

THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

AN EVALUATION STUDY

BY

Patricia

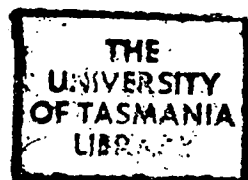
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ABSTRACT

During the 1970's the Australian Schools Commission identified many of the changing needs within Australian society and expressed them as objectives to be achieved through education. It fostered educational change and innovation through field-based experimentation, particularly at the school and community level. The Parents as Partners Project, a state-wide education project in Tasmania, was one such funded project. The aim of the project was to promote the importance of parent participation in children's learning.

After four years of activity, the Parents as Partners Project closed in 1981. Project staff agreed to have the project documented and reviewed. The purpose of the evaluation study was to critically reflect on the project's aims, activities and outcomes within a broader educational context. It was hoped that a number of questions raised by the project participants could be examined in the light of the evaluation, and that the evaluation study would provide one source of material for future developments in parental participation in education.

This evaluation study portrays and evaluates twenty major features of the Parents as Partners Project using the Stake Model of Evaluation. In the process, the evaluation model was also tested for its appropriateness for the task of evaluating this kind of education project that involved the awareness raising of teachers and parents across the state as well as facilitation of parental involvement in children's learning.

The study describes the evaluation methodology that was used, including the selection of a model, collection and analysis of data and selection of evaluation criteria. The study contains a list of findings and discusses a number of issues, including the importance of educational evaluation. Not least, it concludes with a number of recommendations for future developments in educational project management which focuses on community involvement in children's learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

In Australian education the changes of the 1970s were marked by the setting up of the Australian Schools Commission in 1973. The Schools Commission identified many of the changing needs within Australian society and expressed them as objectives to be achieved through change and innovation in education. Throughout the decade the Schools Commission sought to foster change by funding field-based experimentation in education, particularly at the school and community level. The Parents as Partners Project, a statewide education project in Tasmania, was one such project that was funded by the Schools Commission. Its aim was to promote the importance of parent participation in children's learning.

The purpose of this evaluation study is to provide a basis for a summative evaluation of the Tasmanian Parents as Partners Project.

This chapter provides a brief overview of Australian developments in this area of education during the 1970s. It indicates the educational milieu from which the Parents as Partners emerged. The chapter also outlines the structure of the project, states the purposes of evaluation and presents an outline of the six stages of the evaluation study that are described more fully in the chapters that follow.

Australian Developments in Parental Involvement in Education

Material was gathered through a literature search of Australian developments in community involvement in education from 1973 to 1980 in order to gain an initial overview. Sources included: Australian Schools Commission reports, State and Commonwealth education reports, descriptions and reports of specific projects, subject-related bibliographies and reference to the work of exponents in the field. A comprehensive listing of sources is provided in the bibliography of this evaluation study.

Fantini (1982) ¹ distinguishes three categories of parental involvement in schools. These are:

- (i) parents as decisionmakers, directly involved in the governance and policy making decisions of schools;
- (ii) parents as educational producers, involved in teaching, either inside or outside the school; and,
- (iii) parents as clients receiving the educational services of professional personnel in schools.

Whichever category, two of the main underlying intentions of parental involvement in schools are to improve the learning environment and increase student achievement. Collectively, the literature surveyed provides a clear indication of the trends of increased interest in all three categories of parental involvement in Australia.

From as early as 1971 Karmel (Karmel et al., 1971) ² had argued for greater curriculum freedom for teachers and students,

decentralisation of the (South Australian) Education Department and wider community participation in policymaking.

In 1973 the Australian Schools Commission held the following view about the existing process of change in Australian education:

(Change is) characterised by the imposition of new policies from above on schools across the board. Pupils, parents, teachers, employers and the community at large - those with a major interest in schooling - have generally minor roles in the process. Emphasis has been placed on the substance of change and on the conditioning of the participants to accept its consequences rather than on enhancing and exploiting the capacities of committed people to generate their own improvements. 3

At the time, the Schools Commission held only general views about community involvement. It did not intend to be prescriptive. It did not specify how to explain education to the community or how to create greater interaction between school and community.

By 1975 "devolution of responsibility" and "community involvement" were two of the basic assumptions upon which it based its recommendations. A study group was established on the issue of "the school and the community" to examine problems and review trends in Australia and overseas. The Schools Commission was now directing ten percent of its development funds towards activities involving parents. It became an opportune time for innovation in Australian education as far as funding and national educational policy was concerned.

Of particular significance, the Schools Commission report for 1975 (australian Schools Commission, 1975) ⁴ outlines four models of school involvement with the community.

(a) The first model is the traditional or "fortress" model which limits the learning processes to the teachers and students, and, ignores the educational influence of the parents' role in the home.

(b) The second model concentrates on promoting communication between parents and teachers with a view to improving the learning experience of the child. It works on the basis that parents are interested in their children's learning and influence their achievement. The school attempts to provide opportunities to explain its educational aims to parents.

(c) In the third model opportunities exist for various participants, including teachers, parents and students, to reach agreement on educational values.

(d) The fourth model provides for initiatives which may change the nature of the school itself, in order to involve the school in the process of social change. Teachers, parents and students become involved in the process of learning.

The Schools Commission stated that the majority of schools in Australia fell into the first two models; that some administrators, teacher and parent organisations and individuals pressed strongly for development of the third model, while a few schools pioneered model four.

The Schools Commission's funding for the 1975 to 1977 triennium sought to increase the momentum towards models three and four, particularly encouraging independent groups from the community to submit proposals for innovative developments in education. It

met with mixed success.

Notably, several small community groups set up alternative schools in which parents participated in governance, curriculum planning and teaching. However, the majority of Schools Commission funded projects were executed through the existing structures of the States' education systems with the attendant implications for the management of change through bureaucratic structures. It was the Tasmanian Education Department structure that provided the setting in which the Parents as Partners Project attempted to foster innovation and change in parent participation.

Did these aspirations for parent involvement correlate with parents' attitudes towards education and their expectations of education for their children? Fitzgerald (1976) ⁵ gives evidence of the views held by many parents:

The views of parents are influenced by their own previous experience at school. Many evince a lingering sense of failure with regard to formal study. At the same time parents want their children to succeed. They tend to link academic success with good careers and the material advantages that follow. So long as schooling is seen mainly as academic, the notion of matching ideas on curricula and related procedures must seem a daunting one to parents. Most believe they lack both the time and the knowledge to contribute usefully. By and large parents perceive their role to be supportive of teachers in the task of inculcating knowledge and skills.

In this belief parents continue to hand over much of the socialisation of their children to public officials considered to be experts.They expect that the school will equip their children to obtain a job, that teachers will transmit the traditional elements of the Australian way of life, and that deviations of a political, or of a moral nature will be checked. ⁶

Edwards (1981) ⁷, Executive Officer of the Parents as Partners Project, describes one view of parents within the educational setting in Tasmania prior to the commencement of the project in 1977:

in Tasmania prior to the commencement of the project in 1977:

In Tasmania we remained largely apart from developments that related specifically to the involvement of teachers, parents and the community in the formal management of school affairs.

At this time we found it difficult to find ways in which ten per cent of our funds could be spent on parents.

We had no parents on our committees. Parents were not used to coming to our seminars about educational matters unless the situation was something sensationalised by the media. They were not used to working with teachers in a seminar situation.

They were not asking us for anything - even, for example, to tell them much about what was going on in schools.

What was the existing position of community involvement and the impact of the early Schools Commission funded initiatives on the existing educational scene?

Hunt's analysis (1981) ⁸ of community participation throughout the seventies describes attempts at provision for parental involvement at the formal level. This was the introduction of school councils and legislation for the provision of wider decision making powers for school councils. Legislation was passed in four of the states, but these options were not taken up by large numbers in the community. Those school councils which did exist tended to have little direct say. Hunt does speak highly of the Catholic and other private schools in Australia, in particular the parent controlled Christian schools which epitomised participation on all levels. However, she concludes that community participation in the curriculum in Australian schools is the exception rather than the rule.

With Schools Commission funding, experimentation with varying forms of parent involvement began to emerge in all states. Moves were made to open up schools, to involve and inform the community.

Some projects focused on opening up schools to the community with the assistance of school-based liaison officers. For example, in Tasmania in 1976, the Bridgewater Primary School commenced a Parent Support Program in association with the local high school. Generally, the intentions of the program were: to make school less forbidding to parents and more of a community facility; to increase positive contact with teachers and create opportunities for the school to explain its program; and, to gain greater support and involvement from parents. The Bridgewater program was closely followed by programs at Acton Primary and schools in the Huon Valley.

In this instance, the Parents as Partners Project also supported Tasmanian schools' efforts to open their doors to the community. The project made three regionally-based Parent Liaison Advisors (PLAs) available to assist any Tasmanian school or parent group. The Parent Liaison Advisors were also supported by the project's Mobile Resource Van which brought displays and materials to schools and their local communities promoting parent involvement.

Other projects around Australia set out to involve parents in home or school-based reading or tutoring programs with children. Generally, these operated under the guidance of school staff who managed the programs and selected the appropriate resource materials. Again referring to examples in Tasmania, two home reading schemes that had considerable impact were the Huon Valley Language Project (Broadby, 1981) ¹⁰ and the Parents as Partners "Listen to Me Read" program. The latter program eventually operating in over forty

schools at some time throughout the period of 1977 to 1981.

Other projects were concerned with communication and public relations - informing the public about schools and education. At national level the publication School and Community News set out to inform parents and teachers about current issues and developments in education. The Parents as Partners' newspaper Parent represented a state level publication that was distributed to all schools and their Parents and Friends Associations. Not least, at the local level, many schools across Australia commenced the practice of sending home newsletters, over and above the usual official notices to parents.

Parental involvement in discussion and decision making concerning educational and school issues received some encouragement with increased interest in participative planning and decision-making techniques that were being developed as one form of organisational management. For example, in 1976 Rosny Community College in Hobart consulted with students, teachers and the community, utilising participative planning techniques as part of the consultative process for developing its College program. A later example is the series of planning seminars for teachers and parents held by the Acton Primary School in 1981. Educational priorities were identified for the school and then activities were undertaken by parents and teachers to make the subsequent changes.

Not least, seminars were organised for parents and teachers at school or local community group level and at regional levels. These ranged from talks by visiting guest speakers to discussion on current topics that were being taught in the classroom. In this respect the Parents as Partners Project did much to promote

attendance by parents at seminars held at regional Teachers Centres in Tasmania. Statistics for 1980 (State Services and Development Committee)¹¹ indicate that a total of 2,392 parents attended at least one course from among 585 courses offered to Tasmanian teachers and parents by the State and Regional Development Committee.

In summary

In summary, it is clear from the literature there emerged an increased interest in finding ways to involve the community in the processes of providing education to children. In 1971 a significant step was the Karmel Report's recommendation for wider community participation in policy making. By 1975 the Australian Schools Commission had described four models of school involvement with parents and community, and, advocated those models in which teachers, parents and students reach agreement about educational values and become involved in the process of learning that assists schools to become important instruments of social change.

Most comprehensive reports on Australian education from State and Commonwealth levels now included statements about the broadening role for parents and the community. By the end of the decade there was a renewed interest by many states in the notion of increased participation through school councils. Most recently, this interest in parent and community involvement can be identified as a substantial component of the national School Improvement Program, an initiative of which the Tasmanian School Improvement Program is an early example.

Australian Schools Commission funding provided an unprecedented opportunity for the development of initiatives in

educational change. Many field studies and innovative education projects evolved as a direct consequence. Amongst them the Parents as Partners Project took its place within the wider Australian context, reflecting the educational interests of the time and contributing to the development of parental involvement with ideas and activities that were innovative to both the local and state setting.

