in Early Learning Settings



Bertram and Pascal (1996)

nursery, reception and infant classes; local authority day nurseries; and private and voluntary schools, nurseries; and private and voluntary schools, nurseries, playgroups and pre-schools. Early childhood settings, may be a class, or a group of classes. They may be within a larger organisation or they may be a separate and free standing institutional setting in their own right.

The Effective Early Learning Project (Pascal et al, 1995) has been the main dynamic for developing this model for evaluating and enhancing effectiveness in early childhood settings. The model has been extensively trialled and developed, with over 1000 settings throughout the UK involved in, and contributing to, the EEL Project by April 1996. It has been used in a variety of different kinds of setting wherever *centre based* care and education is offered but *non-centre based* carers and educators have also found it of some use. There are a number of initiatives to use the materials developed through the EEL Project on children outside the limits of the original research remit of the funding body, (i.e. for 3 and 4 year olds in UK centre-based settings) by both addressing children outside the age group and exploring differently located provision. For example, it is being developed with special needs home-visiting teams and parents in one Home Counties local authority. It is being used with child minders in Northern Ireland and being revised and adapted for use with 0-3 year olds in an inner city authority.

The Kyriacou (1994) model is also used as a starting point for the EEL conceptual framework, but it must be noted that this model was conceptualised, predominantly, with secondary educational institutions in mind. Laevers' model (1994) is also drawn on heavily, particularly in the *process* dimension, but again attention should be drawn to his differing perspective. Laevers approaches the

issue from the viewpoint of social psychology and focuses on the individual child as the basic unit of his model, so care had to be exercised in adapting his material into the context of the Effective Early Learning Project. For Laevers, the individual child is at the centre of the evaluation process and, for him, the 'treatment - process - outcome' is related wholly to the child in the context of the setting. His avowed interest is also predominantly in the 'process' variables, whereas EEL accepts the importance of all three dimensions in evaluating effectiveness.

The Kyriacou (1994) model, which adopts the temporal sequence 'context - process - product' as discrete categories of variables, is used as a basic plan for the conceptual framework of the EEL Project's view of effectiveness in early learning settings. Essentially, the 'context' is viewed as the set of variables which describe the circumstances and the environment of the institutional setting. The 'process' is concerned with those variables which have a dynamic and interaction within the described context and the 'product' is the results and products of that dynamic. The term 'outcomes' in the EEL conceptualisation is preferred to Kyriacou's use of the word 'product'. 'Outcome' allows for the unintentional, as well as the intentional results. 'Product', arguably, seems to imply only intended and manufactured outcomes. Further, 'outcomes' suggests the possibility of less concrete 'products'. Issues such as the significance of dormant 'dispositions to learn' (Katz, 1995) can be seen as crucial outcomes in early childhood education, but are, perhaps, a little ethereal for a term such as 'product' which carries implications of the measurable market .

3.5.6.1 Three Elements of the EEL Conceptual Framework

In the Bertram and Pascal (1996) conceptual framework, it is important to stress

the difference between those variables which relate to the 'process' and those which relate to the 'context.'. Although the 'process' concerns itself with the nature of interactions and relationships, there are also interpersonal variables in 'context'. For example, issues of how the setting tackles equal opportunities, or behavioural strategies, or whole setting approaches to pedagogical methodology are all seen to be part of the *context* of personal interaction. Context focuses on the situation that exists. There is ample evidence that class size (Nye et al 1995, McGurk et al 1995), staff training (Vandell et al,1983., Pascal,1989., Blenkin, 1995) the setting aims of empowering the child (Whalley,1995) and parental involvement (Pugh 1989,) all effect the interactive process, but these issues would all be placed within the EEL framework as the *context* for the interaction between the child and the educator not the *process* itself.

The EEL Project is described more fully elsewhere in this study (see Chapter3) but its evaluative function adopts a 'context-process-outcome' framework and we will now consider each of these categories of variables in turn.

3.5.6.1.1 The Context Variables of the EEL Conceptual Framework

'Quality' is evaluated in the *context* of a setting (see Fig. 6) by encouraging all the participants; children, parents, managers and staff to collect evidence, systematically and rigorously, using a variety of techniques which will enable them to make supported judgments about their provision. In the EEL Project the contextual variables for quality early childhood provision are defined by the '10 Dimensions of Institutional Quality' which are detailed elsewhere. (Pascal & Bertram,1989). Briefly stated these are Aims and Objectives, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Styles, Planning Assessment & Record Keeping, Ratio

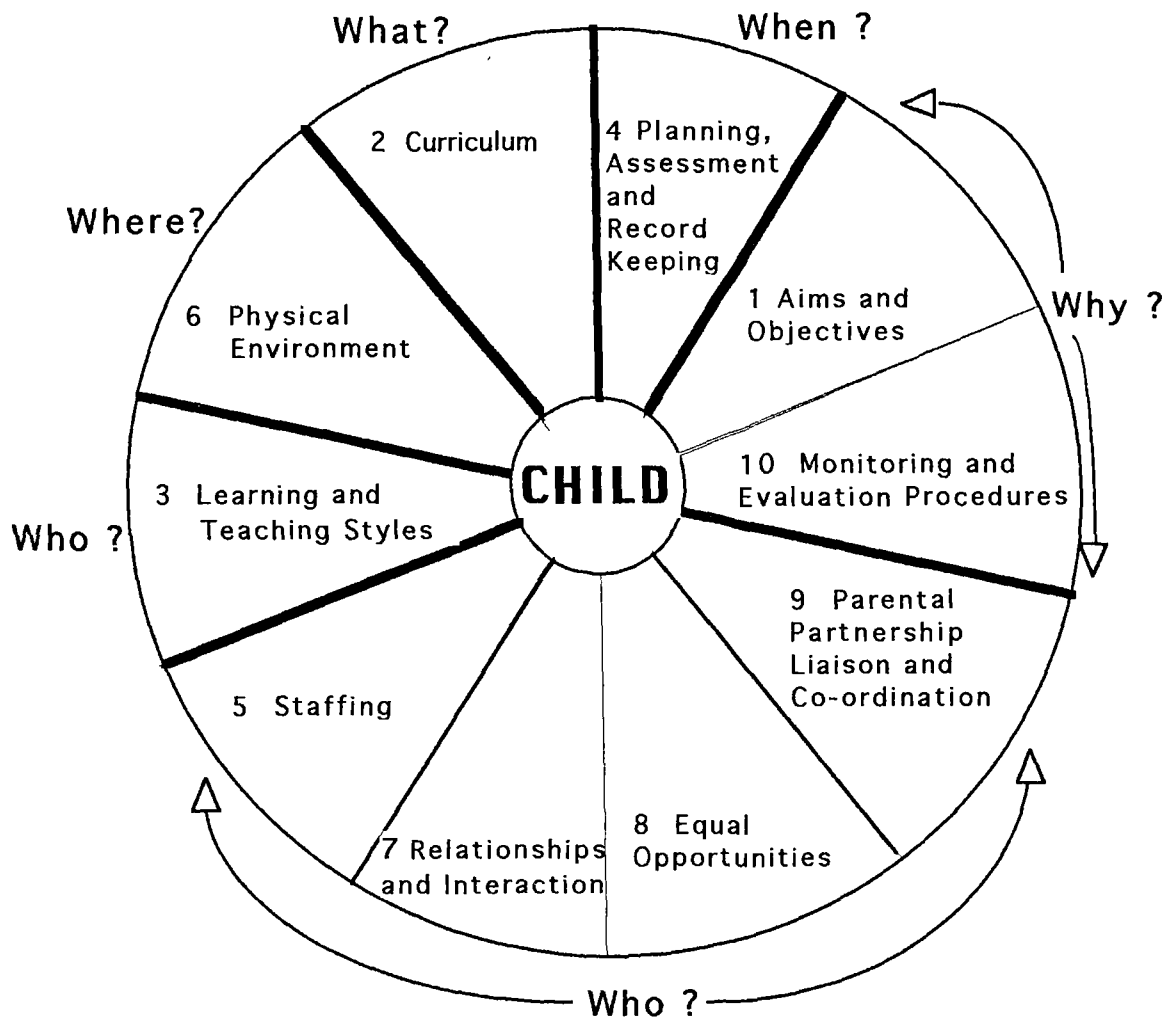
of Trained Staff, Physical Environment, Relationships & Interaction, Equal Opportunities, Parental Partnership, Home and Community Liaison, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

These dimensions cover six action research questions related to learning, which the setting itself is invited to explore using the methodologies developed with practitioners, parents and children during the development, trialling and consolidation period of the EEL Project. The six questions are; where does the learning take place? what is learnt? when is it learnt? how is it learnt ? why is it learnt? and with whom is it learnt? (see Figure 7 overleaf)

It is significant that of the ten dimensions, no less than four are concerned with the research question, 'Who ?', that is with the interpersonal, interactive element of the context. Information on each of the dimensions is collected by the participants in a rigorous and systematic way and used to evaluate and describe the institutional setting. The dimensions focus participants' attention on areas which should be considered. They do not tell the participants what they should do but merely give a framework to find out what they are doing. From this, of course, they can make judgments about what they can celebrate and what they would wish to change and improve. Decisions about this process of evaluation and improvement are therefore largely in the hands of the participants who consistently confirm that they find the process empowering rather than threatening (Pascal and Bertram, 1993).

This information is collected by and from all the participants in the setting; the children and the adults, staff, managers and parents. The underpinning rationale for this rests in ideas of collegiality, democracy, the management of

Fig.7, Pascal/Bertram 10 Dimensions of Institutional Quality



(Pascal and Bertram 1994)

change, ownership, stakeholding and triangulation. If it is accepted that 'quality' is a relative term, dynamic and values-based (Harvey et al., 1993; Katz, 1993; Abbott et al., 1994; Moss and Pence, 1994; Pascal et al., 1995), then it is important that, as far as possible, everyone's views should be included. The 'inclusionary' model of evaluating quality (Moss et al., 1994) values dialogue, exchange, transparency, diversity, empowerment and democratic participation. It recognises that quality in early childhood settings

can be located in a range of different forms of provision and can cover different disciplines and discourses. The EEL model therefore recognises that not only are the selected variables within the context category subjectively given significance, but that the manner in which they are assessed and by whom they are assessed will also give rise to subjectivity.

Whilst recognising that the context variables are value based, however, and reveal a mind set arising from the 'common tradition' of the early childhood pioneers (Bruce, 1987), there is nevertheless a remarkable degree of historical and international consensus, in the views of workers who educate and care for young children and in the reports of policy makers who acknowledge this tradition, as to what are the essential contextual requirements of 'good practice'. (Isaacs, 1932; Drummond et al, 1989; DES, 1990; Bredekamp, 1992; Ball, 1994). As Munton et al. (1995) and Dahlberg and Åsen (1994), have claimed, much of this can be explained through a shared belief by these groups in a developmental psychology which, in itself, is value based. All of this debate is encapsulated in the EEL model by acknowledging that the dimensions are 'cultural determinants', that is, what is chosen as being significant features of effectiveness, who chooses it, who measures it and how it is measured, reveals a subjective value base and the power positions of the decision makers. Although they can be said to have a recognised historical and international consensus amongst early childhood workers and researchers, the context variables, nevertheless, are selective and therefore subjective. The view that these variables are significant ones has not been demonstrated as being acceptable to all those outside the professional domain of the cognoscenti. Further, there are clearly differences in cultural views of childrearing which

would seek to put different emphasis on the significance of a particular variable (Stevenson et al.,1993). Although the EEL model determines and lists the variables it considers need to be addressed in a consideration of effectiveness, it does allow each setting to contextualise the model to their own setting and against their own values. It encourages a democratic method of data collection and the involvement of all the participants. Crucially, it allows the setting to decide its own aims and objectives and then to systematically evaluate how far they achieve them. The evaluation framework directs the participants involved in the settings to the areas where questions need to be addressed but leaves them and their external validator to judge their effectiveness in achieving the purpose they themselves define on the evidence they themselves collect. To this extent, the EEL framework can be contextualised to take on the values of the particular setting. This allows for a relativist and inclusionary approach.

In the EEL model a genuine attempt has been made to address the issue of inclusiveness and democratisation, although clearly the question of the relative power of the participants is still crucial. This inclusionary approach is operationalised in such things as the professional biography, interviews of staff, parents and children, observations of interactions and documentary analysis and the inclusion of participants of varied roles in the data collection. All human activity takes place in an influencing environment and we shall return to this issue when we discuss later the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979)

3.5.6.1.1 The Process Variables of the EEL Conceptual Framework

The *process* is influenced by, and takes place within, the *context* variables. The process variables in the EEL model (see Figure 6) can be seen as forming that

area of focus that McNamara, (1980), suggested was often overlooked by research, the 'black box' of interactions; a dynamic which takes place within the context of the described setting. The interpersonal exchange, primarily between adults and children, has long been recognised as an extremely important element in the provision of early childhood education and particularly in creating an effective learning environment (Vygotsky,1978; Bruner, 1966).

Process in the EEL Framework is seen as a symbiotic and negotiated educative relationship between the adult and the child that Rogers (1983) partly described. It is symbiotic in the sense that not only does the adults' style of engagement directly effect the children's levels of involvement, but the children's involvement effects the adult's style of engagement.

Support for this assertion comes from a study undertaken by Skinner and Belmont (1993). They looked at the effects on children's behavioural and emotional involvement of three dimensions of teacher behaviour which appear very similar to the three EEL engagement dimensions, sensitivity, stimulation and autonomy. The study lasted across a school year with 144 children (U.S. grades 3-5) and they were concerned with psychological and social factors which impinge on pupil motivation within the classroom. They confirmed that teacher's sensitivity was central to the children's experiences and that the provision of supported autonomy and an optimally, structured level of stimulation predicted children's motivation. A reciprocal effect of student motivation on teacher behaviour occurred and students who showed high on involvement received more engagement from the teachers. Students who were behaviourally uninvolved received teacher responses that further undermined

their motivation. Uninvolved children elicited disengaged responses.

Clearly, too, the interactive process between children is a fundamental part of their learning, commonly called 'peer-group learning', but as this analysis is concerned primarily with the effective early childhood educator, that is the adult in the setting, it will not be dealt with here.

The key concepts of 'Involvement' (Laevers, 1989, 1994) and 'Engagement' (Bertram, 1995) are used as a measure of the quality of the interactive *process*.

Involvement is a quality of human activity. It characterised by a 'state of flow' (Csikszentmihayli, 1979) which is taken as evidence that a child is experiencing deep level learning. Miller (1996) considers that the characteristic that makes humans unique as a species, (perhaps in evolutionary terms, the key characteristic), is the ability of individuals to have sustained moments of intense, focused reflectiveness. What Laevers calls 'involvement' can be observed as physical signals that the child displays and rated on an observation scale. Involvement is a measurement which can be applied to learning at all ages. There is now accumulating evidence of the significance to their later learning of observable physical responses of young children to their environment (Philips, 1995). Even the degree of concentration with which neonates respond to stimuli in their environment has been recorded (Bower, 1974; Trevarthen, 1979). An involved child narrows their attention to a relatively limited circle and is rarely distracted. They persist and are focused. They are 'high', in both senses of the word, on intrinsic motivation. They are fascinated and absorbed by their activity. For them, time passes quickly. They are extremely alert and sensitive and respond quickly. An immense amount of energy is often released and children often appear vitalised. They will talk to themselves and make facial grimaces.

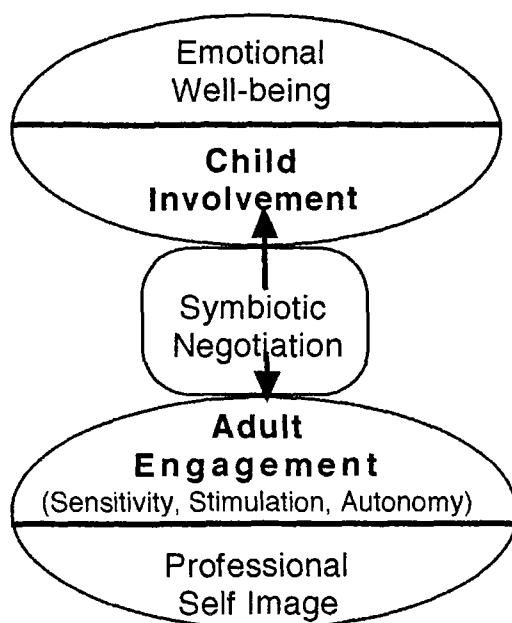
Their eyes are focused and their shoulders may be hunched. The body language is another indication of their need to find out about their world. It is hypothesised that these signals are picked up intuitively by effective, responsive teachers, (Bertram, 1996) but in introducing a scale and training videos, the EEL Project (Pascal & Bertram, 1993) and the EXE Project (Laevers, 1993) have introduced rigour and system into this intuitive response. Many teachers have suggested 'this is common sense' (Pascal,1993) and it is often the affirmation of the common place that not only makes apparent deeply felt truths but also eases the accessibility of the scales to adults.

Involvement can be distinguished from other intensely experienced drives, which derive from different needs, such as emotional demands. Involvement arises from the innate exploratory drive within the child, the need to find out about the world and the need to link to others who will help the child to realise that process. It is centred on social cognition and the view that learning takes place in a social context through interaction. It grows with the development of the individual's cognitive and social awareness. The Vygotskian concept of a 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978) in which the child is at the limit of intellectual capability supported and extended by a 'scaffolding' adult (Bruner, 1966) supports this notion.

The concept of 'Engagement' focuses on the adult's role in the setting (Bertram, 1995). It describes the quality of the adult's interaction with the children and focuses on the three elements of that interaction; Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy. These concepts and their The concept of engagement, which describes the adult's educative rôle is balanced by the concept of involvement which describes the nature of the child's learning.

The two appear to be in symbiotic relationship (see Figure 8), that is, as children become more 'involved' so the adult seems to be more 'engaging", and as the adults optimise their 'engagement' so the children become more 'involved'. This relationship is best realised through the process of interdependent negotiation, (Brown, 1994; Bruner,1996)

Figure 8: Bertram/Pascal Process variables



Bertram (1996).

The emotional well-being of the child effects the child's capacity to become involved with the curriculum offered. The educator, similarly, has an affective dimension to her role upon which the ability to engage with the children is dependent, her professional well being. Essentially, we are considering here, the adult's professional self image and emotional well being. The role of the effective educator is a central concern of this study and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

3.5.6.1.1 The Outcome Variables of the EEL Conceptual Framework

The *outcomes* (see Fig.6) can be seen as impacting at three levels: the child, the adult and the setting. For the child outcomes can be identified as:

- emotional wellbeing,
- the degree of respect for self and for others,
- dispositions to learn
- scholarship and academic achievements.

'Emotional wellbeing' is the term that Laevers (1994) uses to suggest the physical and mental health of the child. 'Respect for self', self image, self knowledge, self concept and self esteem could be seen as being a part of that mental health, as too, could 'respect for others', in that ideas of belonging, alienation, acceptance, tolerance, openness, and such like, could be viewed as a social psychological part of 'well being'. For several reasons, we have chosen to make it a separate outcome. Firstly, it is particularly important to personal fulfilment, educational and personal, that the social psychological dimension is highlighted. Secondly, the relationship between self and intrinsic motivation is well established (Feuerstein, 1980; Smiley and Dweck, 1994) and finally, respect for others and equal opportunities could be seen as a non-negotiable core value that is outside the limits of relativism (Joseph et al. 1994) and that learning about and from others is central to development (Lipman, 1988). For these reasons, the outcomes of 'emotional well being' and 'respect for self and others' are separately identified.

The child's 'disposition' to learning is also seen as another important outcome (Katz, 1995). Dispositions are defined by the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as,

..a turn of mind. The state or quality of being disposed (to, or to do something); inclination, desire or intention; the condition of being well or ill disposed towards. 5. Physical aptitude or tendency to or to do something,

Onions et al, 1968, p.53

The dictionary offers a particularly apt illustration from 1791 describing how different materials accept a dye, 'the differing dispositions of wool, silk, etc. to unite with the colouring particles'. Children can have a genetic, physical disposition to be able to absorb learning and they can develop, or acquire, a learnt disposition which inclines them to be curious, to explore, to experiment and to link up with others. It seems (Trevarthen, 1979) that this tendency is apparent in all young children but it needs encouragement and support. Very young children show a predetermination to reach out and link up with their environment and with an interpreter. Trevarthen (1979) hypothesises that children are born with a ready created space in their minds for an attachment which is stimulating and comforting and which they must fill with this 'virtual' other. This is not dependent on class or culture or environment but is biologically determined. Even very young children are not passive recipients but actively reach out and respond, drawing mature and significant others into interaction. Learning, from its very beginnings, takes place in a social context and is inextricably linked to the nature of the relationships which are formed. Phillips (1995) describes this thus:

Human infants, while subject to a prolonged period of immaturity and vulnerability, usually come into the world with a well organised capacity for adapting to their environment. Much of this capacity is attributable to our unique central nervous system. But the unfolding of the developing brain is not inevitable. It depends on a nurturing and stimulating environment, one that is peopled with caring, responsive and dependable adults, and characterised by safety, consistency, stimulation and love.'

Philips (1995) p.7

This concept of 'social cognition' views the development of learning and social interaction as inseparable. It is also a central tenet of Vygotskian theory (Vygotsky, 1978) with which it has a nexus. The concept of 'engagement', which describes the educative abilities of the adult will be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter, but it may well be the crucial process variable which effects outcomes. Disposition to learn characterises all healthy children from birth, but that disposition is enhanced or diminished by the environment and, in particular, by contact with 'engaging' adults.