The Structure of the Parents as Partners Project

The Tasmanian Parents as Partners Project commenced in the wake of the influence of the British Plowden Report (Plowden,1967)¹² and the Haringey Reading Project (Keynes,1981)¹³. It also bears the influence of the American Coleman Report (Coleman et al.,1966)¹⁴ and the national Head Start, Home Start and Follow Through programs.

Set up in late 1977, the project's aims were:

- * to increase parent awareness of educational issues;
- * to promote parent education activities that enhance student learning;
- * to improve generally the quality of parent involvement in education; and,
- * to have all such activities assist in developing partnerships between parents and teachers. 15

The concept of the Parents as Partners Project was not a parent or teacher proposed initiative, although several teachers thought it an excellent idea at that time. The project received

support from the State Professional Development Committee, and, in particular, from its Chairman, Deputy Director of Services, Martyn Cove. Cove's interest in the field of parent involvement in children's learning, his overseas study tour to gather evidence of developments in this field, and his experience within the Education Department were utilised to advantage when Schools Commission funds became available. These appear to be instrumental factors contributing to the setting up of the Project.

The State Development Committee was a central committee, based at the Development Branch of the Education Department. Its membership included representatives from Catholic Education, the Association of Heads of Independent Schools, the Tasmanian Teachers Federation, Tasmanian Council of State Schools Parents and Friends Association, and the Australian Schools Commission. The Committee also included the Regional Development Officers based at each regional Teachers Centre. The three Teachers Centres, of the South, North, and North West regions, also supported the project with administrative and seminar facilities and access to information and services of personnel.

The personnel of the Parents as Partners Project included the Executive Officer, the State Co-ordinator who was also Editor of the newspaper, Parent, and three Parent Liaison Advisors. The Executive Officer was a full-time salaried employee of the Education Department. All other personnel were employed half-time and paid through Schools Commission funds.

The project operated a wide range of activities in each region and across the State. They include:

- * a Home Reading Program for children, involving parents

and teachers;

- * a Mobile Resource Van stocked with relevant literature, materials and displays for parents and teachers;
- * Parent Liaison Advisors' visits to schools and parent groups to organise discussions, seminars and activities relevant to the aims of the project; and,
- * a statewide newspaper, Parent, for parents and teachers, with parents on the editorial staff.

The Purpose of the Evaluation Study

The Parents as Partners Project ceased after four years, in December 1981, even though Schools Commission funds remained available. There was little direct intervention by parent groups or schools to oppose its closure, although numerous letters of protest were written to Parent.¹⁶ The School Improvement Program became the new direction to develop within the State education system, and certainly built upon some of the Parents as Partners experience in further developing parent participation as one strand of its program. Despite its termination, Parents as Partners personnel remained convinced of the worth of the project's aims and objectives.

In October 1981, prior to the closure of the project, a group of participants, who had implemented or supported the operations of the project, considered the worth of having the project documented and reviewed.

Participants of the project determined that the purpose of an evaluation study would be to examine the nature, extent, objectives, operations and outcomes of the project after its four years

of operation from late 1977 to 1981. They hoped that such a study would provide:

- (i) a critical analysis of the project's aims, activities and outcomes;
- (ii) the project to be set in a broader educational context, in order to examine a number of issues raised by the participants; and,
- (iii) documentation and interpretation of project data for future developments in parental involvement in education.

In particular, three questions emerged from the issues to be explored as part of the evaluation process. The questions were:

- (a) Who should assist parents in the task of building their confidence for participation in children's education?
- (b) How is it determined whether the project was good value as a resource user in the face of competing priorities?
- (c) How can the impact of the project be measured?

The present evaluation study of the Parents as Partners Project was undertaken within the scope of a dissertation for the Degree of Master of Education (Coursework). Hence, there were constraints on funding, extensive information compiling, and on measurement procedures that would be required to analyse the wider impact of the project both on the community and on broader developments in education. The evaluation study narrowed its perspectives to the specific interests of the main participants of the project. It provides a modest foundation of data set in an educational framework while testing the Stake Model of Evaluation.

Scheme of the Evaluation Study

The evaluation study was organised into six stages:

Stage 1: Literature Review

The intention of the literature review was to put the topic of parental involvement in education into its current educational context. The review examines educational developments in Australia as they pertain to community involvement, particularly since the inception of the Australian Schools Commission which was the funding sponsor of the Parents as Partners Project. The present chapter has delineated a summary of this review drawing a number of examples from the Tasmanian field of education in order to provide a contextual setting in which to describe and assess the Parents as Partners Project.

A further aspect of the literature review was to look at the underlying assumptions of parental involvement lifting levels of achievement in children's learning. This was done with particular reference to the influence of research developments in America and the United Kingdom. This aspect of the review is not exhaustive, thus indicating the paucity of theoretical and research literature that can provide valid evidence of the extent and nature of parental influence within the range of complex variables that influence children's learning. Chapter Two contains a summary of the literature reviewed.

Stage 2: Selection of a Model for Evaluation

This stage considered the development of evaluation models

in relation to the purposes they are expected to serve. It describes a range of avaluation approaches that were examined before the Stake Model of Evaluation was selected. The Stake Model is described in some detail as is the Context, Input, Product and Process (CIPP) Model of evaluation for comparative purposes. Chapter Three contains a description of these models for evaluation, with reasons for the adoption of the Stake Model.

Stage 3: Evaluation Methodology

Chapter Four consists of a description of the evaluation process; that is, how project information was gathered, how judgement criteria were decided upon and how variables were selected for observation and measurement within the constraints of the evaluation study. It also illustrates the analysis and judgement process that one feature of the project undergoes in order to exemplify the underlying evaluation processes that yielded the outcomes and judgements of the Matrices in Chapter Six.

Stage 4: Review of Project Documents

A review of the Parents as Partners documents, primary source materials and brief excerpts from interviews with project staff give some indication of the nature of the project and its transactions, as well as one source of criteria for evaluating the project. The review of project documentation is contained in Chapter Five.

Stage 5: Portrayal of the Project Within the Stake Model

Using the Stake Model as a framework, twenty features of

the Parents as Partners Project were described and analysed within two data matrices - the Descriptive Matrix and the Judgement Matrix. The analysis took into account Stake's five basic characteristics of evaluation activity. These characteristics are:

- (a) the evaluation acts of description and judgement;
- (b) collection of data forming three bodies of information: antecedent, transactional and outcome data;
- (c) consideration of congruencies and contingencies;
- (d) determination of standards to be used as criteria for judgement; and,
- (e) the uses of evaluation.

In Chapter Six the main features of the project that have been selected for analysis and evaluation are listed. The standards held by relevant groups are made explicit as part of the evaluation process. A summary of the analysis is given in table form.

Stage 6: Project Conclusions and Implications

This stage was concerned with the conclusions about the project, and it followed up the issues and questions originally raised by the project participants. Chapter Seven gives a summary of the implications of the project for future planning and developments in this area of education. The summary also includes a number of recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

This chapter discusses the literature concerned with parent involvement in children's learning. It is intended to provide an understanding of the theoretical basis of parental involvement and a view of the state of current research in this area. It is particularly indicative of some of the antecedent influences from American and British research studies from which the Parents as Partners Project drew its own rationale.

The first section considers a role for parents in their children's learning. It looks at the pervasive influence of the family, as described by the educational theorists and researchers, and notes the difficulty of measuring this influence on children's educational achievement. The second section looks at the multiplicity of variables that influence children's learning. This provides the major difficulty for researchers who have tried to establish direct links between parent involvement and levels of achievement. The research results of a number of British and American projects are outlined, and despite the difficulties, conclusions that have been drawn from research findings are also described.

A comprehensive listing of sources for this chapter is provided in the bibliography, including those primary sources which influenced the directions of the Parents as Partners Project.

The Influence of the Family

The general trend of parent involvement in education has broadened considerably in Australia in the past decade. It continued to develop based on American and British research and project work, and extensive fieldwork that took place in Australia, particularly since the inception of the Australian Schools Commission in 1973. This paved the way for significant changes in attitudes about the role of parents in school-based education.

In particular, the concern of the evaluation study lay with what may be described as the "awareness raising" stage of the present interest in parent and community participation in education; a stage when attempts were made to find evidence to support the assumption that parents do influence their children's learning achievement.

To what extent does the influence of home and parents affect children's levels of achievement at school; how can educators turn this influence to positive account in the child's schooling and developmental interests; and, to what extent are the educational processes that are required to develop parental interest and involvement the responsibility of Education Departments, schools and teachers?

Attempts to explore such questions requires an understanding of the nature of the child's relationship (a) to its family, and, (b) to the complex range of external variables that also influence development, socialisation and education.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) subscribes to the view that the family is a highly significant factor in influencing educational achieve-

ment. He argues that the family is the most powerful structure known for nurturing the capacity of human beings to develop and work effectively in all areas of human activity; that it is critical to the capacity of the child to develop physiologically, mentally, emotionally, motivationally, socially and morally. Within the family, the psychological development of the child is brought about through his or her,

continuing involvement in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with persons with whom the child develops a strong and enduring emotional attachment.

....(The reciprocal activity) generates an emotional bond, enhanced motivation, and cognitive and manipulative skills that are mutually reinforcing to both participants. They are then reflected in the child's enhanced capacity to comprehend, cope with and even create the environment in which he or she lives. ¹

Bernstein (1977) ² concurs with the case for the family being a major influence, but indicates that the family is strongly influenced by the social class to which it belongs, and that the language code a social class uses is the basis of its socialization process. Further, that this language code can be at odds with the language code that operates within a school thus creating a cultural discontinuity which raises one problem of educability for children who are not sensitive to the communication system of the school.

Bernstein's theory of restricted and elaborated codes of communication is based on the powerful relationship between language and socialization. Socialization refers "to the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity, and to his responses to such an identity". ³ The process of socialization is

a complex process of control, whereby a particular moral, cognitive and affective awareness is evoked in the child and given specific form and context. Socialization sensitizes the child to the various orderings of society as these are made substantive in the various roles he is expected to play. It is through the basic agencies of family, peer group, school and work, and in particular through their relationship with each other, that the various orderings of society are made manifest.

For example, Bernstein notes that a communication code of the lower working class will emphasize verbally the communal rather than the individual, the concrete rather than the abstract, substance rather than the elaboration of processes, the here and now rather than exploration of motives and intentions, and positional rather than personalised forms of social control. As the child learns his speech or the specific codes which regulate his verbal acts, he learns the requirements of his social structure.

Bernstein terms this communication code a restricted code. He explains that this restricted code directs the child to orders of learning and relevance that may in themselves be valid, appropriate and full of potential, but are not in harmony with those required in the school which promotes an elaborated code of communication and its attendant social values. Where the child is sensitive to the communication system of the school, and thus to its orders of learning and relation, then the experience of school for this child is one of extension and social development. However, for a child who is not sensitive to the communication system at school it becomes a case of a change of social identity. Thus

between the school and community of the working class child there may exist a cultural discontinuity based upon two radically different systems of communication. The source of the problem of educability lies not so much in the genetic code but in the culturally determined communication code.

Kifer (1977)⁴ contributes further to the analysis of variables in the home setting that influence children's learning, and the criteria by which learning achievement is measured. His intention was to identify and measure processes which operate effectively across homes to produce educational advantages for children. Notably the most effective processes, as identified by Kifer, line up with Bernstein's elaborated code of communication and its associated social values.