The final outcome, particularly 'academic achievement', is unfortunately the one that is sometimes viewed as the only outcome of worth by policy makers (Alexander, 1992). Often, too, this outcome is seen as more important and concrete than process or context. Perhaps there is a tendency to measure those things that are more easily measured but which may not, in the long term, be of greater significance. The U.K. School Curriculum and Assessment Authority's Nursery Education: Desirable Outcomes for Children on Entering Compulsory Schooling (DfEE/SCAA, 1996) lists six areas of learning: personal and social development; language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and

understanding of the world; physical development and creative development. Many commentators have seen this as minimalist and worry that, driven by the inspection and the voucher scheme, it will lead to a formal, narrow curriculum delivered by poorly trained adults (Lally, 1991; Hurst, 1994). This tendency may be exaggerated by the need perceived by many managers to turn early childhood educational provision simply into a preparation for the National Curriculum. Even the prescriptive National Curriculum may be seen as 'too broad' in its scope and give rise to notions of a 'core' curriculum with a limited range of opportunities ultimately reducing children to recipients of a 'back to basics', centrally controlled, authoritatively delivered model. The views of Gardner (1991), who sees intelligence as needing more than one form of expression, are informative in this context. American commentators have witnessed this process as a characteristic of socio-economically different settings (Wrigley, 1991). Simplistically, middle class children tended to experience a rich and varied curricula, working class children tended to be subjected to instructional, highly focused literacy and numeracy programs with little emphasis on other areas of development or acknowledgement of their culture. The end result of this 'back to basics' process, internationally, it is suggested (Spodek, 1982; Olsen and Zigler, 1989; Walsh, 1993; Kärrby, 1990; Åsen and Dahlberg, 1994) is that ever younger children are forced into narrow, simplistic, cognitively orientated curricula which exclude the opportunities to address the development of the whole child. The focus on the cognitive development of the child's brain excludes, it seems, the child's mind (i.e. personality, self and feelings) and astonishingly seems to assume that the child's brain exists discretely unaffected by all other development. But even if we accept such a narrow focus, there is now evidence that there are optimum

conditions for the brain to develop and many of these are related to social interaction and the social environment. Knowledge of the development of the human brain has been given impetus by the introduction of sonic technology (Chugani, 1993). Phillips (1995) summarises some of these findings:

- Brain development takes place most rapidly after birth and before the age of 12 months and continues into early childhood. Neurons migrate to their correct location and begin to connect up through the development of neural synapses. The rate of increase in this activity after birth is of a magnitude of twenty fold (Kolb,1989).

- The effects on the brain of environmental deprivation, both in nutrition and in lack of stimulation, are longer lasting, cumulative and greater than previously thought (Campbell and Ramey,1993). This is of particular interest in the UK where there has been a sharp increase in children living in poverty (Rowntree Foundation,1995).

- 'Neural Darwinism' (Edelmann,1992) means that some of the links are discarded and some are reinforced. Those that are reinforced and get stronger are those that are rewarded by impulses from the pleasure centres of the ephalumus. These pleasures appear to be related to sensory interaction with a caring and smiling adult (Chugani, Phelps and Mazziotta, 1987).

- Stress in early childhood releases hormones which effect neural development , brain function and memory (McEwen,1992).

Clearly, psycho-medical research is emphasizing the social context of development.

It is interesting to speculate how such outcomes as dispositions might be determined, differentiated or prioritised in centre based settings. It could be hypothesised that dispositions to learn might be a more sensitive measure of some of the long term effects in ways which academic achievement criteria might not (Schweinhart et al. 1993).

To capture some of the wider understanding associated with learning, the model links the outcome 'academic achievement' to a more open ended view of 'scholarship'. Scholarship here might be defined as attainments and attitudes which go beyond the mere proficient. It is not enough to simply have knowledge. Children must develop the ability to use it, apply it and reflect on it.

In the EEL Conceptual Model, (Figure 6) an arrow indicates that the outcomes for the child will be carried forward to the next setting to which the child will proceed and, ideally, there should be some continuity in that passage. The child's outcomes will become the starting point of the next educational context.

For the adult, development of professional and personal competence in both the short and the long term are desired outcomes. Participation in the EEL Project cycle of evaluation and development gives the adult feedback from two sources. Firstly, the evaluation of the 10 dimensions of 'context' quality and, secondly, from the systematic observations of their interactions with children in the classroom 'process'. This will have fed their own development and will allow them to develop their effectiveness. This outcome will, in time, loop back into the process category effecting and improving their future interaction with the

children as the arrow in Figure 6 suggests.

Similarly, desired outcomes of development and increased effectiveness applicable at the level of the whole settings will be fed by the EEL development cycle. This outcome measure but will loop back into the *context* category, realised in the ten context variables, as future contexts are improved by the outcome of the setting's evaluation and development.

It remains only to put the model into a context. Here, the ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner,1992) is useful. According to the ecological model, human development cannot be studied out of context. Development is defined as

' the set of processes through which properties of a person and the environment interact to produce constancy and change in the characteristics of the person over the life course'

Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p.191

The environmental part of the ecological model focuses on interactional processes rather than outcome assessments. The environment is defined as a series of nested systems levels: the micro, meso, exo and macro levels. The micro system includes the child's ordinary day to day settings (school, playgroup, preschool, home). The meso and exo systems both include relations between the the local authority and the school (exo) or the family and the school (meso). At these levels, developmental processes are suggested to be particularly influenced by cultural belief systems, values, prescriptions and expectations and they are transmitted into the child's, and the adult's, micro systems.

Vygotsky himself, as a philologist, thought of children's development as being the mastery of culturally defined and experienced tasks. Luria (1979), his colleague and student, makes the point:

The cultural aspect of Vygotsky's theory involved the socially structured ways in which society organises the kind of tasks that the growing child faces and the kinds of tools, both mental and physical, that the child is provided with to master those tasks'.

(Luria, 1979, p.44)

The final element of the Bertram/Pascal Model acknowledges the truth of this. Context, process and outcome variables are to be seen as embedded in the ecological environment. In the model context is seen as cultural determinants, process is seen as cultural determining and outcomes as culturally determined. The model is thus placed within the Bronfenbrenner ecological paradigm.

Much of the criticism of those (Moss and Pence,1994: Åsen and Dahlberg, 1994; P Munton et al.,1995) who work in an 'inclusionary' paradigm arises from a ecological view and their perception that no one view of quality can be universal. Yet whilst accepting the principle of contextual realities and the need for negotiated solutions (Bruner, 1996) care must be taken not to lose all coherence by adopting too fully deconstructive, post-modernist, relativist tendencies. As Bronfenbrenner (1992) himself points out,

It is an instance of what might be called 'the failure of success'. For some years I harangued my colleagues for avoiding the study of development in real-life settings. No longer able to complain on that score, I have found a new *bête noir*. In place of too much research on development 'out of context' we now have a surfeit of studies on 'context without development'

Bronfenbrenner, 1992, p.288

In this review of models from other disciplines and aimed at different age phases much can be adapted to the needs of a model of effectiveness in early childhood settings. The Bertram/Pascal model draws on these but is unique in being focused on early childhood, centre based settings, and in offering a cross disciplinary, context-process-product framework, which delineates, clearly, the characteristics, behaviours and outcomes of the variables associated with each category. It is hoped that, in outlining, fully, for the first time, in this chapter, a comprehensive view of the Conceptual Framework of the Bertram/Pascal model for effective learning in early childhood settings has emerged and a contribution has been made to the debate which will be of some use to others. The next task is to show how the concept of engagement is embedded within the conceptual model and how this, in turn, underpins the notion of an effective early childhood educator, the central focus of this study.

Chapter 4: The Concept of Engagement

4.1 The Development of the Concept of Engagement

In this chapter, I want to look firstly, at the specific way in which I defined 'engagement' (Bertram, 1996) and then to review some of the research which has led to the development of the concept. The context of this innovation within the climate of reformist accountability in the UK will also be addressed within the overview. The similarities and differences between EEL and its sister project in Belgium, Experiential Education (EXE), will be explored, in particular, the link between the Adult Engagement Schedule (Pascal , Bertram et al, 1995) and the Pre-Primary Teachers Observation Schedule (Laevers,1991). Finally the elements of the Adult Engagement Schedule (Pascal , Bertram et al, 1995) will be set out and reference made to its underlying conceptual basis.

4.2 Engagement Defined

The term 'Engagement' was not lightly chosen. Firstly, it is important for the action research paradigm, and the evaluation and development aspect of the EEL Project, that as far as possible, the conceptual underpinning and the research instruments should be accessible to all the practitioners at whatever their level of qualification. It is also important to EEL's democratic and 'inclusionary' stance (Moss and Pence, 1994) that the participants in the Project should be incorporated in the data collection. So the 'Adult Engagement Style', as a term, simplified and replaced the Laever's (1993) descriptor 'Adult Style Observation Scale, Form B'. 'Engagement' was seen as a linguistic and

conceptual balance and complement to the child observation scale of 'Involvement' or to give it its full title, the Leuven Involvement Scale for Young Children (LIS-YC). One focused on adult teaching and the other on children learning, and they were in a symbiotic and negotiated relationship. But there were also more literary precise reasons for choosing 'engagement'. A close examination of definitions of the word revealed much that we wished to incorporate in our concept of an effective early childhood educator.

The word engagement comes from the French '*gager*' which, in English, is also the root of the betting term '*wager*'. If one is *en gager* one is in the state of being bonded, just as, for example, to *been route* would suggest one was in the state of being a traveller. Engagement implies '*giving something of yourself to an enterprise, of pledging, an element of risk taking, of having a stake in something*' (Onions, 1933, p.767). It '*implies that one binds or entangles with something*' (Onions, *ibid.*) Engagement incorporates notions of personal responsibility. It allows one '*to assert one's own responsibility that*', one has '*given something of oneself to an enterprise and is committed*'. (Onions, *ibid.*) There is '*a promise, a pledge*' and '*one is bound or mortgaged*' (Onions, *ibid.*) Taking responsibility, having professional commitment, being a stakeholder and risk taking are essential attributes of an engaging adult and an effective early childhood educator. Risk taking that allows adults to move away from the mundane and the routine that have been observed to characterise aspects of some early childhood practice (King, 1978; Sylva et al, 1980; Bennett et al.,1989; Pascal, 1990) and to empathise with the child's view of the world and work towards extending, scaffolding and developing it (Vygotsky,1978; Bruner,1966), engaging and involving them.

A definition of 'engagement' in the mechanical sense implies a need to be '*coupled, joined*' (Onions, *ibid.*). Cogs engage with other cogs to make machinery work. Uncoupled, disengaged cogs are ineffective. Relationships and ratios are important to cogs and to the concept of engagement. An engaged adult sees the interactive and inter relatedness of her role. To be unengaged is to be indifferent. Competence and skill acquisition are not sufficient in themselves for the engaged educator. They, alone, will not bring engagement for an early childhood worker; neither with her children nor their parents nor her co-workers. 'Engagement' implies a '*commitment and giving of oneself, a promise and an obligation*' (Onions, *ibid.*). It suggests professionalism and vocation and dedication and openness. To be engaging is '*to attract, to fascinate*' (Onions, *ibid.*) and, perhaps, even '*to charm*' (Onions, *ibid.*). It is not distancing, cold or authoritarian. It is not condescending, patronising or judgmental.

'Engagement' can have specific purpose. It describes, for example, a diary entry. It can mean '*entering on an agreement or an appointment or embarking on business*' (Onions, *ibid.*). It is comfortable with being interventionist. It '*attracts and holds fast*' (Onions, *ibid.*). It '*occupies and employs*' (Onions, *ibid.*). Engagement '*involves and binds with a promise*' (Onions, *ibid.*). It '*urges and enduces*' (Onions, *ibid.*). Engagement is not the passive, invisible observer who has abrogated responsibility (King, 1978; Alexander, 1992) but an active 'facilitator' (Rogers, 1983) at the same time able to be sensitive, to stimulate and empower, (Whalley, 1993) having power to give supported autonomy and choice.

'Engagement' attempts to '*gain or win over new adherents*' (Onions, *ibid.*). Paulo

Freire (Taylor,1993) talks of the passive 'domestication' of many workers who feel powerless and who become biddable, eager and easy to please. Early childhood workers should be articulate, passionate advocates who speak up for the children in their care and who are prepared to be assertive about the importance of their role. (Pascal, 1992). 'Engagement' is proactive not docile.

The revelations of Colin Richards the former senior UK Primary HM Inspector (Times Ed., 19.04.1996) that the official inspection records appeared to have been statistically manipulated for political reasons was worrying. What was perhaps even more damning was that the figures revealed that it was not that a substantial minority of schools were 'less than satisfactory' but that so many were worthily bland. Standards, standardisation and 'sound' give a fairly minimalist perspective on quality. The 'good enough' principle (Bettleheim, 1987) does not generate quality, merely adequacy. Brighouse (1995) talks about 'improving on previous best' as the ipseitive concept he wishes to be applied to evaluation. Engagement fits that active, dynamic concept of externally validated self improvement. 'Engagement' is aspiring, involves commitment and enterprise.

All these interpretations of 'engagement' can be implied from the etymology, the historical principles and usage of the word (Onions,1932). Engagement is not simply one model of adult educative interaction with children but it does describe an approach that can be contextualised to meet the needs of all participants in settings. 'Engagement' is for the dedicated, the committed, the professional, the organised, the reflective, the responsive, the sensitive, the stimulating, the empowering and the risk takers. 'Engagement' is also a research instrument adapted to be used by practitioners themselves and

allowing them to make systematic and rigorous judgments on their own practice. 'Engagement' is essential to effective early childhood educators.

If this examination of the etymology and definitions of engagement is the vision, the mission statement, of the concept then what is also needed, to be credible, is research evidence that will support it. What follows, then, is a review of the development of the concept.

4.3 Research on Effective Early Childhood Educators

As long ago as 1931, Cattell was asking 254 educators to 'write down the ten most important traits' of good teachers. Overall the five most reported qualities in order of frequency were: 'personality and will', 'intelligence', 'sympathy and tact', 'open-mindedness', and 'a sense of humour'. Survey studies, such as this, which looked at teacher's attributes in isolation from their performance in the classroom were labelled 'black box' research (McNamara, 1980). His point was that such research completely ignored the main component of teaching; the effectiveness of interaction within the classroom.

Feeney and Chun (1985) in a review of research into effective teachers of young children describe several studies which look outside, rather than into, the 'black box'. They generally describe the contextual variables associated with teacher effectiveness, their personal qualities and skills. These included warmth, sensitivity, flexibility, honesty, integrity, naturalness, sense of humour, acceptance of individual differences, ability to support growth without being over protective, physical strength, vitality, compassion, self-acceptance, emotional stability, self-confidence, ability to sustain effort, and the ability to learn from experience (Yardley, 1971; Hymes, 1981Mc; Read and Patterson, 1980). Most

of this work comes from reported interview and questionnaire studies rather than direct observational or longitudinal methods. It seems that there is agreement intuitively amongst professionals, parents, managers and pupils that these qualities are significant but that it is difficult, it is claimed, to systematically demonstrate it.

Another rich source of unverifiable assertion is in the literature on the parallel but tangential debate on the *role* of the early childhood educator. In order to assess the adults' effectiveness we must first define their role. Katz (1987) defines role as that aspect of behaviour that concerns the responsibilities, duties and functions expected of a teacher by clients and self. She describes three major roles played by the teachers of young children: the maternal (*sic*) role, the therapeutic role and the instructional role. The emphasis on the most desirable role may vary by setting and by the age of the children served. Katz (1995) talks elsewhere about 'authoritative' teachers of young children; she believes that adults must not give up their instructional role in favour of one of passive observation. The 'Engagement' conceptualisation acknowledges the importance of the affective domain, signalled by Katz's 'maternal' and 'therapeutic' roles, through its category of 'sensitivity' but it addresses 'instruction' in terms of 'stimulation' and 'autonomy'.

Others have looked at the qualities that managers look for in early childhood workers as a guide to assessing the suitability of early childhood workers. Effectiveness here is often assessed by how well observers believe adults are fulfilling their role. Effectiveness in these studies reflects the values, attitudes and beliefs of the observer as well as the observed. What is looked for in early childhood workers is in itself revealing. Seifart (1976) in interviews regarding

early childhood teachers with 50 elementary principals in the US found they were less concerned with specialised skills and knowledge than with personal qualities such as warmth, kindness, creativity, love of children and ability to create a happy classroom. Bertram (1988) looked at over 80 advertisements placed by Headteachers for reception class teachers and characterised them into two groups; those that used words like 'energetic', 'lively', 'enthusiastic' and 'young', code words it appeared from follow up interviews for adventurous, newly qualified, low cost teachers; and those advertisements which used words like 'mature', 'experienced' and 'responsible' code words for someone who would be 'stable, motherly and good with the parents'. In contrast to the advertisements for colleagues working with older children the job descriptions rarely carried any requests for such things curriculum or specialist expertise, confirming Seifart's findings.

Another way of making judgments on effectiveness is by asking observers to give their subjective impression. Students observing practitioners were asked to identify categories for defining effective teachers of young children in a study conducted by Yawkey (1974). They identified 3 main categories, (1) teachers' attitudes such as being positive, willing to learn from children, and the ability to motivate, (2) a child-centred orientation focusing on creativity and letting children make choices; and (3) curriculum approaches including both provision for many experiences and academic objectives related to children's interests.

Research into teacher effectiveness shows inconsistent correlations with personality type (Getzels et al 1963), but there are difficulties in generalising because studies vary in focus and design and rarely address the teacher of the very young, who undoubtedly are perceived as needing particular attributes and

skills even if there is no consensus on what they might be (Feeney and Chun, 1985). The psychological make up of effective early childhood teachers was the basis of a studies by Rosen (1968,1972). He used student teachers' biographical essays to discover links between their own childhood and their relationship with their parents and their ability to relate to children and their effectiveness in teaching them. College supervisors were asked to identify those students who were best with preschoolers. These students tended to have a vivid and spontaneous recall of their own childhoods and were able to describe the joy and security of their own childhood. Rosen went on to field test The Developmental Self and Child-Concept Scales as a method of screening those who wished to work with young children. His work demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between how teachers view their own childhood and their effectiveness as teachers of young children, at least, as it is measured by the subjective judgments of college supervisors.

Another method of assessing adult personality in relation to teacher effectiveness is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), an instrument designed to assess individual styles in judgment and perception based on Jung's theory of psychology. A number of American studies (Feeney and Chun 1985; McCaulley & Natter, 1980; Keirsey & Bates, 1978) have used the MTBI on early childhood student teachers. They all agreed that the majority of students choosing early childhood modules were orientated to the outer world of the physical and concrete rather than the inner world of ideas; that they would rather work with known facts and rely on experience than look for possibilities and meanings; that they based their judgments on personal values rather than on impersonal logic and that they had a keen interest in and sensitivity toward

interpersonal relationships and preferred a planned and orderly way of life. Although this describes the personality of the majority of the students entering early childhood courses in these studies, as measured by MBTI, the researchers suggest that this personality type may not be as effective in the role or in meeting children's needs as those who are more flexible and creative. Their research showed that teachers who were more open to ideas did not tend to stay in the classroom but moved on to posts in teacher education or research.

Using a case study approach, Porter (1983) investigated five preschool teachers who were deemed as successful. The purpose of the study was to explore their understanding of the theoretical basis for their teaching and their self-awareness of their value base. Data was collected by participant observation and interview. Analysis suggested that teachers' descriptions of their approach were consistent with distinct theoretical approaches, although these were not always articulated precisely. The teachers preferred to discuss personal values than theoretical constructs. In reflecting on their own professional relationship, the teachers cited earlier relationships and events as significant in the formation of their own belief systems. Their graduate training had served to confirm rather than challenge their methods and rationale. Verma and Peters (1975) in an observational study found little correspondence between teacher's professed beliefs and observed practices. They found teachers put little effort into implementing theoretically pure or internally consistent programmes of practice in child care settings. Generally teachers contextualised programmes in ways that worked best for them. The recent study by Blenkin et al. (1996) confirms a similar pattern in the UK where evidence from questionnaire and follow up interviews revealed that many early childhood

workers felt theory and research had little explicit bearing on their practice and more worryingly, that they perceived their professional development needs as minimal. Alexander's (1992) studies in Leeds showed how primary teachers often adopted the outward appearances of practices (elaborate displays, non-interactive grouping, individualised work) which they thought were required of them by headteachers or their inspectorate, without understanding the rationale that would have allowed them to make their own judgments about the value of these practices. The superficial surface indicators became the ends in themselves and more important than real learning, and rhetoric was often unmatched by reality. Further, he pointed out that there was a 'polarisation of the discourse' on what constitutes good primary practice.

'Despite the growing weight of conceptual and empirical evidence (Bennett,1976; Bennett et al.1989; Galton et al 1980; Alexander 1984; DES 1978, 1982, 1983, 1985; Mortimore et al. 1986; Tizard et al.1988, etc.) there was a tendency to acquiesce in a conventional wisdom (about 'good' practice) and all that went with it; the reduction of what ought to have been a complex and multi-faceted debate to the simple adversarialism of 'formal' versus 'informal', 'didactic' versus 'exploratory', teacher as 'instructor' versus teacher as 'facilitator', rote learning versus 'discovery', 'subjects' versus 'integration', class teaching versus group work, 'traditional' versus 'progressive', 'bad' practice versus 'good'. This primitive style of discourse, in which complex issues are reduced to simple polarities, ...provides the basic framework for much professional discussion and the culture of some schools makes the entertainment of alternatives difficult.'

Alexander, 1992, p.81

I suspect that it is precisely because early years teachers' professional models are founded on their personal values, the origins of which are in their own childhood and subsequent constructs of what childhood is, that they feel so strongly about criticism of their practice, especially when there is a perception

that they are being criticised by those who have never had practical experience of that which they seek to judge (Curtis, A. et al. 1993).

Alexander (1992) offers a model (Figure 9, overleaf) which represents 'good' practice as resting at the intersection of five considerations and effective teaching as a matter of reconciling these competing imperatives. Settings which depend only on what he calls 'political considerations' will have a very minimalist view of 'good practice'. Similarly, settings which depend only on pragmatic realism, 'what works for us', will have a very simplistic view. Alexander (1992) believes there is a lack of awareness of empirical research and little debate about the broader issues of values and beliefs in school evaluation but only when these considerations are incorporated can 'good practice' be sustained by democratic consensus. The EEL Project makes an attempt to address the issue of the value basis of 'effectiveness' in democratizing the collection of its data, in recording the views of a representative sample of all the stakeholders in the setting, and by including views on the 'aims and objectives' of the setting as a key dimension in the evaluative process. It also makes a strong statement on its conceptual base being underpinned by research and much of the three day initial training programme which two members of staff from all settings involved in the Project must attend, is devoted to empirical evidence.