Kifer views three process variables as facets of three main dimensions of the home environment. The first process variable is the verbal dimension, that is, use of language, reading, encouraging children to express themselves precisely in both speech and writing. He states:

An explanation for the power of the verbal environment resides in the notion that success in the typical classroom is, in part, a function of the child's ability to penetrate the verbal curtain which surrounds the instructional process. Those children with verbal facility tend, therefore, to be more successful in academic tasks. In those homes where precise communication is encouraged and emphasized, children develop abilities which give them increased power to comprehend what is expected of them in the classroom setting.⁵

The second dimension is an effective home environment which includes activities congruent with the expectations of the school. For example, finding a time and place for homework, working with a child when he or she is faced with a difficult task,

and taking an interest in what the child is doing at school. There are positive correlations between parental behaviours and willingness of students to devote efforts to their school studies.

The third dimension of the home environment is its general cultural level. Homes which emphasize reading, discussing, attending cultural activities, and visiting museums and zoos, provide a milieu in which children develop both competencies and attitudes which increase the probability that they will be successful in school. Further, where there is congruence between what home expects and what school expects and rewards, achievement and positive personal growth result; incongruence leads to less achievement and less positive personal growth.

In summary

In summary, Bronfenbrenner indicates the critical importance of the family in nurturing the capacity of children to develop. Bernstein's theory, in turn, shows how the family is powerfully influenced by social class and the language codes of that class which are used in the socialization process of children. Not least, Kifer analyses the influences of variables within the home, describing the positive factors of language use, cultural level and home environment congruent with the expectations of school as means to producing educational advantages for children.

Review of Research in the Field

This section shifts from the variables of home environment and family and community background to the research evidence for the impact of parent involvement in school-based activities. The difficulties of measuring student achievement and establishing the causal links between parent involvement and student achievement are discussed. A number of research projects and their findings are briefly delineated in order to indicate the nature of the research work that has been undertaken, despite the difficulties of assessing the outcomes. The section sums up the generally held conclusions from the research findings which continue to support the development of parent participation in education.

Stearns and Peterson (1973) ⁶ assert that there is a serious lack of data on the effects of increased parental involvement in schools. Although many studies in this area have been undertaken throughout the 1960's and 1970's, there is little direct evidence to confirm or reject the basic assumptions about the impact of parental involvement and its influence on students' achievement. Although the advantages are claimed to be numerous, the causal links between increase in involvement and the subsequent benefits are not often clearly stated. This view is also held by Filiczak, Lordeman and Friedman (1977), ⁷ Clasby and Stanton (1982) ⁸ and Fantini (1982). ⁹

Further, Clasby and Stanton (1982) ¹⁰ state that despite the apparent value of establishing a causal link between community participation and student performance, the norm-referenced standardised instruments most commonly used for measuring student outcomes are inappropriate to use as criteria for making decisions

about programs for community participation in schools. They also hold reservations about large-scale statistical studies and narrowly focused case studies providing adequate grounds for policy and practice in community involvement.

On the one hand, the case studies avoid the dangers of "context stripping" which results with large-scale statistical studies. They do provide a more in-depth look at programs and tend to place behaviours in a meaningful context, illuminating complexities and variations. However, Clasby and Stanton claim that it is extraordinarily difficult to accumulate knowledge that can be generalised from such individual case studies which may also lack consistency in perspective and rigour in analysis.

Despite these shortcomings, research studies and opportunities for practice in the field are valuable sources of evidence that can be used to refine the theoretical bases and assumptions which underlie the rationale of much of our educational activity. From research and practice, educators can learn more about the variables that are associated with effective schools and teaching, and can gain a clearer understanding of causality.

As early as 1966, in the U.S.A., the Federal Government commenced a nationwide effort to create educational opportunity through its Head Start, Home Start and Follow Through programs, which involved parents in children's learning. The programs were based on the following assumptions:

- * parents are the primary educators of their children and schools must recognise this;
- * some methods of instruction are more effective than others;

- * and, the child's self-concept affects learning.

The programs were directed at mainly pre-school age children and their parents, but assisted children up to grade three level where funds would allow. The broad educational goals included interest in educational achievement and mandatory parent involvement as well as interest in health and social welfare. The Follow Through programs were for students of all abilities, especially for those of low-income families, and were designed to sustain gains that children had made in previous programs. ^{11 & 12}

An example of the extensiveness of these programs can be seen by the activities that were developed by the Philadelphia Parent-Child Centre, Philadelphia, PA. It commenced its Head Start Program in 1968 and spread its activities to include: a Learning Centre Program (1968), Home Visitor Program (1970), Family Day Care Program (1974), Centre Based Program (1974), and Home Based Program (1977). This particular Head Start program was also further supplemented when its children were given opportunities to continue Follow Through programs up to grades three and four. Further, Brady (1976)¹³ states that some Head Start continuation projects also trained parents as Head Start Assistant teachers to move with children into public schools to assist in maintaining the gains that pre-school children had made.

What results did programs like these yield? Bronfenbrenner supports his arguments with evidence from research results of many of the American studies. From twelve studies of pre-school intervention and home-based tutoring programs, Bronfenbrenner reports the following common conclusions:

- * cognitively structured curricula produced greater gains than play-oriented programs;
- * by the first or second year after completion of the program children began to show a progressive decline, the sharpest occurring after the child's entry into regular school; but preliminary data from the Follow Through Program suggests that this decline may be offset by the continuation of intervention programs, including strong parent involvement into the early grades; and,
- * children who profited least and showed earliest and rapid decline were from the most deprived social and economic backgrounds. 14

Similarly, Levenstein (1978)¹⁵ investigates research into child-parent interaction and its influence on education. She reports the research findings of a Mother-Child Home Program which took place from 1972 to 1974. The program was looking for:

- (i) positive relationships at age four between what parents did and how children acted; and,
- (ii) whether the ratings of children's competence by teachers in class two years later correlate with mother's parenting behaviour when the child was four.

The program sought forty five low-income mothers with children age four. The children were assessed by home visitors at half hour play sessions twice a week for seven months and then again by teachers when the children were age six and at school.

The measuring instruments used were the "Child's Behaviour Traits" (CBT) and "Parent and Child Together" (PACT), both composed of Likert-type scales yielding item and summative scores.

Empirical testing supported the view that there is mutual influence on child and parent; that parents influence a child's later socio-emotional coping skills in school; and, in particular, that verbal interaction behaviours of mothers are significantly linked to competencies of the child age four at home and of enduring influence to the child age six. Similarly, Berlin and Berlin's (1973) ¹⁶ nationwide study of Head Start programs supported these findings.

On the American scene from the mid-1960's onwards, the Coleman Report (1966) ¹⁷ represented the most significant piece of research documentation. It provided data for interpretation and reassessment (Jencks, 1972) ¹⁸ for the next decade and a half. Many of the early studies on parent involvement were related to examining the effects of compensatory education programs in the United States. These studies found that the direct participation of parents in instructional activities had positive effects on student achievement, and that parental involvement in school governance increased the self-concept of children in schools (Jencks, 1972, ¹⁹ Wagenaar, 1977, ²⁰ Baker, 1971, ²¹ Berlin and Berlin, 1973 ²²).

Similar to efforts in the U.S.A., research in Britain was also directed at obtaining a national picture, both at primary and post-primary level. For example, the 15 to 18 Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1960) ²³ sought evidence from teenagers in order to establish a national picture about the

the relationship between school life and the factors of parental occupation, "ability", size of family and type of school attended. Studies by Douglas (1964) ²⁴ and Moore (1968) ²⁵ dealt with children's learning, achievement and emotional development being more related to the indices of family environment than to socio-economic status.

One of the most comprehensive British studies was the Plowden Report, Children and Their Primary Schools (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). ²⁶ The Plowden Report argued that educational policy should recognise the influence of the environment on the school and of the school on the environment. The triangle of parent, child and teacher should be completed and a more direct relationship established between teachers and parents. "They should be partners in more than name; their responsibility become joint instead of several". ²⁷

In 1964 the Plowden Committee commenced a national survey, the aim of which was to relate what could be learned about home and school to the attainment of children. The survey included three thousand children from one hundred and seventy three junior, junior-infant and infant schools. Information was collected from the head teachers about their schools and the children in the sample. Attainments of the children were assessed by reading comprehension tests, and a picture intelligence test was also given to top infants. The report also included a survey of interviews with mothers (and occasionally fathers) of the Plowden children.

Parental attitudes in the survey were assessed on answers to such questions as: how much schooling did parents want for

their children; did they visit their children's school; how much time did they spend with their children, help with homework, read at home; what amenities were part of the home; what was father's occupation and income; what was the size of the family; and, what was the level of education of both parents?

The Plowden Report stressed the importance of parental attitudes in the educational system. It revealed that parents were greedy for information about their children at school, the school itself and how children learn. The report assessed that eighty one per cent of all parents interviewed were positively interested. Based on this evidence, the report urged that instead of relying on voluntary membership of parent-teacher associations, schools, local education authorities and the Department of Education and Science should positively encourage parents to become far more actively involved in their children's education. Jackson (1978) ²⁸ even argues for the establishment of part-time courses for parents, explaining that some schools affect parental attitudes by helping parents to understand the education process by working with them rather than compensating for them.

One final example of parent-teacher collaboration that enjoyed considerable success was the Haringey Reading Project, set up through the Thomas Coram Institute, University of London, from 1976 to 1979 (Keynes, 1980). ²⁹ The intention of the project was to investigate the effects of collaboration between teachers and parents in assisting children's reading. This project in particular was to provide the basis from which the Tasmanian Parents as Partners Project adapted its own Listen to Me Read scheme.

In brief, the Haringey Project asked parents to hear their children read several times a week from appropriate material sent home from the school. The six schools which took part in the two year experiment had the same multi-ethnic, inner city background, with reading standards well below the national average.

At the end of the Haringey Project, it was reported that children with parent help were well ahead of comparable children who did not receive help. More than one half of the parent-assisted children were reading at or above their age level, a slightly better performance than the national average. The control group had only one third of its number reach a reading performance appropriate to their ages. A year later, further assessment showed that the parent-assisted children had maintained their lead over the control groups in reading performance. Spencer (1979);³⁰ Armor and Associates (1976)³¹ and Guttentag (1972)³² also provide data from the American educational scene that supports the significant relationship that exists between family involvement and reading achievement.

In conclusion, Cove (1980)³³ summarises much of the recent American and British evidence and provides a summary of eight inter-related factors that affect levels of achievement. These factors are:

1. standards of literacy and numeracy correlate closely with socio-economic status and the self-concepts of students and their parents;
2. parental attitudes are strong determinants of success;
3. the extent of physical impairment (visual and auditory), especially in early childhood, is correlated closely with learning achievement;

4. there is an inverse relationship between the age of the child and the likelihood that intervention will be successful;
5. well organised and planned programs of teaching are correlated closely with improvement in standards of achievement;
6. improvement will not occur without diagnosis and skilled, unremitting follow-up;
7. the effectiveness of schools depends on staff commitment and skill, and system support; and,
8. student motivation and will to learn is of special importance. 34

Fantini's (1982) ³⁵ summing up expresses the generally held views derived from the findings of the research literature.

The pattern of involvement that focuses directly on the educational process, with the parent participating as an educator, does show a relationship to school achievement in reading and mathematics as well as self-concept....Some of the literature acknowledges parental participation as a valuable end in itself.Research suggests that only those forms of participation directly involved in instruction have a positive measurable impact on achievement and self-concept. 36

In view of all the findings related to parent involvement and student achievement, it is reasonable to assume that any consideration of the effectiveness of schools should take the factors related to this involvement into account. Educators can attempt to reach children both directly and indirectly with the assistance of parents, if schools and Education Departments are prepared to make policy and implement education programs that encourage parent involvement in the school and in children's learning. For example, the formation of processes for more effective participation by parents in the governance and parents-as-educator roles could be viewed as contributing maximally to

the learning environment and increased performance on the part of students. To many, however, these processes involve parent education as well.

In summary

The evidence that emerged from studies undertaken in America and Britain supported the widely-held assumption that parental involvement in education does enhance children's levels of achievement. Much of the evidence concluded that schools and Departments of Education should find ways to involve parents and increase collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of school children.

Despite the paucity of research literature with evidence of direct links between parent involvement and students levels of achievement, and, despite the difficulties of developing effective ways of observing and assessing these links, the need continues for research and evaluation that examines closely the processes, content and long-term outcomes of effective education projects involving parents.

CHAPTER THREE

SELECTION OF A MODEL FOR EVALUATION

This chapter is about the meaning and purpose of evaluation in relation to education projects and programs. Two models are described which have been designed to assist the process of evaluation in education. They are referred to as the Stake Model of Evaluation and the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model of Evaluation. In particular, this evaluation study has applied the Stake Model as a framework for portraying, analysing and evaluating the Parents as Partners Project, a project which cannot be evaluated solely by measuring children's levels of learning achievement. The CIPP Model provides a framework for comparison of evaluation models.

Educators and project planners who are interested to monitor and evaluate the impact of work done in education, or who require data in preparation for planning future developments in education, embark upon a task which can become complicated and often frustrating. There are many variables, some measurable and others not, that influence the processes of educating children and the degree of educational achievement that can be attained. For example, such variables include, amongst others, the socio-economic background of school children, the availability of adequate resources for education, the choice of curriculum and the methods of teaching used in the school's curriculum.

Apart from the variables that constitute the influences

on learning, the process of evaluation carries with it influences of its own which also affect the interpretation of the outcomes of an education project. For example, these include the constraints of time and resources of those participating in the evaluation, the choice of methods used to gather and analyse information in relation to the purpose of the evaluation, and the values and interests of the evaluators and those participants directly involved with the project. Despite the complexities, educators and project planners must continue to make decisions about priorities in education, about the selection of the best alternatives for program implementation and deployment of resources. Good decision making is assisted by accurate and useful information that helps to increase understanding.

The meaning and purposes of evaluation

In the context of this evaluation study, the concept of evaluation as derived from Stufflebeam (et al., 1971), ¹ and utilized by Davis (1981), ² is appropriate. Davis states that evaluation is,

the process of attributing value to intentions, actions, decisions, performances, processes, people, objects - almost anything. However, the improvement of the object of evaluation usually requires some degree of understanding which, in turn, depends upon appropriate data and information.Evaluation can be regarded as the process of delineating, obtaining and providing information useful for making decisions and judgements. ³

An evaluation is concerned with a specific situation. Its value lies partly in the understanding gained of the specific situation by the evaluators - preferably including the main project participants because of their work leading up to the report - and partly in a variety of benefits to others, such as teachers, parents, education administrators and project planners.

From the late 1960's onwards there has been much development in the designing of approaches to evaluation to meet the widening range of evaluation purposes. For example, education projects, such as the Parents as Partners Project, that set out to involve the community in a diverse range of activities related to their children's education are a recent phenomenon. They require a different form of evaluation to the traditional forms that consisted of measuring children's levels of achievement or evaluating curricula or evaluating the variables of home background and school setting in relation to children's learning, even though they contribute to the same implicit goals. The difficulty here was how to evaluate a program intended to increase parental understanding of education, confidence in their own educating capacities, and skill and knowledge required to collaborate with teachers in the educating processes.

Both Davis and Kemmis (1980) ⁴ give useful descriptions of the evolution of educational evaluation from the early Tyler model which consisted of assessing students in terms of

behavioural objectives. Other significant evaluation approaches include: organisational development models, such as the CIPP model, which address wider institutional arrangements as part of an evaluation; responsive and illuminative models, by Stake and Parlett and Hamilton, which arose in response to previous mechanistic and rationalistic approaches; current action-research and participative models of evaluation which incorporate the experiences and critical reflections of program participants to a much greater extent in an ongoing evaluation process which is an integral part of program implementation.

In particular, there are two main kinds of evaluation which Scriven (Davis, 1981) ⁵ distinguishes as 'formative' evaluation and 'summative' evaluation. Formative evaluation is investigatory and is intended to provide information that increases an understanding of an education program's problems and possibilities. Educators are involved in formative evaluation when they critically examine what they do (for example, their teaching, the materials they use or the learning environments they create) with a view to improvement.

Summative evaluation, such as this evaluation study of the Parents as Partners Project, reports relative levels of success and failure according to specified criteria, standards or values. As it is not primarily intended to provide information for subsequent modification and development, a developed process, end event or finished product is assumed. Summative evaluation usually follows formative evaluation (but often precludes it).

Further, Stake distinguishes the formal and informal sides of educational evaluation methodologies. Informal evaluation is recognised by its dependence on casual observation, implicit goals, intuitive norms and subjective judgement. Formal evaluation is recognised by its dependence on checklists, the structured visitation of peers, controlled comparisons and standardised testing of students.

Henderson (1978) ⁶ sums up with a number of useful characteristics that distinguish an evaluation study.

- (a) In evaluation the context of the study almost completely defines the issue for investigation.
- (b) Precise hypotheses can rarely be generated, and the task more usually becomes that of testing generalisations derived from previous knowledge and experience.
- (c) Every evaluation study is unique.
- (d) Evaluations have to be conducted in the presence of a multitude of variables which could have relevance in the interpretation of results, with randomisation generally impossible or impractical to accomplish.
- (e) In evaluation, the data to be collected are heavily influenced, if not determined, by feasibility.
- (f) The evaluator cannot escape value judgements, both his own and those of the people involved in the study, at every stage - in the definition of the problem, in the selection of variables for study, and in the choice of data to be collected.

Which Approach to Evaluation Will Suit the Evaluation Purposes?

Kemmis (1980)⁷ in his argument against the "technologisation of reason" outlines five models of educational evaluation that have evolved from the early Engineering Model that was first articulated by Tyler to the Critical Reflection Model that Kemmis advocates. These five classes of evaluation approaches are the engineering, organisational, ecological, illuminative/responsive, democratic and evaluation as self-reflection approaches. They are outlined briefly here to indicate the process of selection that took place in searching out an evaluation model suitable for the Parents as Partners Project.

(a) Engineering Model

The Engineering Model concentrates upon developers' instructional objectives and related student learning outcomes. It entails the following stages:

- (i) secure agreement on the aims of the curriculum and/or course of study;
- (ii) express these aims as 'objectives' (i.e. explicitly stated student behaviours that the curriculum is intended to produce);
- (iii) devise and provide experience that seems likely to enable learners to behave in the desired way;
- (iv) assess the congruence of student performance and objectives; and,
- (v) vary the 'treatment' until behaviour matches objectives.

This model, which integrates the evaluation and development processes, draws several main criticisms under the problems of sufficiency, specification, measurement, explanation and epistemology.

It is evident that on its own this model is not sufficient for the purposes of the present evaluation study.

(b) Organisational Model

The Organisational Model is based on the image of the program as an organisation. The aim is essentially bureaucratic: to serve program managers (decision makers) with the range of information relevant for keeping their programs or institutions on the right track. It is a model of rational management, its image supported by cultural values of scientific rationality, economic efficiency and consensus about an institutional mission.

The main dimensions of this model include:

- (i) determining institution purposes, goals and educational objectives;
- (ii) measuring educational and other outcomes;
- (iii) evaluating learning experiences in terms of the desired outcomes;
- (iv) evaluating the adequacy and utilisation of resources in terms of desired outcomes;
- (v) evaluating the planning and decision making processes in terms of the desired outcomes; and,
- (vi) interpreting objectives, means of attainment, and evidence of attainment to new faculty, to students and to the public.

Kemmis notes that experience with this model in Australian schools indicates that it tends to disaffect staffs, involve them in extensive data-gathering exercises and yield little in terms of actual change.

The main problem of the model is that it views the world as a complex set on interacting variables and is driven to absurd

lengths to control this complexity. It is so comprehensive as to defy genuine application. It subjugates the critical perspective of participants to the perspective of the institution as a corporate entity in its own right, and, being goal-based, is open to some of the same criticisms of the Engineering Model.

Its positive features are that it can accommodate the participants in a program in its evaluation, and it can suggest the enormous variety of places where something can go wrong with an organisation. However, Kemmis states, it may deaden critical awareness in the slow grind of its progress rather than heighten self-criticism in convivial debate.

The Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model of Evaluation is a particularly representative example of the Organisational Model which continues to be used today in many program evaluations concerning general institutional arrangements. The CIPP Model was selected for comparative purposes with the Stake Model of Evaluation for three reasons. It does provide one possible evaluation approach that could be modified to suit the evaluation purposes. It represents an approach that continues to have extensive influence in evaluation. Not least, the Illuminative/Responsive approaches, including the Stake Model, evolved out of dissatisfaction for these rationalistic approaches. By outlining the CIPP model it can be indicated just where the Stake Model has come from in the development of approaches to educational evaluation and why it has acquired the characteristic features that it possesses.

(c) Ecological Model

This model expresses a widespread desire in our culture to

to understand our social life not just as a set of interacting variables, but as organic, structured and functioning. It sees a program as "alive" and part of a "living" context.

This approach falls prey to the dangers of positivism and the problem of complexity cited in relation to previous models. The kind of complexity these models deal in is hostile to understanding because it fragments our view of the program along the lines of its own analysis, not according to the problems perceived and experienced by those who inhabit the programs.

Like the engineering and organisational models, this model reveals an "objectivist" epistemology. The evaluator attempts to study the program "objectively", is interested in value-neutrality with respect to the program, and displays a "technical" knowledge-constitutive interest.

Kemmis concludes that all three models manifest the technologisation of reason, making critical self-understanding subordinate to program goals, bureaucratic organisational imperatives, or the "life" of the program as understood from a non-participatory (non-empathetic) perspective.

(d) Illuminative/Responsive Model

Parlett and Hamilton's "illuminative" approach and Stake's "responsive" approach are two relatively recent models for evaluation.

Stake's approach attempts to address issues raised by program participants rather than impart the questions of the evaluator into the program setting. These issues guide the quest for data and the writing of reports. The evaluator is likely to choose to make portrayals of the program rather than report it in analytical terms.

The aim is to convey something of the life of the program and the concerns of its inhabitants. Similarly, Parlett and Hamilton's illuminative evaluation discards the analytical role in favour of an interpretive one.

Problems of these approaches include the problems of credibility, the length of time required for descriptive methodologies and the criterion of authenticity.

Reports are not always regarded as credible, which is a fundamental problem for an approach which is built on the notion that evaluation should speak to the concerns of the participants and in their own preferred languages.

Descriptive methodologies take time. However, the process of writing up at least part of a program, even if imperfectly, may help to make wiser judgements of it.

The notions of "responsiveness" to participant and audience concerns, of "progressively focussing" on issues which compel those in and around the program and of "participant confirmation" as guarantees of authenticity are challenged by the notion that it is not the participants themselves but professional evaluators who shape the accounts. The outside observer understanding and reporting on the program is doing something fundamentally different from the insider-participant who must live with the consequences of the evaluation, with the meanings reclaimed from its life and the reputations the evaluation establishes or diminishes.