Alexander's category of 'political considerations' includes parents and the community, which suggests that parents are viewed as 'outsiders' (Katz, 1995). We would hope that in early years settings the relationship with the other adults in the child's life would be much more central to the settings objectives. The

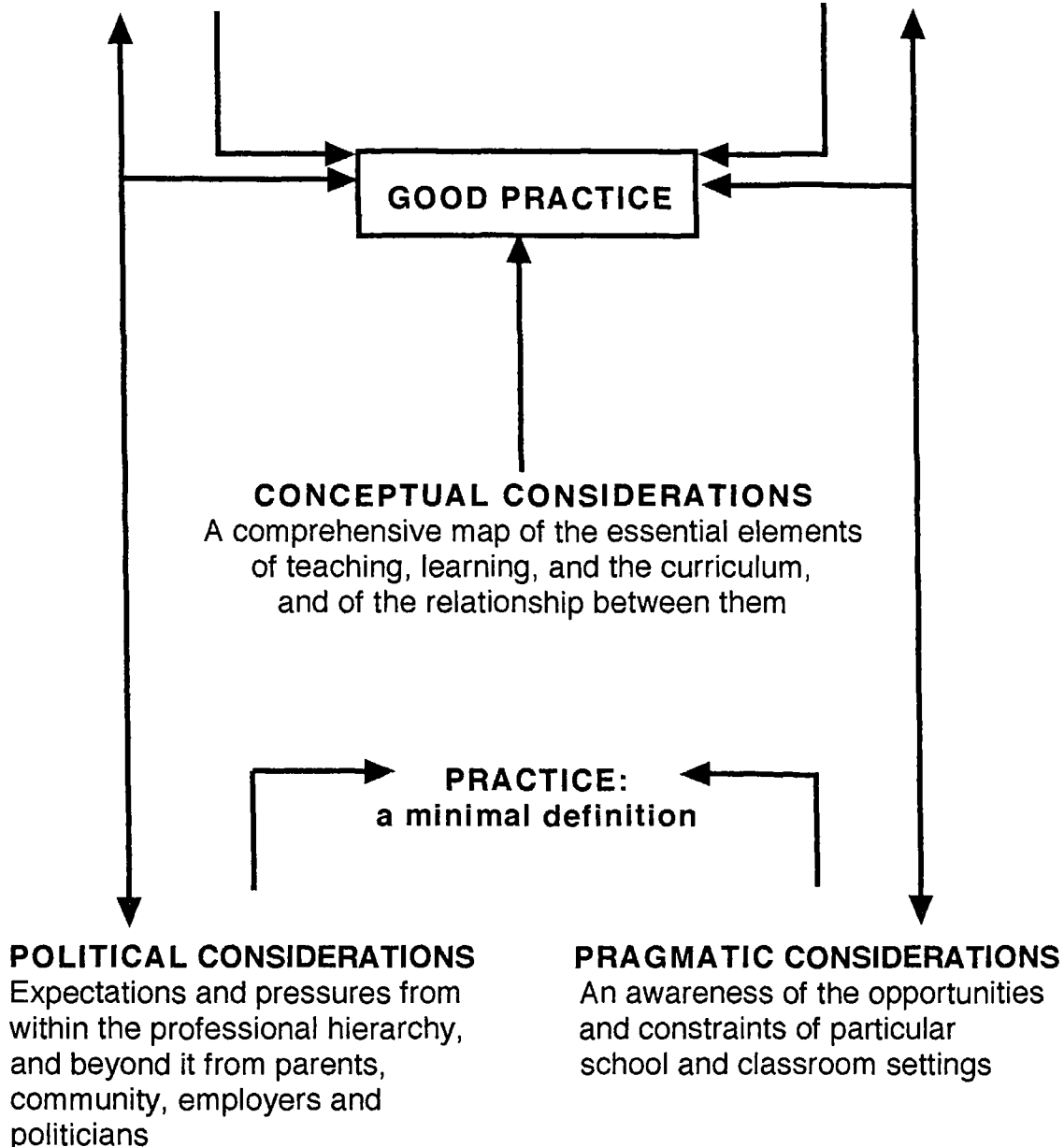
Figure 9: What is good practice? Beyond relativism

VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

Beliefs and values shaping views of childhood and the child's needs, of society and its needs, and of knowledge, which inform a coherent view of what it is to be educated

EMPIRICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evidence about the effectiveness of practice: about the capacity of particular teaching strategies to deliver learning in accordance with a coherent view of what it is to be educated



(Alexander 1992, p.190)

separation of values and beliefs as another category mirrors that part of the conceptual view of EEL which derives from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory. Alexander suggests that his framework gives an overview of the extent to which the various 'protagonists' (sic) in early childhood may pursue very different versions of quality, in that each will accentuate one of these considerations whilst down playing another. He summarises thus:

good primary practice, like education itself, is as much an aspiration as an achievement; but at least we can try to become clearer about what it is we aspire to, and why; and in confronting the various considerations which bear upon classroom practice we can inject a greater degree of honesty and realism into the professional discourse and thereby make the gap between achievement and aspiration a diminishing one. Moreover, thus armed we may be able to counter the journalistic and political hijacking of the debate about pedagogy rather more convincingly than we have hitherto.'

Alexander, 1992, p191

Since the early 1960s research on effective teaching has focused predominantly on classroom activity (Bennett, 1976, 1978; King, 1978; Centra and Potter, 1980; Haertel et al., 1983; Galton et al., 1980; Mortimore, 1986; Rutter et al., 1979; Alexander, 1992; Kyriacou, 1994). Much of this has been US based research and much of it has been focused on the education of older children in school settings, either at the secondary or later primary stages. It is important to bear this in mind when attempting to apply findings to early childhood settings within the very varied UK context.

There are four reasons for caution: firstly, provision for young children in the UK, and the manner in which it is organised, is substantially different from US 'programs'; secondly, there are particular differences between early childhood

and later years and studies which are focused on older children may not be transferable or applicable to younger children; thirdly, many of the settings in which young children find themselves in the UK are not classrooms and do not have appropriate resources, staffing or facilities (Blenkin & Yue, 1995); and fourthly, as we have already discussed, outcome measures are much more difficult to isolate and identify with immature young children. They may not be capable of written tests and often think in delightfully, idiosyncratic ways which may confuse the uninformed or unwary researcher (Athey 1990). Further there may be dormant features of their learning which may not be apparent for a very long time (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). Nevertheless, there are considerable insights to be gained from studying this material and some clear patterns and models of thinking about effectiveness emerge.

Perrot (1982) in reviewing research on the observable indicators of effective classroom teaching tabulates three major studies, all based on 'achievement gains' indicated by academic outcome measures;

Ryan's (1960) Factors:

1. Teacher is warm and understanding versus cold and aloof
2. Teacher is organised and businesslike versus unplanned and slipshod
3. Teacher is stimulating and imaginative versus dull and routine

Flander's (1970):

Indicator's of indirect teaching style:

1. Teacher asks questions
2. Teacher accepts pupils' feelings
3. Teacher acknowledges pupils' ideas
4. Teacher praises and encourages pupils

Indicator's of direct teaching behaviours:

5. Teacher lectures
6. Teacher gives direction
7. Teacher criticises

Rosenshine and Furst's (1971) correlates:

1. Teacher is enthusiastic
2. Teacher is business like and task oriented
3. Teacher is clear when presenting instructional content
4. Teacher uses a variety of instructional materials and procedures
5. Teacher provides opportunities for pupils to learn the instructional content.

A study (Aspey and Roebuck, 1977) involving 10,000 students and 500 teachers in both rural and urban settings in the US looked at the interactions between adults and children and measured them using the Carkhuff Interpersonal Skills Scale (Carkhuff, 1977). They were able to show that certain facilitative qualities and skills demonstrated by teachers after a three year training programme encouraged student gains from a pre-treatment test, both in mental health and in cognitive growth. The teachers were trained in specific verbal discrimination skills using a modified form of Flanders (1970) Interaction Analysis and Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956). This project gave rise to the US National Consortium for Humanising Education (NCHE).

'It was found that educators could be trained in large numbers in both discrimination and interpersonal communication skills; and it was further found that the interpersonal components of such training did result in positive and statistically significant changes in student attendance, student achievement and student self concept.'

Aspey and Roebuck, 1977, p.vii

Clearly this is a finding that has implications for a research project such as EEL which also has adopted a similar strategy of research and development and wide scale dissemination. Another interesting finding from Aspey and Roebuck was their claim that,

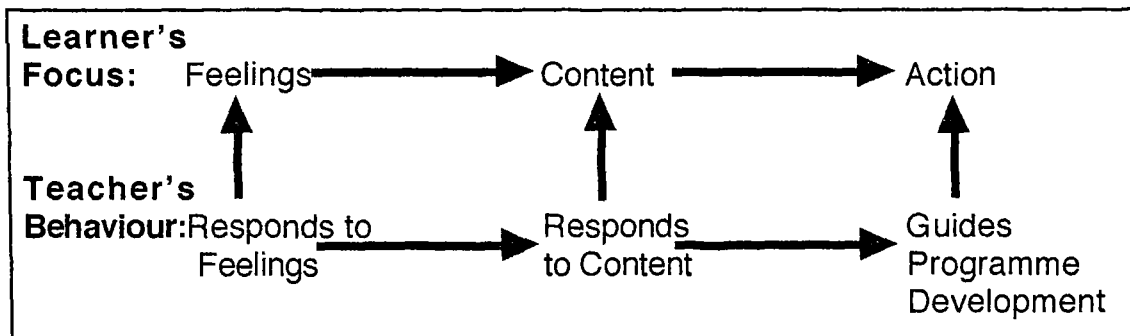
There can be no separation of “humanistic” and “skills” concerns in education. Only those teachers trained in specific interpersonal communication skills can make good their delivery of speciality or subject skills to students. Teachers who cannot employ interpersonal skills will invariably have a retarding rather than a “neutral” effect upon their students.

Aspey and Roebuck, 1977, p.viii

Many of these studies were drawing on the work of Rogers (1957) who had hypothesised that there were three factors which were related to all human learning situations; empathy, congruence and positive regard. Simply described, empathy is the ability of an individual to perceive and understand another person's inner world of private and personal meaning. Congruence or genuineness was the degree to which an individual's words and actions accurately reflect their feelings and attitudes. Positive regard is best summarised by the concept of warmth.

The model developed by Carkhuff (1977), Figure 10 overleaf, defined 'responses to feelings' by reference to Roger's (1957) facilitative conditions of Empathy, Congruence and Positive Regard.

Figure 10: Carkhuff (1971) Model of Interpersonal Relationship in Teaching



Carkhuff (1971)

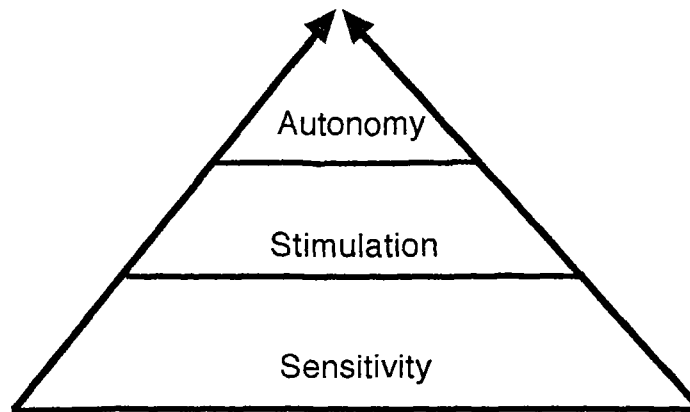
Response to feelings were identified by Roger's (1957) facilitative elements of empathy, congruence and positive regard, content was defined by reference to Flander's Interaction Analysis and Bloom's Taxonomy and responses to Action by reference to Carkhuff's technology for programme development. Data collection was done in a precise way by assessing observed verbal interactions by the adult either,

- 1) as response to the expressed feelings,
- 2) a response to the content
- 3) a planned course of action.