(e) Democratic Model

The "democratic" approach moves from the processes of understanding social contexts to the question of the politics of information

in evaluating them. The shift from the illuminative/responsive approach to the democratic approach parallels the shift from the engineering model to the organisational model.

Kemmis refers to "Evaluation and the Control Education" (MacDonald, 1976) for the distinctions between bureaucratic, autocratic and democratic approaches to evaluation of programs.

Democratic evaluation is an information service to the community about the characteristics of an educational program. It recognises value-pluralism and seeks to represent a range of interests in its issue-formulation. The basic value is an informed citizenry, and the evaluator acts as a broker in exchanges of information between differing groups. His techniques of data-gathering and presentation must be accessible to non-specialist audiences. His main activity is the collection of definitions of, and reactions to, the program. He offers confidentiality to informants and gives them control over his use of information. The report is non-recommendatory, and the evaluator has no concept of misuse of information. The evaluator engages in periodic negotiation of his relationships with sponsors and program participants. The criterion of success is the range of audiences served. The report aspires to "bestseller" status. The key concepts of democratic evaluation are 'confidentiality', 'negotiation' and 'accessability'. The key justificatory concept is 'the right to know'. 8

Kemmis describes the image of the democratic evaluator as one of the investigative journalist, or open-minded concerned observer who attempts to see that reason wins over political muscle as different views of a program are shared among participants and with program audiences.

While the democratic approach is subject to the failings of illuminative/responsive approaches, it attempts to overcome the political problem of authenticity, and, it attempts to respect the autonomy and responsibility and the reasonableness of program participants. Kemmis believes that this approach does foster the capacity for critical thinking about the program and thus is closest

to the image of evaluation achieving both conviviality and critical capacity.

(f) Evaluation as Self-reflection in a Critical Community

Jevons (1979) ⁹ has remarked that the strategic aim of a tertiary institution is that it become "a learning learning system", that is, a learning system capable of learning from its own experience.

Kemmis states that we must create the means to engage the community of participants (administrators, teachers, students, parents and others) in our programs in the critical debate about them. This self-reflective approach is in some senses the most familiar notion of program evaluation. It is evident whenever program participants discuss the life of the program with a view to understanding it in general and to understanding it within the constraints of its context, or with a view to modifying program practice.

The evaluative dimension of all human activity is present in a range of individual and public judgement processes which exist whether or not an evaluation is formally commissioned or expected of a program's participants. Evaluations then should approximate (and focus and sharpen) these informal critical processes, not ignore or supplant them.

Kemmis' "Seven Principles for Programme Evaluation" ¹⁰ attempt to provide a framework within which conviviality can be preserved by emphasizing the continuity and mutuality of concern between program participants, its sponsor, an evaluation sponsor

and an evaluator. Evaluation forms a natural part of the critical thinking that guides the development process. This is not to say that formal evaluations can lack vigour, discipline and honesty, but rather their critical edge should be tempered with humane values rather than narrowly technocratic or bureaucratic concerns. Thus, the definition of evaluation which informs Kemmis' principle is this:

Evaluation is the process of marshalling information and arguments which enable interested individuals and groups to participate in the critical debate about a specific program. ¹¹

The Democratic Model and the Critical Reflection Model represent current interests and developments in educational evaluation. Both are sensitive to the politics and social consequences of evaluation activities, and the latter particularly values the capacities of program participants to evaluate in both a critical and convivial manner as part of ongoing program development. Aspects of both models were kept in mind while undertaking this evaluation study.

In conclusion, a last reference is made to Davis' (1981) ¹² modification of Stake's (1975) ¹³ 'Nine Approaches to Educational Evaluation' and Straton's (1977) ¹⁴ eight groups or classes of evaluation models. Figure 1, "Different Kinds of Evaluation" presents a modified table by Davis of eleven types of evaluation. The critical point is that these approaches overlap (conceptually and in practice) and an evaluation may draw on several approaches to suit its needs.

TYPE AND PURPOSE	KEY ASPECTS OF APPROACH	MAIN PARTICIPANTS	RISKS/PROBLEMS	PAY-OFFS
1. <u>Goal based:</u> To estimate the attainment of defined goals, instructional processes and antecedent variables.	Describing, monitoring and measuring <u>intended</u> outcomes, processes and antecedents.	Developers, involved teachers and outside evaluators.	Neglects, unintended outcomes and processes; technical inadequacy; bias towards explicit aspirations.	Reveals goals, outcomes, success and shortcomings.
2. <u>Student achievement:</u> (special category of goal based) To measure outcomes related to student attainment.	Selection and administration of achievement tests, exams, and other behavioural outcomes measures.	Examiners, educational psychologists and teachers.	Oversimplifies educational aims; ignores processes; narrow definition of outcomes.	Emphasises and ascertains relative performances of students.
3. <u>Goal free:</u> To induce the actual effects of any program (as distinct from intended effects).	Classroom observations, interviews, examination of a wide range of outcomes (disregard developers goals and objectives).	Outside evaluator unaware of goals (could be a teacher).	Requires fairly sophisticated sensitive evaluation skills.	Provides fresh perspectives and data with relatively little co-option; allows unintended outcomes to be revealed and considered.
4. <u>Panel review:</u> To overview the school's program and affairs.	Gathering and reviewing information during site visits; concentrating on available documents and materials; some interviewing and observing.	Prestigious panel of citizens, relevant experts (could involve teachers from outside the school).	Relies on documented and readily available information; may judge worth by inappropriate standards.	Brings in outside overview and perspective; comparisons with other programs and schools.
5. <u>Institutional self-study:</u> To review and increase staff effectiveness and involvement.	Committee work; standards and approaches determined by staff; discussion and dialogue; mutual co-operation and professionalism.	Teaching staff within a school.	Alienates some staff; ignores values and demands of outsiders.	Increases staff sense of responsibility, professional development and participation.
6. <u>Transaction:</u> To supply ongoing information to curriculum developers.	Frequent interaction between developers and evaluators; change direction according to developers' needs; importance of specific context and issues; classroom observations, trials, case studies, interviews.	Developers (could be teachers); evaluators (could be teachers). (NB: developers and evaluators could be the same people).	Emphasises situational variables; may have limited general application or application over time.	Provides feedback for ongoing modifications and retrieval; responsive to developers' immediate information needs.
7. <u>Surrogate experience:</u> To provide outsiders with a portrayal of school and program activities.	Process, rather than input or outcome, oriented; emphasis on best strategy for obtaining information that gives vicarious experience to outsiders; participant observation and story-telling approach.	Teachers and students; outside evaluators.	Relies on subjective impressions; requires sensitive observation and communication skills.	Provides full description to outsiders; provides evaluators with fresh insights.

Figure 1: Different Kinds of Evaluation (a table modified by Davis, 1981)

* Figure 1: Different Kinds of Evaluation con't....

TYPE AND PURPOSE	KEY ASPECTS OF APPROACH	MAIN PARTICIPANTS	RISKS/PROBLEMS	PAY-OFFS
8. <u>Social policy analysis:</u> To aid development of broad aims and policies.	Analysis of social trends and conditions; assessment of alternative institutional forms.	Sociologists	Neglects educational and situational characteristics, issues and details.	Clarifies social trends, pressures, choices and constraints.
9. <u>Management analysis:</u> To increase organisational rationality in decision-making.	Lists of options; efficiency; cost of estimates; feedback loops.	Managers, economists.	Overvalues efficiency; undervalues personal and social meanings and experiences.	Provides feedback for decision-making on organisational and financial issues.
10. <u>Legal or Adversary:</u> To examine and present both positive and negative perspectives and data.	Preparation of cases for and against a program, activity or experience; classroom observations, interviews, surveys.	An advocate and adversary of the program (both could be teachers or outside evaluators).	Encourages overstatement of advantages or disadvantages; assumes uncommitted and representative 'jury' for 'fair trial'.	Produces strong information impact; claims can be challenged and put to the test; facilitates making judgements of merit.
11. <u>Instructional research:</u> To explain learning, motivation and behaviour; to formulate general explanations and tactics of instruction.	Controlled, experimental conditions; multivariate analysis; development of generalisable models and theories.	Experimentalists in educational psychology.	Accepts artificial conditions and 'treatments'; ignores individual differences and situational variables.	Suggests new ideas and principles for teaching and for developing materials, programs, etc.

*Modified from Stake (1975) and Straton (1977)

In summary

This section examined the characteristic features of five specific approaches to educational evaluation that have evolved from the early Engineering Model to Kemmis' recent Critical Reflection Model. These approaches are cross-referenced with Davis' modified table of eleven evaluation approaches derived from Stake and Straton. From this extensive range of approaches it can be seen that there is greater opportunity than previously to select an approach or combination of approaches to better suit the purposes of an evaluation.

THE STAKE MODEL OF EVALUATION

The Stake Model of Evaluation and the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model of Evaluation (put forward here for comparative purposes) both provide logical, systematic approaches to educational evaluation, but from vastly differing viewpoints. The Stake Model centres on a more descriptive portrayal of an education project, its antecedent conditions, project transactions and project outcomes, and on explanations of what standards, criteria and values are held by whom as a basis for forming judgements about the education project. The CIPP Model accommodates formative evaluation to a greater extent and is intended to assist ongoing educational decision making in four specific stages of a project. Features of both models were useful to this evaluation study.

The following is an explanation of the Stake Model of Evaluation with reference to Stake's article, "The Countenance of Educational Evaluation".¹⁵ Stake claims that educators often fail to perceive what formal evaluation could do if a methodology could be developed that reflects the fullness, complexity and importance of their programs. Little effort is made in formal evaluation activities in education to spell out antecedent conditions and program transactions and couple them with various outcomes; little attempt is made to measure the match between what is intended and what actually happened.

Stake acknowledges that there are a wide range of evaluation purposes and methods which allow for diversity of

perspectives in education. The emphasis of the Stake Model is centred on educational programs not educational products. It assumes that the value of the product depends on its program of use.

The Methodology of Evaluation

The methodology of the Stake Model includes five kinds of activity:

- (a) the model bases evaluation around two major activities: the acts of description (or portrayal) of the project; and, the judging of it in relation to agreed upon criteria. The model operates on a matrix for each of these activities (see Figure 2 which illustrates the Description and Judgement matrices);
- (b) the collection of data forming three kinds of information to be analysed and evaluated: antecedent, transactional and outcome data;
- (c) processing the descriptive evaluation data by locating contingencies, or relationships, among the antecedents, transactions and outcomes, and, finding congruence between the intentions of the program and the observations of the program; and,
- (d) utilizing the results of the evaluation.

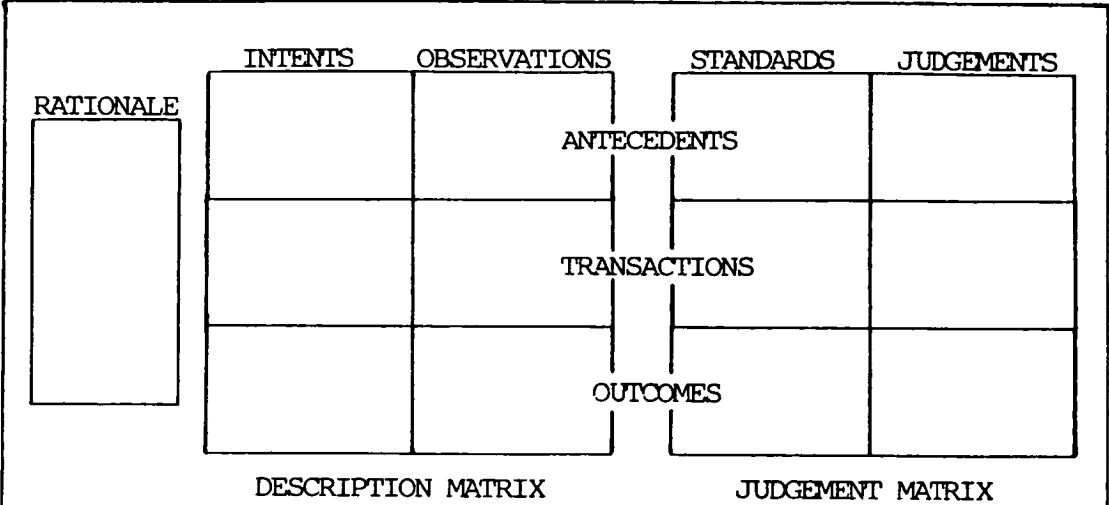


Figure 2 : The Stake Evaluation Model
The Descriptive and Judgement Matrices

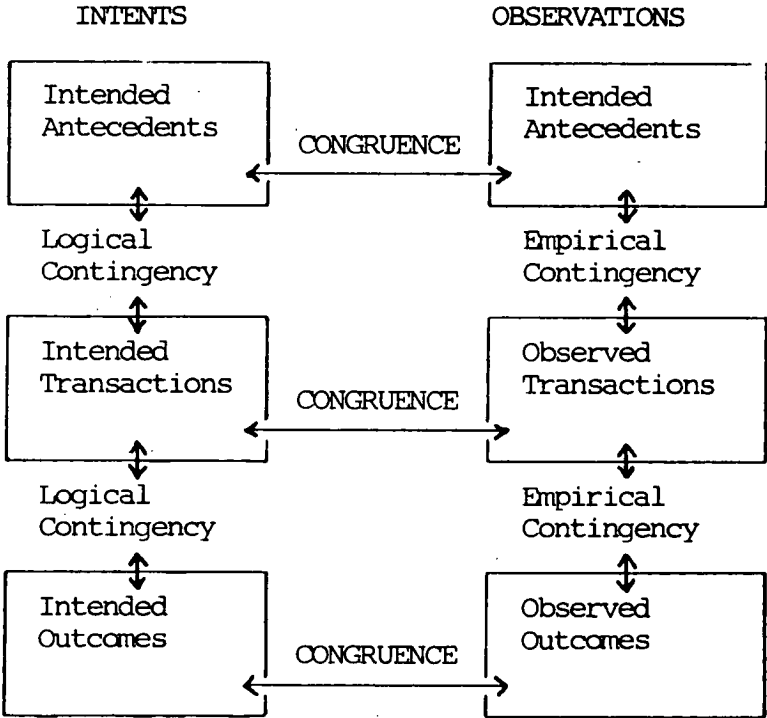


Figure 3 : Congruence and Contingency within the Descriptive Matrix

Description and Judgement

There is an increasing emphasis on fullness of description, whereas previously evaluation had consisted primarily of measuring student progress toward academic objectives. To the traditional description of pupil achievement is added the description of instruction and learning environments, and the description of the relationship between them. In the specific case of evaluating the Parents as Partners Project, description included describing the activities and processes used to involve parents in the educating processes of their children.

With regard to the act of evaluation, Scriven claims that no evaluation is complete until judgement has been passed and that the evaluator is best qualified to judge. However, evaluators are often reluctant to render judgements themselves and find the responsibility of processing the judgements of relevant groups to be more acceptable.

Scriven refers to Taylor and Maguire's selection of five groups with important opinions on education. These groups are, (i) spokesmen from society at large, (ii) subject-matter experts, (iii) teachers, (iv) parents, and, (v) students. An evaluation of an educational program should portray merit and fault perceived by well-identified groups, systematically gathered and processed. Thus, judgement data and descriptive data are both essential to the evaluation program.

Filling in the Data Matrices

Data for an evaluation comes from different sources and is gathered in different ways. Three bodies of information should be sought: antecedent, transactional and outcome data. With reference to Figure 2, the following points explain those parts that make up the Descriptive Matrix of data.

Antecedent means any condition existing prior to the implementation of the program which may relate to the outcomes.

Transactions is that succession of engagements which comprise the process of education. For example, in the case of the Parents as Partners Project, seminar work with parents, parent-teacher collaboration over a child's home reading program and parents taking an active interest in a school's education program comprise transactions. Transactions are dynamic, antecedents and outcomes are relatively static. The boundaries between them are not clear. For example during a transaction we can identify certain outcomes which are feedback antecedents for subsequent learning, understanding and involvement.

Outcomes include not only those evident or existent, but also applications, transfer and relearning effects which may not be available for measurement until long after. Outcomes are the consequences of educating - immediate and long-range, cognitive and conative, personal and community-wide.

Rationale. A statement of the program's rationale is necessary as

part of the evaluation, even if the rationale is only implicit. It provides one basis for evaluating intents, in order to ask whether the plan developed by the educator constitutes a logical step in the implementation of the basic purposes.

Intents includes the planned for conditions, demonstrations, coverage of certain subject matter, as well as planned for student behaviour. In the case of the Parents as Partners Project this meant planned for activities and coverage of information of relevance to parents, in particular. Include in the 'Intents' column, a) desired effects, b) hoped for effects, and, c) those effects which are anticipated, even feared. This class of data includes goals and plans that others have, in this case, especially parents and teachers. It includes what teaching and information giving, as well as learning, are intended. It can include global goals or the detailed goals of the programmer.

Observations. Choices about what variables to observe for evaluation is a subjective decision. Rule out those that would not contribute to an understanding of the educational activity. The choice of characteristics to be observed is as important as selection of measuring techniques.

Processing Descriptive Evaluation Data: Contingency and Congruence

For any one educational program there are two principal ways of processing descriptive evaluation data:

- (i) finding contingencies among antecedents, transactions and outcomes; and,
- (ii) finding congruence between intents and observations.

The data for a program are congruent if what is intended actually happens. With reference to Figure 3 : Congruence and Contingency within the Descriptive Matrix, compare cells containing intents and observations to note discrepancies and to describe the amount of congruence for that row.

The relationships or contingencies among the variables deserve additional attention. "In the sense that evaluation is the search for relationships that permit the improvement of education, the evaluator's task is one of identifying outcomes that are contingent upon particular antecedent conditions and instructional transactions."¹⁶ For example, parent involvement is built upon faith in certain contingencies, such as parent interest and teacher willingness to collaborate. A school that believes in the importance of parent involvement arranges opportunities for interest to be stimulated and collaboration to occur. The success of parent involvement is contingent on both parent and teacher willingness and the school's active support for the idea.

Logical contingency. If there is a logical connection between an intended purpose and an intended transaction, then a logical contingency exists between those two intents.

Empirical contingency. Evaluation of 'Observations' contingencies depends upon empirical evidence, either from the evaluation or research literature. The usual evaluation of a single program will not alone provide data necessary for contingency statements. Previous experience with similar observables is a basic qualification of the evaluator.

Standards and Judgements

No educational project can evaluate the impact of its program without knowledge of what other programs are doing in pursuit of similar objectives. And, neither school grades nor standardised test scores, nor the candid opinions of teachers are very informative as to the excellence of students. Whether local or national, the measurement of excellence requires explicit rather than implicit standards. Part of the responsibility of the evaluator is to make known which standards are held by whom.

There are two bases for judging characteristics of a program:

- (i) with respect to absolute standards as reflected by personal judgements; and,
- (ii) with respect to relative standards as reflected by characteristics of alternate programs.

Before making a judgement the evaluator determines whether or not each standard is met. Unavailable standards must be estimated.

Judging is assigning a weight, an importance to each set of standards. Rational judgement in educational evaluation is a decision as to how to pay attention to the standards (point of view) of each reference group in deciding whether or not to take some administrative action.

The evaluator selects which characteristics to attend to and which reference programs by which to compare. From relative judgement of a program, as well as from absolute judgement, we can obtain an overall or composite rating of merit (perhaps with certain qualifying statements), a rating to be used in making an educational decision. From this final act of judgement a recommendation can be composed.

The evaluator who assumes responsibility for summative evaluation, rather than formative evaluation, accepts the responsibility of informing consumers as to the merit of the program. The judgements diagrammed in Figure 4: The Process of Judging the Merit of an Education Program are the evaluator's targets.

Finally, Stake concludes the outline of the evaluation model with a checklist of evaluation questions.

1. Is this evaluation to be primarily descriptive, primarily judgemental or both descriptive and judgemental?
2. Is the evaluation to emphasise antecedent conditions, transactions or the outcomes alone or in combination, or their functional contingencies?
3. Is this evaluation to indicate the congruence between what is intended and what occurs?

4. Is this evaluation to be undertaken within a single program or as a comparison between two or more programs?
5. Is this evaluation intended more to further the development of curricula or to help choose among available curricula?

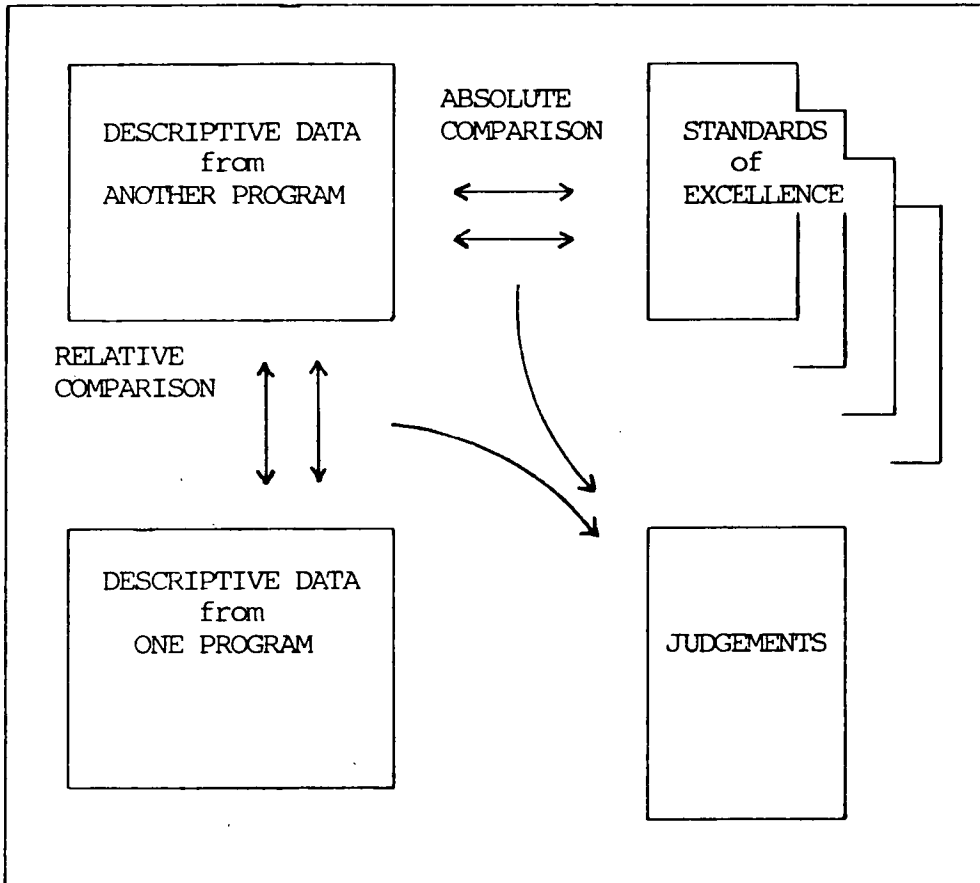


Figure 4: The Process of Judging the Merit of an Education Program

THE CIPP MODEL OF EVALUATION

In contrast to the Stake Model, the CIPP Model of Evaluation was not intended as a possible alternative framework for this evaluation study, although it could be adapted for the purpose. This description of the CIPP Model is meant to show a number of features that are common to many evaluation frameworks, as well as highlight a number of differences in approach to educational evaluation that distinguish Stake's more descriptive approach. The CIPP Model is the earlier organisation development approach. It is still used extensively, particularly as a basis for larger education institution full-scale evaluations, including general institutional arrangements as well as curricula evaluation and student assessment. The Stake Model represents a change in evaluation thinking in the light of the disaffection that such mechanistic and complex approaches as the CIPP Model caused amongst teachers subjected to the time-consuming complexities of the evaluation process without seeing much effective change as a consequence of their efforts.