Carkhuff's model has the merit of putting emphasis on the social context of learning and shows how the adult responses are critical, but a weakness seems to be the portrayal of this as a one way process. Within the EEL (Pascal and Bertram, 1994) conceptualisation this is an interactive process from which the adult benefits from the learner's emotional and cognitive feedback. A further similarity with EEL (Pascal and Bertram, 1994) is the implication of a hierarchical process (Fig.11). The concept of 'Engagement'

comprises of three elements, 'Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy' and it is postulated that there is a hierarchical dependency of each

Figure 11: The hierarchical nature of the three categories of 'Engagement'



on the other beginning with 'Sensitivity' as a base line condition. 'Autonomy' is only possible if 'Stimulation' and 'Sensitivity' are appropriately addressed.

Sensitivity and Stimulation are both key aspects of the work of Rogers (1983) and his followers. Rogers summarised two decades of humanising educational research in forty-two states and eight countries which focused on interpersonal relationships in classrooms thus:

The NCHE findings can be briefly summarised in one statement: students learn more and behave better when they receive high levels of understanding, caring, and genuineness, than when they are given low levels of them. It pays to treat students as sensitive and aware human beings.'

p199, Rogers (1980).

An alternative view is put by King (1978). He expressed a concern in a

sociological study of infant class rooms in the UK that 'sensitivity and caring' was sometimes a cloak for low expectation. He challenged some of the dichotomous typologies that characterised Bernstein and Brandis (1974). In particular he was interested in their dialectically related pairs of concepts, 'positional/personal control' and 'visible and invisible pedagogies' as it applied to infant teacher's relationships with their children. What Roger's called a 'facilitator', Bernstein and Brandis called 'the invisible pedagogue'. King claimed that 'it is difficult to conceive of an invisible pedagogue' (p.128) but he did see teachers who labelled and classified children implicitly according to the perceived socio-economic status of their parents. For King developmental theory and child centredness had been institutionalised by higher education colleges and by people like Susan Isaacs. He felt this was simply an attempt to impose a middle class view of parenting on teachers and was ineffective for many children, particularly working class boys. Worse it was secretive, stereotyped children and carried reduced expectations of them. Children were labelled.

'The invisible qualities refer to what I have called the private elements of typification and assessment which are not revealed to the child, because they are defined as developmental and natural and also because the teachers defined the children as innocent of responsibility for them'

King, 1978, p.128

King (1978) claimed the concept of development had led infant teachers to adopt a passive role which discriminates against the working class child. His conclusions about 'permissive education' stress the importance of social and economic structures external to the classroom situation; the antithesis of the

phenomenological approach. Social control and assessment in the classroom contribute to the conservation of the existing social order and on this account child centredness is deemed to be a failure. The views of King are not dissimilar from the views of many perceived as being on the political right (Turner, 1990; Alexander et al. 1992; Lawlor, 1995; Woodhead, 1996) and represent a strand of thought that has always deplored attempts to move away from a didactic and instructional model of effective teaching as an abdication of authority. In much of this debate, early childhood teachers' conceptual frameworks and practices are criticised (Alexander, 1992), indeed Woodhead is reported as doubting many teachers have a theoretical framework. Many within the early year's community seem to hear a condescending, uninformed, patronising tone and see an implicit sexism, given that most of these commentators are men, who have never been practically involved with young children, yet who are telling the experienced, mostly female practitioners what they should do (Curtis et al., 1993). It is unfortunate that in many ways the discussion about effective educators has moved away from attempts to get at research truths and become associated with a particular stance. In this highly charged climate, anybody who adopts a viewpoint is immediately categorised as belonging to this or that camp. That identification carries with it associated labels covering a range of tangential issues which may or may not be part of the original viewpoint. This is not an atmosphere in which genuine debate of important issues can be given mature reflection. It does reveal that even in research there is no such thing as objectivity, and that the values and attitudes of the researcher impact on the subject studied.

It is, of course, possible to hold the view that the ideas of Rogers (1983) and of

King (1978) and their followers are not incompatible. Humanistic education recognises that children should not be patronised or absolved of responsibility. It is equally possible to have a view of Piagetian (1971) child centredness and biological determined development which allows for intervention, as Vygotsky (1978) has shown. This view is incorporated in the EEL categories of Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy' (Pascal and Bertram, 1994). We shall return to a fuller conceptualisation of 'Autonomy', later.

4.6 Evolution of the Adult Engagement Scale

Kohut (1980) described a difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of teachers. He thought it was important to distinguish between teaching 'style' and teaching 'technique'. 'Style' was seen as being related to the teacher's personality traits, attitudes and feelings and 'techniques' were seen as the methods and strategies that teachers used to accomplish their objectives.

In 1979 a large scale Flemish study of 49 early childhood classrooms was undertaken by the Centre for Socio-Educational Research (CSPO) based at Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven. Their concept of 'style' was very different from that of Kohut. They postulated that a teacher characteristically displays certain qualities in the myriad interventions she has with the child. This was identified as one of the crucial 'treatment' or context variables in the educational environment offered to the child. A teacher's interventions can vary dependent upon the nature of the activity, the responses and initiatives of children, the purpose of the interaction or any number of personal or professional decisions, but it was evident that over a period of time a characteristic 'teacher style' emerged which described the nature of an teacher's predominant interactions with children (Laevers, 1996). The 'teacher style'; what, how, when, why, to

whom and how often the teacher communicates and the socio-psychological context of the exchange was thus identified as one of the key variables in this study. Three dimensions of the 'teacher style' were delineated; '*sensibility to development*', (the extent to which the teacher tunes her interventions to what is happening within the child), '*achievement orientation*', (the extent to which the activities are organised with the intention to achieve quick progress in the child) and '*lending autonomy*', (the extent to which the teacher allows children to decide what, with whom and when something is done). The research instruments consisted of 15 subscales and each dimension was operationalised in five 4 point scales, each referring to one specific situation in the setting: circle time, the first teacher-supported learning activity, the first individual children's work, transition to playtime and free play. For example, the subscale for 'sensibility to development' in circle time incorporated the following 4 descriptive levels:

- LEVEL 1. Is totally missing the point, does not understand the child
- LEVEL 2. Stereotyped view, expected responses (e.g. rituals)
- LEVEL 3. Genuinely interested
- LEVEL 4. A very good insight in the experiences of the child and responding in a non-stereotypical manner

Statistical analysis of the resultant scores indicated that the dimensions '*sensibility to development*' and '*lending autonomy*', were closely correlated. These two dimensions were perceived to be clearly independent from the other teacher style dimension '*achievement orientation*'. This was much more closely linked with a fourth measure which looked at '*the amount and variety of activities offered*'. By combining these pairs of variables a two dimensional

matrix was set up: dimension A, '*achievement orientation*' type, versus dimension C, '*child orientated*' type. Using multi-variance analysis, five categories of pre-school settings were then identified:

1. 'learning orientated' type (high for A, mean for C)
2. 'child orientated' type (high for C, mean for A)
3. 'custodial' type (low for A, mean for C)
4. 'teacher centred' type (low for C, mean for A)
5. 'middle group' type (mean for A, mean for C)

All the 49 pre school settings could be positioned in the matrix and the kind of educational environment offered to the children could thus be indicated.

The CSPO instrument was taken as a starting point for a further research project at the Centre for Early Childhood and Primary Education, K.U. Leuven, entitled 'The quality of early childhood education; an exploration between treatment, process and effect variables'.

As we have seen earlier (Chapter 3), Kyriacou (1994) and others have established the model: 'context' → 'process' → 'product', as a basic framework for thinking about effective teaching. In this model, 'context' variables refer to all the possible effects which are the result of the context of the learning experiences. 'Process' variables describe those qualities of the teacher and pupil behaviour and interaction, of the learning task, activities and experiences which take place and effect the success of the learning. 'Product' variables include all the outcomes which are the result of the educational experiences and activities. In the EEL project teacher characteristics such as gender, age,

experience, social class, training, and personality would be part of the 'context' variables. Teacher perceptions, strategies and behaviour would be part of the 'process' variables. In the CSPO study, teacher style was defined as the way teachers interact with children; the way they initiate different activities. It was considered a context or 'treatment' variable. In the course of the development of the Experiential Education Project (EXE) Laevers (1993,1994), refined the CPSO instrument into the Pre-primary Teacher Style Observation Schedule (P-TSOS). Major adaptations were made. First the dimensions were renamed and defined more extensively and secondly, the dimensions were no longer scored on a 4-point scale but instead they were operationalised using closed categories that referred to the type of intervention observed. The categories were descriptive but a value was attached to it. In most cases it could be positively or negatively tagged. The standard of 'good practice' was defined by the Experiential Model (Laevers,1993).

It is important, here, to address the debate about 'good practice' and the suggestions, common in the UK, that this phrase is both exclusionary in only offering one version of truth (Moss and Pence,1994) and badly conceptualised (Alexander, 1992). Alexander feels worried about teachers' notions of 'good practice'. He notes the attempt at objectivity, implied by the phrase being in a parenthesis of some uncertainty, but he feels this tentativeness is rarely examined or followed by rational debate or consideration.

Nowhere in our considerable quantity of data is there any sense that the notion of good practice was presented to teachers as problematic. Nowhere were teachers invited to note that 'good practice' implies questions and judgments of value, and that the whole issue of good practice might raise controversial yet essential questions about the claims made for particular approaches, the arguments and the evidence for and

against them, the educational values they represented, or the practical problems of implementing them. Instead, despite the ostensible commitment to 'flexibility' there was apparently just one version of good practice, presented as a package of recommendations and principles and exemplified in the model classroom. This was viewed by teachers as having the force of policy and therefore being not open to challenge.

Alexander, 1992,p.86

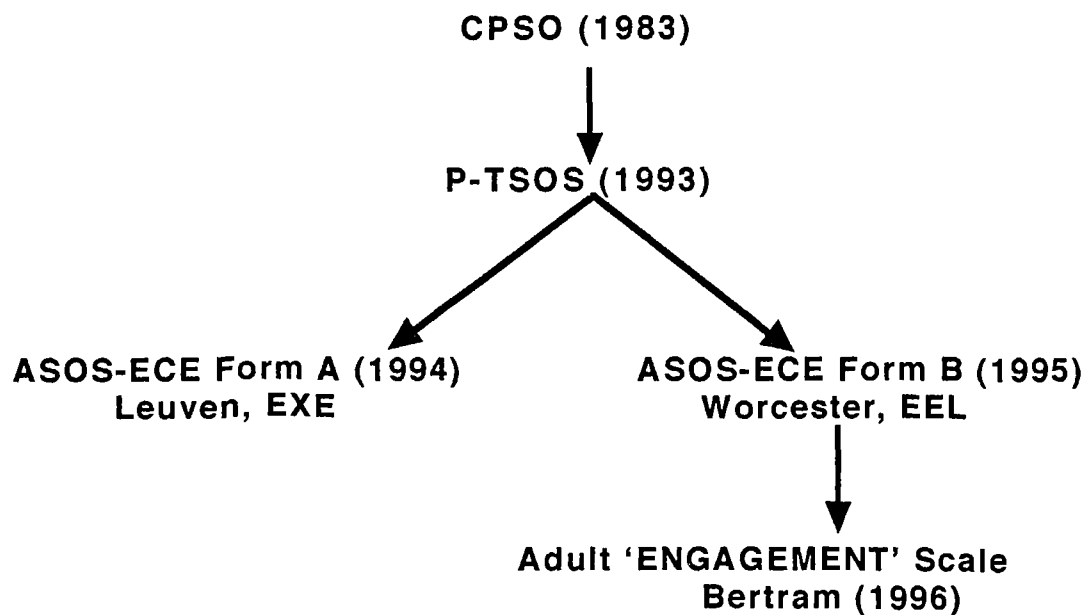
I hope later in Chapter 6 to present evidence which refutes this view of educators who are not questioning or reflective but here I wish to address the issue of how 'good' practice in my concept of Engagement is based on theory.

Laever's (1993) EXE Project was able to make explicit, through reference to research, the concept of 'good practice' that he takes as his base line (Gendlin, 1964; Piaget, 1971; Csikszentmihayli,1979; Rogers,1983; Laevers, 1989, 1990, 1991,1992,1993). Within the EEL Project, reference was made by the research team to research findings and theoretical perspectives which supported their approach to evaluation but no one model of practice was 'officially commended', to use Alexander's (1992) phrase. Indeed, it is a feature, and the Directors would claim, a strength of the model, that it can be contextualised to any educational situation where three and four year olds are in centred based provision, no matter what the particular regime, or programme, or methods are employed by the centre's staff. This is one of the central differences between the EEL and the EXE approach. The EEL Project is not attempting to define its notion of good practice against a standard, delineated model although clearly the values implicit in the Project show subjectivity. Evaluation must have a value

base but the EEL Project rests on supportive research that suggest certain practices are successful. It does not start from the position of having an established model such as Montessori (1912), High/Scope (1986), EXE (Laevers, 1993) or van Kuyk, (1995).

The Pre-primary Teacher Style Observation Schedule (P-TSOS) categories (Laevers,1993) were an adaption of the original CPSO instrument (CPSO). The P-TSOS was itself then adapted by EXE to become the Adult Style Observation Schedule for Early Childhood Education (ASOS-ECE) - Form A. The P-TSOS was also adapted by the EEL Project to become (ASOS-ECE)-Form B and later still after further revision and trialling, the Adult Engagement Scale thus:

Figure 12: The Evolution of the Adult Engagement style



The Engagement scale attempted to make the P-TSOS accessible to all early childhood practitioners by simplifying and removing the jargon from the instrument, whilst still retaining its validity and reliability. The Leuven Form A was intended to be used solely by researchers, but substantially Form A and B are the same instrument. As both were variants generated from the P-TSOS it might be useful to look more closely at that scale.

4.7 The Pre-primary Teacher Style Observation Schedule

Category A: Stimulation

- A1 Makes an offer of a possible activity (implicitly - explicitly)
- A2 Introduces an activity (gives guidelines that enable children to start)
- A3 Gives open impulses (e.g. "maybe you can add some soap" when children were blowing through pipes into the water)
- A4 Gives individual support taking into account the individual abilities of the children (e.g. notices a child needs a more difficult jigsaw and helps to find one)
- A5 Sustains communication by explicit invitation to tell or explain something or by listening in an active way (a series of six subcategories refer to kinds of subject areas: communication about activities, events, socio-cultural phenomena, psycho-social phenomena, bio-physical-technological phenomena)
- A6 Gives information (the same six subcategories are used to specify the kind of information)
- A7 Gives specific stimulation (aiming at specific learning effects)
- A8 Corrects language (which can be in an implicit or explicit way)

Category B: Stimulation

- B1 Paying attention to introvert children
- B2 Praise versus disapproval of a performance
- B3 Authenticity and equity; High (e.g. "oh yes, you're right, I forgot to stir it" versus low (e.g. "you cannot go into the home corner because the dolls are sleeping now").
- B4 Correction of unacceptable behaviour: the act is targeted (e.g. "you have to stop shouting now because..") versus the person is targeted (e.g. you are always being naughty, stop it")
- B5 Support (e.g. "you must have been frightened when your mum seemed to be gone") versus rejection of feelings (e.g. "don't make such a fuss") or moralising rejection (e.g. " you know we have to be nice to each other don't you?")
- B6 Correcting misbehaviour in a sensitive or rejecting manner
- B7 Positive, individual attention ("there is great news today, Sarah has a new sister!") versus indifference and neglect (" this is not the time to talk about your dog")
- B8 Giving affection (in gesture, speech or contact)

Category C: Autonomy

- C1 Gives room for experimentation (e.g. the teacher notices that the type of glue used by the child will not hold, but she does not intervene immediately) versus intervenes immediately (e.g. "you'll need a larger piece of paper to wrap that")
- C2 Judgments on the quality of the product of an activity: open

versus restricted (e.g. in relation to a drawing, "that child must be very unhappy without someone to play with, can you draw someone beside her?")

C3 Judgments on the quality of the process before work is finished: open versus restricted (e.g. in relation to a jigsaw and without the child having asked for help, " Find the straight sides first")

C4 Choice of activity: open versus restricted (e.g. No you've played in the sand tray this morning")

C5 Hidden persuasion (e.g. "I thought it would be nice if we all made something for Martin whilst he's in hospital")

C6 Conflict (between children): giving autonomy ("how could we solve this?") versus being authoritarian ("I am putting it in the cupboard so there will be no more squabbles")

C7 Responding to the interest of the child: flexible versus indifferent and rigid (e.g. "no, not that one, again; I read it last week")

C8 Rules: flexible and with explanatory justification ("if you start it now you want finish it before home time") versus rigid without explanation ("I have told you. I do not want you to use this brush for gluing").

P-TSOS (Laevers, 1991)

This schedule was used to categorise continual 2 minute observation periods interspersed with 1 minute reflection and recording periods. The observation could be recorded against several categories but only one observation could be recorded for each 3 minute period. This record of interactions and activities was tabulated against frequency per hour.

ADULT ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

ENGAGING QUALITIES POINT 5	POINT 5 Totally engaging qualities	POINT 4 Mainly engaging qualities but some evidence of non-engaging qualities	POINT 3 Neither engaging or non-engaging qualities predominate	POINT 2 Mainly non-engaging qualities but some evidence of engaging qualities	POINT 1 Totally non-engaging qualities
<p>ENGAGING QUALITIES POINT 5</p> <p>SENSITIVITY</p> <p>Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a positive tone • makes positive body gestures & eye contact • is warm & demonstrates affection • respects & values the child • gives encouragement & praise • empathises with child's needs & concerns • listens & responds to the child • encourages the child to trust. <p>STIMULATION</p> <p>Intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has energy & life • is pitched appropriately • 'matches' the child's interests & perceptions • motivates the child • is rich & has clarity • stimulates dialogue, activity or thinking • shares in & enhances the child's activities • can be non-verbal <p>AUTONOMY</p> <p>Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows child to choose & supports this choice • provides opportunities for experimentation • encourages child initiated ideas & responsibility • respects the child's judgement of quality of finished product • encourages the child to negotiate conflict & rules. 	POINT 5	POINT 4	POINT 3	POINT 2	POINT 1
<p>NON-ENGAGING QUALITIES POINT 1</p> <p>SENSITIVITY</p> <p>Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a negative tone • is cold & distant • puts the child down, does not respect the child • criticises and rejects the child • does not empathise with child's needs & concerns • does not listen or respond to the child • speaks to others about child as if child isn't there <p>STIMULATION</p> <p>Intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a routine way • lacks energy and enthusiasm • does not motivate the child • does not match child's interest & perceptions • lacks richness & clarity • is confusing • is not pitched appropriately • curtails dialogue, activity, thinking <p>AUTONOMY</p> <p>Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gives child no room for choice or for experimentation • does not encourage child's ideas • does not give the child responsibility • does not allow child to judge quality of finished product • is authoritarian & dominant • rigidly enforces rules & boundaries, allows no negotiation. 	POINT 1				

4.8 The Adult Engagement Schedule

I have elaborated the P-TSOS schedule in detail because it gives a full view of the derivation of the Adult 'Engagement' Schedule but also allows a detailed comparison between the two which shows the development of the Adult Engagement Schedule and the differences in the manner of recording. Figure 13, is taken from the EEL Manual (Pascal, Bertram et al,1995, p.85).

The EEL Project gives a central prominence to the Adult Engagement Scale in its process of Quality Assessment but it must be remembered that this is only one of the measures used in the evaluative process. The instrument was developed in order to allow an assessment of the effectiveness of the adult in the educative process which operates within a setting. We believe that the way in which adults intervene and interact is critical to the quality of learning which is experienced by the child. It is also important to the professional development of the adult and evaluation of the setting that both the setting managers and the individual adult have the means of making judgments about their performance. (I shall consider issues of reliability and validity in later chapters.)

Three categories of teacher behaviour are observed using the Adult Engagement Schedule: Sensitivity, Stimulation and Autonomy. Observation and recording of these allows a profile to be built up of an educator's style of intervention in the learning process. The EEL Project (Pascal, Bertram et al 1994) has adapted the PTSOS schedule (Laevers,1994) to allow observations of a number of staff within a setting. By amalgamating the observations of the staff team a profile of the style of teaching which predominates amongst the staff of the setting can be described. These categories fundamentally reflect the setting's adults' style through their personal qualities of 'engagement' or 'non-

engagement'. It might be helpful at this point to explore the categories in more detail.

4.8.1 Sensitivity:

This is the sensitivity of the adult to the feelings and emotional well being of the child and includes elements of sincerity, empathy, responsiveness authenticity and affection. This corresponds to Roger's (1983) facilitative and the interpersonal relationship factors in learning which we have discussed earlier. Sensitivity is operationalised through systematic observations which focus on the adult's responsiveness to a range of children's needs including:

- a child's need for respect: giving the child a feeling of being valued and put on an equal basis
- a child's need for attentiveness: listening to the child, acknowledging the need for attention
- a child's need for security: recognising and responding to the child's insecurities and uncertainties
- a child's need for affection: responding to the child with warmth and care
- a child's need for praise and encouragement: giving the child praise and support.

4.8.2 Stimulation:

This is the way in which an adult intervenes in the learning process and the nature and content of such interventions. The conceptual underpinning rests on a synthesis and blend of several concepts of cognitive development and learning theory (Vygotsky,1962; Bruner, 1966; Piaget, 1971; Csikszentmihayli,

1979; Donaldson, 1978 and Athey, 1990). It views the adult as neither exclusively an instructor nor a facilitator, but as someone who is a proactive and responsive observer, who can identify and respond to children's needs at the appropriate level and who can use a variety of different techniques and pedagogical skills to structure a learning environment. The observations focus on the following actions of the adult:

- introducing or offering an activity
- giving information
- intervening in an ongoing activity to stimulate action, thinking or communication.

The observations are focused on the degree of motivation the adult displays. The energy and life of her interaction or its routine quality. All work with young children must include some routines. Young children find them useful and a form of security. It aids the development of such concepts as time and prediction and socialisation. Adults, too find them useful for organising, managing and administrating. Children can be given autonomy with a routine and some responsibility. The dangers begin when too much routine begins to adopt patterns of ritual, when the organisational aspect becomes the end in itself and not the facilitating mechanism to move, for example, from one activity to another. 'Stimulation' is not entertainment though fun, joy and pleasure are powerful motivators. It can also require an element of struggle. Serendipity is welcomed but not as an end in itself. Stimulation has adult purpose but also makes allowance for the child's purpose to be acknowledged and negotiated. The child's culture, interests and perceptions are incorporated and the relevance of activities is also assessed. The richness and clarity of adult presentation and

the level and appropriateness of pitch and match is also considered within the category of 'stimulation'. The effect of the adult on the child in eliciting some response either in action, thinking or communication is assessed.

4.8.3 Autonomy: This is the degree of freedom which the adult gives the child to experiment, make judgments, choose activities, take responsibility and express ideas. It also encompasses how the adult handles conflict, rules and behavioural issues and how the child is encouraged to share in the development, application and negotiation of rules. Because this discussion has not yet looked at the conceptual underpinning of 'Autonomy' and because the concept is beginning to emerge as being of central importance to 'involvement' (Bertram,1996) we will look deeper into its theoretical and research background.

'Autonomy' gets legitimacy from psychological research which has focused on such notions as intrinsic motivation, (Corno & Rohrkemper, 1985) exploratory drive, (Laevers, 1989), mastery orientation, (Dweck and Elliot, 1983) and wider issues in social psychology (Wigfield and Karpathian,1991) social competence (Chapman and Skinner, 1990) and empowerment (Wolfendale, 1992). Skinner and Belmont (1993) claim that these social and psychological views of motivation in the classroom have focused on 'intrapsychic influences' such as attributions, self-efficacy, perceived ability, perceived control and competence, self concept, learning strategies, and goal orientation. Brophy (1986) summarised US motivational research in education as being more focused on the adult's behaviours than the child's and it interesting to see that Government policy in the UK is beginning to do likewise (HMI, 1996). The differences in the

EXE and the EEL conceptual models seem to be explainable, too, in terms of the different disciplines which are their starting points, psychology and education, respectively. Spodek (1993) has spoken of the historical tradition in the US which has kept education and psychology separated in the field of early childhood education. It is an issue that I have been keen to see addressed in European research forums (Bertram, 1993,1994). Brophy's (1986) review of educational research on motivation included teacher behaviours such as provision of choice, enthusiasm, guidance and modelling, sincere praise, reinforcement, and curiosity-induction, dissonance-induction, and interest-induction. Connell & Wellborn, (1991) looked at the interface of educational and psychological literatures and postulated a model which sees the source of motivation as internal to the child and that the power of specific teacher behaviour derives its effectiveness in so far as it provides for children's basic needs. The EEL Adult Engagement Schedule, particularly, in the 'Autonomy' category, accepts curiosity and dissonance especially in adults who encourage a climate where they are open to other possibilities, different realities and truths. To take one example of this, circle time, where autonomy is apparently limited. Studies of this common feature of early childhood provision by both Hughes (1986), and Wells (1985) have indicated the difference in open and closed questions in developing language, self esteem and self confidence. The teacher who adopts the 'guess-the right-answer-in-my-head' seems to do less well in the development of children's language than the one who is prepared to allow alternatives and encourages the children to ask the questions.

Disaffection (Skinner and Belmont, 1993) occurs when children are passive, do not try and give up too easily in the face of a challenge. They become bored,

depressed, anxious, angry, withdrawn, or even rebellious. Sometimes what children learn from adults is that they are not capable of learning. Smiley and Dweck (1994) showed that even very young children have a predisposition to 'helplessness' or towards 'mastery orientation' and that this disposition can be ameliorated or exaggerated by adult interaction. Crucial, she felt, to developing a disposition towards mastery is the degree of child autonomy. Walkerdine (1985) has commented on the the decline of child autonomy within society. Children, particularly girls, are ferried to activities which are often chosen for them, they are discouraged from doing simple things like walking to school or playing outside. She claims that today's young are the 'most watched generation of children', fussed over by parents who are conscious of dire media stories of constantly threatened children in a hostile environment. These children grow up lacking mastery orientation because decisions are always taken for them. They are less likely to develop resilience or to be curious or to ask questions because everything comes prepackaged and ready for consumption, including their packets of knowledge.

'Autonomy' seeks to address these issues. It attempts to create an environment where children can make some choices about their learning. It encourages the 'negotiated responsibilities' that Bruner (1996) describes. It allows for possibilities and experimentation. It keeps children intrinsically motivated. It is postulated (Bertram, 1996) that there is an (as yet unexplored) optimum level of autonomy. Too much choice may be as restricting to development as too little. But there is a much bigger issue here than the appropriate development of individuals. Democracy is about asking questions of authority and it may be that, on the development of autonomy in our youngest children, ultimately rests the

nature of our future society (Postman and Weingartner, 1969).

4.9 Adult Engagement Scale

The Adult Engagement Scale is based on the belief that the quality of the interactions between the educator and the child is a critical factor in the effectiveness of the learning experience. The three categories of the adult interaction are used in order to facilitate a judgment of the adult's style. They are observed and then each is located on a 5 point scale according to the style or the qualities that the adults actions convey (see Figure 13).

- The 5 point Adult Engagement Scale is a continuum.
- This continuum flows from point 1 to point 5.
- Each point on the 5 point scale reflects the degree to which the observed actions convey those adult qualities which are supportive of children's learning.

Point 5 will represent a style that is totally engaging.

Point 4 will represent a style which is mainly engaging but has evidence of some non-engaging qualities.

Point 3 will represent a style where neither engaging or non-engaging qualities predominate.

Point 2 will represent a style which is mainly non-engaging but has evidence of some engaging qualities.

Point 1 will represent a style that is totally non-engaging.

The attitudes and behaviours of the adult are assumed to have implications for

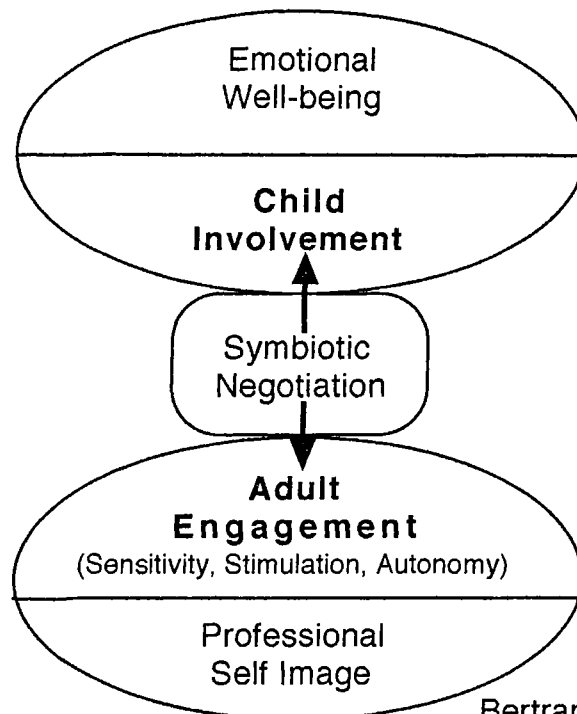
the quality of the child's learning. Engagement takes forward Rogers' (1983) notions of a 'facilitator' by including a view of the adult as a 'scaffolder' who supports the child in constructing knowledge (Bruner, 1966). The 'Engagement' concept acknowledges the importance of Piaget's ideas on biologically determined development (Piaget, 1971) but agrees with Bruner (1966) that, at some level, anything can be taught to any child at any age, providing the link is made to the child's existing knowledge. Children learn by expanding what they already know to incorporate the new, sometimes deconstructing previous knowledge to construct new hypotheses about their environment. This new learning must be 'embedded' and relevant for it to take hold (Donaldson, 1978). Engagement, therefore, holds a view of the adult not just as a passive facilitator but as an active stimulator, who intervenes appropriately and creates enriching environments. The adult 'negotiates' the curriculum with the child, (Bruner, 1996) monitoring and responding to the child's needs but also being a participant stakeholder, together with parents and the wider community, in structuring the child's learning. In addition, the 'Engagement' concept acknowledges the social and cultural context of learning expounded by Vygotsky (1978). In particular, 'Engagement' recognises the Vygotskian notion of the importance of adult intervention operating predominantly within the 'Zone of Proximal Development', (ZPD) assisting and supporting the child. Often, the young children in the ZPD, at the edge of their capabilities, are in play situations and intervention has to be done with sensitivity as a participant in role within the play with a view to maximising autonomy. Adult intervention is less necessary, even, wasteful, when children are revisiting or reinforcing knowledge within their 'zone of actual development'. Adults who try to operate

in the zone of the unknown beyond the child's present knowledge, will find children have difficulty in accommodating or assimilating knowledge that cannot be attached to their existing conceptual frameworks. Adults, who operate with high levels of sensitivity, stimulation and autonomy in this way, are 'engaging' adults

4.9 Professional Well being

The quality of 'engagement' does not just rest on the attitude and behaviours of the adults with their children, it also incorporates a self concept of their own professional persona as important to children's development. Analogous to the involved child's sense of emotional well being is the engaged adult's sense of professional well being, of being comfortable with her professional self image (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Bertram/Pascal Process variables



Bertram and Pascal, 1996

This professional well being comes from her view of her self and her work and

her status. It incorporates positive attitudes to innovation, reflection and is purposeful. An engaged adult sees herself as a researcher of her practice, being both informed and knowledgeable about her children but also being a systematic and rigorous observer, constantly seeking to improve the environment she provides for her children's learning.

Preliminary evaluation based on interviews and written responses incorporated in the first EEL Interim Report (Pascal 1994) seems to indicate that when adults display engaging qualities, they tend to have an improved sense of professional well being and professional self image. It is hoped to explore this later in Chapter 8, Discussion and Analysis. When staff become stronger as people (Freire, 1995) they become better at giving autonomy and generally more 'engaging' (Warham, 1993; Whalley, 1994).

There is evidence also that teachers modify their responses towards individual children on the basis of their perceptions of the child's behavioural and emotional 'involvement'. Skinner and Belmont (1993) showed that teachers, working with US grades 3-5, could compensate for children's lagging motivation. Teachers could respond by increasing the level of sensitivity, stimulation or autonomy. The level of 'autonomy support' was a particularly good predictor of student motivation across a school year. Another finding was that children who showed high levels of 'involvement' got more 'engagement' from teachers; children who were less 'involved' tended to get less 'engagement' from teachers. There was a reciprocal effect between 'involvement' and 'engagement'. Children who were less 'involved' tended to create teachers who were less 'engaged'. Adults who were less engaging

tended to create children who were less involved. A spiral of negative decline or positive improvement tended to develop in the relationship between adult and children. Relationships were always dynamic and changed over time. Again it is hoped we will return to this issue in a later chapter.

'Engagement', then is a

set of personal qualities which describe the nature of the educative relationships between the adult and the child. These personal qualities will affect an adult's ability to motivate, extend, enhance and involve the child in the learning process

Bertram, 1995

I wish to explore in this study the idea that an effective early childhood educator is an 'engaging' adult displaying certain characteristics in her educative interactions with her children. These characteristics are sustained by developing a positive spiral of improvement in her relationships with them, their parents and others, and continual professional and personal growth.