Stufflebeam (1968) strengthened the relationship between evaluation and decision making with the now familiar CIPP Model. Stufflebeam defines a decision as a choice among alternatives, and a 'decision situation' as a set of alternatives. The CIPP Model has four categories of decision situations and each has a suitable kind of evaluation. The following is a summarisation of the CIPP Model with reference to Stufflebeam's article, "Towards a Science of Educational Evaluation".¹⁷

The CIPP Rationale

- * The quality of programs depends upon the quality of decisions in and about the programs.
- * The quality of decisions depends upon decisionmakers' abilities to identify the alternatives which comprise decision situations and to make sound judgements of these alternatives.
- * Making sound judgements requires timely access to valid and reliable information pertaining to the alternatives.
- * The availability of such information requires systematic means to provide it.
- * The processes necessary for providing this information for decision making collectively comprise the concept of evaluation.

In summary, generally, evaluation means the provision of information through formal means, such as criteria, measurement, and statistics, to serve as rational bases for making judgements in decision situations.

The Methodology of Evaluation

The methodology of evaluation includes four functions: collection, organisation, analysis and reporting of information. Criteria for assessing the adequacy of evaluations include validity (is the information what the decisionmaker needs?), reliability (is the information reproducible?), timeliness (is the information available when the decisionmaker needs it?), pervasiveness (does the information reach all decisionmakers who need it?), and credibility (is the information trusted by the decisionmaker and those he must serve?).

The Decision Situations that Evaluation can Serve

The functions of decision situations in education may be classified as planning, programming, implementing and recycling. Planning decisions are those which focus needed improvements by specifying the domain, major goals and specific objectives to be served. Programming decisions specify procedure, personnel, facilities, budget and time requirements for implementing planned activities. Implementing decisions are those in directing programmed activities. Finally, recycling decisions include terminating, continuing, evolving or drastically modifying activities.

Given these four kinds of educational decisions to be served Stufflebeam puts forward four kinds of evaluation. These are portrayed as Context, Input, Process and Product evaluation. The CIPP Model with its four kinds of evaluation is reproduced in Figure 5 : The CIPP Evaluation Model.

Developing a Design for Implementing the Evaluation

Once an evaluator has selected an evaluation strategy, he or she must develop a design to implement the evaluation. Stufflebeam envisages that the completed evaluation design would contain a set of decisions about how the evaluation will be conducted and what instruments will be used. He proposes a list of decision situations common to many designs, which gives a systematic approach to the problems of evaluation design. The list is reproduced in Figure 6 : Developing Evaluation Designs.

THE STRATEGIES:

	CONTEXT EVALUATION	INPUT EVALUATION	PROCESS EVALUATION	PRODUCT EVALUATION
OBJECTIVE	To define the operation context, to identify and assess needs in the context, and to identify and delineate problems underlying the needs	To identify and assess system capabilities, available input strategies, and designs for implementing the strategies	To identify or predict, in process, defects in the procedural design or its implementation, and to keep a record of procedural events and activities	To relate outcome information to objectives and to context, input and process information
METHOD	By describing individually and in relevant perspectives major sub-systems of the context; by comparing actual and intended inputs and outputs of sub-systems; by analysing possible discrepancies between actualities and intentions	By describing and analysing available human material resources, solution strategies, and procedural designs for relevance, feasibility and economy in the course of action to be taken	By monitoring the activity's potential procedural barriers and remaining alert to unanticipated ones	By defining operationally and measuring criteria associated with the objectives, by comparing these measurements with pre-determined standards or comparative bases, and by interpreting outcomes in terms of recorded output and process information
RELATION TO DECISION MAKING IN THE CHANGE PROCESS	For deciding upon the setting to be served, the goals associated with meeting needs and objectives associated with solving problems, ie., for planning needed changes	For selecting sources of support, solution strategies and procedural designs, ie., for programming change activities	For implementing and refining the program design and procedure, ie., for effecting process control	For deciding to continue, terminate, modify or refocus a change activity, and for linking the activities to other major phases of the change process, ie., for evolving change activities

Figure 5: The CIPP Evaluation Model

A Classification Scheme of Strategies for Evaluating Educational Change

THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF EVALUATION DESIGN IS THE SAME FOR CONTEXT, INPUT, PROCESS AND PRODUCT EVALUATION.

The parts are as follows:

A. FOCUSING THE EVALUATION

1. Identify the major levels of decision making, eg., local, state, national
2. For each level, project the decision situations to be served. Describe each in terms of its locus, focus, timing and composition of alternatives
3. Define criteria for each decision situation by specifying variables for measurement and standards for use in the judgement of alternatives
4. Define policies within which the evaluation must operate (eg., self-evaluation, outside evaluation)

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

1. Specify the source of information to be collected
2. Specify instruments and methods for collecting
3. Specify the sampling procedure to be employed
4. Specify conditions and schedule for collecting

C. ORGANISATION OF INFORMATION

1. Specify a format for the information which is to be collected

2. Specify means for coding, organising, storing and retrieving information

D. ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION

1. Specify the analytical procedures to follow
2. Specify a means for performing the analysis

E. REPORTING THE INFORMATION

1. Define the audiences for evaluation reports
2. Specify means for providing information
3. Specify format for evaluation reports and/or reporting sessions
4. Schedule for reporting of information

F. ADMINISTRATION OF THE EVALUATION

1. Summarise the evaluation schedule
2. Define staff and resource requirements and plans for meeting these requirements
3. Specify means for meeting policy requirements for the conduct of the evaluation
4. Evaluate the potential of the evaluation design for providing information which is valid, reliable, credible, timely and pervasive
5. Specify and schedule means for updating evaluation design periodically
6. Provide a budget for the evaluation program

Figure 6: Developing Evaluation Designs

Reasons for Choosing the Stake Model

At the opening of this chapter Stufflebeam's definition of evaluation was put forward as appropriate for the context of this evaluation study; that is, "evaluation can be regarded as the process of delineating, obtaining and providing information useful for making judgements and decisions." (p. 34) Stufflebeam strengthened the relationship between evaluation and decision making with the now familiar CIPP Model of evaluation.

Both the CIPP Model and the Stake Model provide logical, systematic approaches to evaluation, and in this respect both models provide different methodologies for achieving the same ends; although Stake, in particular, strives for a qualitative difference in how the evaluation is conducted and the information presented.

From experience, both models are difficult to implement. Both models would require considerable knowledge of the model and commitment to the evaluation project if they were to be undertaken without the assistance of an outside evaluation facilitator with the time available to undertake much of the work. For this reason neither is as useful for the more recent interest in evaluation - undertaken by project participants themselves to assist program planning and evaluation - as current 'action-research' and 'participative' approaches to educational evaluation.

With regard to the Parents as Partners Project, the Stake Model emphasised three features of the evaluation process that

were more useful and sympathetic to the nature of the project than the CIPP Model. These features are listed.

(a) The choice of method for gathering and analysing project information into three categories of data - antecedent, transactional and outcomes. This allowed for breadth of description of the project within a coherent data framework. It allowed for a wide range of sources of data, even though not all sources were able to be tapped within the present constraints of this evaluation study.

(b) The model allows for the assumption that evaluation can be a participatory activity, which can include, in fact be guided by, not only the interests and values of the evaluators but also the participants who have worked on, or benefited from, the project. The model can allow for different purposes of evaluation and can seek out some of the standards by which to judge the project from amongst these participant groups.

(c) The model gives clear guidelines about: (i) the process of selecting criteria for the purpose of making judgements about the merit of the project; and, (ii) particular emphasis on one set of standards which consists of identifying contingencies among the antecedents, transactions and outcomes and determining whether there is congruence between the intentions of the program and what actually occurred.

In summary

This chapter considered the meaning and purpose of evaluation in relation to education projects or programs. The Stake Model of Evaluation was described at length and the CIPP Model offered by way of a comparison. The reasons were given for the choice of the Stake Model as the framework for portraying, analysing and evaluating the Parents as Partners Project.

Although both models provide a logical, systematic approach to the evaluation process of "delineating, obtaining and providing information useful for making decisions and judgments", the Stake Model provided three features that were useful to the specific nature of the Parents as Partners Project. These features are: (a) the choice of method for gathering and processing project data; (b) the provision for evaluation to be a participatory activity; and (c) clear guidelines for the selection of criteria for judging the project, including the criterion of congruence between project intentions and actual outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Chapter Four consists of a description of the process that was undertaken in evaluating the Parents as Partners Project. It describes: how the information was gathered and organised, according to the Stake Model of Evaluation; how features of the project were selected for analysis, within the constraints of this evaluation study; and, how judgement criteria were decided upon in order to evaluate those selected features of the project.

The Purpose of the Evaluation Study

In October 1981, prior to the closure of the Parents as Partners Project, a group of participants considered the purpose of having the project documented and reviewed. The purpose of the evaluation study was to examine the nature, extent, objectives, operation and outcomes of the project after its four years of operation from 1977 to 1981. Participants of the project hoped that such a study would provide a useful overview that would allow for:

- * critical analysis of the project's intended aims and activities compared with its actual outcomes, whether planned or unanticipated;
- * the project to be set in a broader educational context, in order to examine a number of issues raised by the participants; and,

- * documentation and interpretation of project data for future developments in parental involvement in education.

In particular, participants raised three questions of interest.

The questions were:

- (a) Who should assist parents in the task of building their confidence for participation in children's education?
- (b) How is it determined whether the project was good value as a resource user in the face of competing priorities?
- (c) How can the impact of the project be measured?

Since the evaluation study was undertaken within the scope of a dissertation for the Degree of Master of Education (Coursework), there were constraints on funding, extensive information compiling and on measurement procedures which would be required to analyse the wider impact of the Parents as Partners Project both on the community and on broader developments in education, in Tasmania in particular. The evaluation study narrowed its perspectives to the specific interests of the main participants of the project, and to providing a modest foundation of project data within an educational framework while testing the Stake Model of Evaluation. With this in mind, the evaluation study was carried out in the following manner.

Gathering and Organising Information

Following the meeting with project participants, in which

the purposes of the evaluation study were established, material for the study was gathered in the following ways:

- (a) a literature search was undertaken, (i) to identify educational developments that occurred prior to and during the project in Australia, and those of some influence from Britain and America; and, (ii) to seek out an evaluation model suitable for assisting in the evaluation of this kind of project;
- (b) project personnel made project documentation available;
- (c) and, each member of the project team, as well as a number of others who had direct experience of supporting the project, was interviewed personally.

Two sets of questions relevant to the evaluation study were drawn up and sent to project staff in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart in advance of the interviews. Each participant who was interviewed was given opportunity to discuss at length aspects of the project that were to be evaluated as well as any other aspects that he or she felt to be of importance. The interviews were conducted with reference to Kemmis' "Seven Principles of Evaluation" (Kemmis, 1982).¹ The resulting transcripts, from the tapes and handwritten interviews, were compiled with the criteria of "fairness, accuracy and relevance"² in the reporting of the views of others. The questions for discussion at the interviews are reproduced in Figures 7 and 8.

THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT
EVALUATION STUDY

Questions for discussion with the Executive Officer
of the Parents as Partners Project, and with the
Chairman of the State Services and Development Committee,
the Committee responsible for the Project

1.0 INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

- .1 Why was the Parents as Partners Project set up?
- .2 What was the project intended to do?
- .3 Who was involved in putting the first submission to the Schools Commission for funding?
- .4 What were the guidelines by which the Education Department operated the project with Schools Commission funds?
- .5 What was the role of the State Services and Development Committee in relation to the project?
- .6 What was your role in relation to the project?
- .7 Comment on the process of establishing the project at each regional Teachers Centre. What effects, if any, did the project have on the operations of each centre?

2.0 PROJECT INTENTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- .1 Four main areas of project activity include, the newspaper, Parent, the Mobile Resource Van, the Home Reading Scheme, and the work of the Parent Liaison Advisors. What were the intended aims of each area of activity? Were there any other significant areas of activity?
- .2 Did the project have adequate resources of money, materials, time, personnel, expertise and support from other groups in order to achieve the aims of the project?
- .3 List those groups who contributed resources and/or support, either formally or informally, to the project.
- .4 What aspects of the project have been of greatest benefit in terms of developments which would not have occurred otherwise?

1/2...

Figure 7: Questions for discussion with participants
of the Parents as Partners Project

Figure 7 continued ...

- 2.5 What aspects have been most difficult to contend with, both external and internal aspects, in working towards the objectives of the project?
- .6 To what extent do the project's activities and achievements actually reflect the intentions of the project?
- .7 In what respects did opportunities to involve parents fall short of requirements needed to achieve the intended outcomes of the project?
- 3.0 COMMUNICATION, DECISION MAKING AND EVALUATION
- .1 Was the progress of the project communicated within the Education Department structure?
- .2 How sustained was project contact with, (i) community, (ii) school staffs, (iii) principals, (iv) Parents and Friends Associations, and (v) parents?
- .3 Did the project experiment in any way with consultation and decision making processes that involved parents?
- .4 Over the four years, how did consultation and decision making processes operate within the project with regard to:
 - (a) setting priorities for the use of time on particular tasks;
 - (b) modifying changes of direction in the light of project experience; and,
 - (c) assimilating parent and teacher ideas into project activities?
- .5 In what ways was the project monitored and its effectiveness evaluated throughout the four years?
- .6 How can successive projects, involving parents in children children's learning, develop procedures to improve the value and relevance of their own programs?

THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

EVALUATION STUDY

Questions for discussion with Project Co-ordinator
and Parent Liaison Officers

1. What needs existed that made the project necessary, and, what were the aims of the project?
2. Who were you immediately responsible to, and, in what ways did you participate in the decision making processes of the project?
3. Describe,
 - (a) the nature, extent and adequacy of the resources used in the project; and,
 - (b) the nature of the support, both formal and informal, that you had for implementing your job within the project.
4. Describe the nature of your work, giving examples of each kind of task.
5. In what ways was the project communicated, and, how sustained was contact with schools, Parents and Friends Associations and parents?
6. In what ways did you monitor the project and evaluate its effectiveness over four years?
7. Describe what aspects of the project have been,
 - (a) of greatest benefit in terms of developments which would not have occurred otherwise; and,
 - (b) the most difficult in working towards your objectives.
8. Given the time again, what changes would you make for the project?
9. In what ways would you like to see the project influencing future developments in the field of parent participation in school-based learning?

Figure 8: Questions for discussion with participants of the
Parents as Partners Project

Project documentation and related literature was reviewed in order to gain an understanding of the nature of the project and its activities, the antecedent conditions of the project, and concurrent developments in parent involvement in education in Australia. With some understanding of the project and the purposes of the evaluation study established, a number of evaluation models were reviewed in order to find a suitable framework for evaluating the project. The reasons for choosing the Stake Model of Evaluation are given in Chapter Three.

With the selection of the evaluation model, the evaluation methodology then followed the outline of the Stake Model with its six characteristic evaluation activities as outlined in Chapter Three. Project data was categorised into antecedent, transactional or outcomes data in order to be analysed within the two data matrices - the Descriptive Matrix and the Judgement Matrix - of the Stake Model. Distribution of the material into the matrices, in the form of project features, analysis and evaluation are recorded and tabled in Chapter Six.

Selection of Project Features and Criteria for Evaluation

The selection of twenty features of the project for evaluation was a subjective activity. In this instance, selection was made with reference to each feature's relevance to the project's underlying rationale, as well as to those aspects that were continually remarked upon as important by the participants of the project, or seemed to be of relevance from the outside point of

view of the evaluator. These features are listed in Chapter Six.

Relative success or failure of features of the project was determined, where possible, according to specified criteria, standards and values drawn from a number of sources. Taylor and Maguire's five groups with important opinions on education (p.51) was helpful. These groups are, (i) spokesmen from society at large, (ii) subject-matter experts, (iii) teachers, (iv) parents, and (v) students. For the Parents as Partners Project, the following groups hold views of some importance: educators and researchers working in the field of parent involvement, the Australian Schools Commission, the Tasmanian Education Department, schools and their Parents and Friends Associations and parent groups, individual teachers, parents and students who have had some association with or experience of the services of the project.

The criteria for judgement varied according to each feature being evaluated, although a common criterion was the assessment of the extent to which each feature achieved what was intended by the aims of the project.

In the analysis of each project feature, as described in Chapter Six, the criteria for judgement are stated. These are derived from groups who hold relevant views on the matter. Although an evaluative opinion is not always directly given, evidence of standards by which to evaluate is sought from a number of places, such as research literature, funding guidelines, project aims and participant interviews. However, as mentioned before, due to the constraints of this evaluation study, direct evidence about the impact of the Parents as Partners Project from several sources,

such as parents, teachers and students is noticeably incomplete. This aspect remains an area for further investigation. Where evidence is unknown or information incomplete, it can only be stated that this is the case at present and no conclusions be drawn.

In conclusion, the judgements made about the features of the Parents as Partners Project are drawn together and discussed in the light of the original purposes of the evaluation study. The discussion addresses the specific interests of the project participants and considers what has been gained by the experience of the project that might have implications for future developments. The conclusions address a wider audience in concluding with a number of recommendations.

Analysing the Data

Twenty features of the Parents as Partners Project were selected for evaluation. For the purpose of illustrating the analysis and judgement processes, presented as a summary in the Descriptive and Judgement Matrices in Chapter Six, one of the transactional features is described here in some detail. This feature comprises the role and activities of the Parent Liaison Advisors. The other nineteen features were dealt with in a similarly detailed fashion; however, the full explanation of each is not included here as it would result in a large and cumbersome document.

A. Project Feature: The Role and Activities of the Three Parent Liaison Advisors (PLAs)

The role of the PLAs, along with central support staff and

Committee, the Services Branch and the three regional Teachers Centres, represent the necessary structure of the project. The existence of the roles of the PLAs was contingent upon the aims and antecedent conditions of the project. From within this structure the PLAs were the project implementers. The transactional features summarised in the Matrices in Chapter Six represent those broad areas of activities that were undertaken.

B. Intents: The intention was that the PLAs should promote the aims and activities of the project in all regions of the state. This was achieved by: (i) publicizing the project's aims and services; and, (ii) by facilitating activities that would assist schools, teachers and parents to further increase understanding of parental involvement, and, involve parents in children's learning to a greater extent.

C. Observations: Although grouped as one project feature, the activities of the PLAs involved a multiplicity of formal and informal transactions too numerous to detail in any but the most general sense, and each with its own anticipated and/or unanticipated outcomes. In essence the PLAs were: promoters, facilitators, implementers, educators and change agents. They were employed for twenty hours per week and were available to respond to requests from 320 schools and their Parents and Friends Associations, as well as other groups throughout the state.

The PLAs adhered to their job descriptions in undertaking the following activities:

- * responding to requests for project information and materials;
- * addressing teachers and parent groups about parental involvement and the aims and services of the project;

- * initiating, assisting or facilitating parent-teacher and parent-teacher-child activities in learning;
- * initiating, assisting or facilitating parent learning activities, such as discussion groups, films, guest speakers and parent seminars;
- * liaising between schools and parent groups and generally providing a focus for the issue of parent involvement; and,
- * administrative and reporting responsibilities, such as monthly reports to the State Co-ordinator containing records of parent activities and attendance, new ideas, materials and literature and local developments and issues.

Evidence of these project activities undertaken by the PLAs was derived from the project documentation, such as monthly reports and PLA reports, as well as descriptions from sources outside the project. It was also taken from transcripts of interviews with all project staff and a number of project participants from within the Education Department.

D. Standards: The criteria for evaluating the roles and activities of the PLAs were derived from a number of sources. Conclusions drawn about the effectiveness of the PLAs can only be general statements. These statements are qualified by stating that they are based on information drawn from (i) educational thinking, research and fieldwork at the time, (ii) Australian Schools Commission guidelines and the Education Department's views in education reports and as indicated by their actions towards the project, (iii) the personal experience of project participants, from policy making level to implementation levels, and, (iv) the views and interpretations of the evaluator.

First, the performance of the PLAs was observed in relation to the job descriptions and the aims of the project. Next, their own observations of what worked well and what didn't work well in the

project's activities was noted. The PLAs were able to consider how realistic the expectations of the job proved to be, how supportive the structure, the schools and community and how they viewed the response to the project over the four years.

Another source for criteria was the research literature on parent involvement. The experience of other projects and research studies forms one basis for comparison. Despite the difficulties of establishing direct links between parental involvement and levels of achievement, most surveys of the research literature still conclude with recommendations for developing parent involvement as one means of contributing to school effectiveness. More directly related to the Parents as Partners Project, the funding guidelines of the Australian Schools Commission make the criteria of "devolution of responsibility" and "community involvement" quite explicit.

The notions of change and innovation in education, as promoted by the Australian Schools Commission, also require another set of criteria by which to judge project effectiveness. The sources of these criteria are to be found in the theory and practice of educational management. The Education Department, regional Teachers Centres, schools and parent groups all represent complex social organisations with a continual need to interrelate with groups outside their own boundaries. How open, how flexible, what support for change? How the project was designed and implemented had as much consequence for its success or otherwise as the content of project activities.

Notably, the school principals, teachers, parents and parent

groups, and students could provide most valuable observations and views with which to assess some of the impact of the project; although, unfortunately, these views were not able to be surveyed within the constraints of this evaluation study.

From the views of all those sources indicated, a useful set of criteria, relevant to examining the roles and activities of the PLAs, was established. The following is a list of the relevant standards and values, although it must be noted that not all values are adhered to with the same degree of interest by all groups concerned. The values are:

- (a) Parent involvement is valuable and schools should increase their parent involvement.
- (b) Rather than centrally imposed policies for change, field-based change is desirable, and regional support should assist this.
- (c) Parent involvement is only one priority in providing for children's education with finite resources.
- (d) Project staff must be flexible, communicate project aims effectively, and work well with teachers and parents.
- (e) Evidence of successful parent involvement and its relation to learning is important for increasing support.
- (f) Educational evaluation is useful for project development.
- (g) Parents should be involved in the design and implementation of parent involvement projects.

E. Judgements: The findings and judgements are listed below. They are relevant to the roles and activities of the PLAs, as well as to other, inter-related features of the project.

1. The project's aims, activities and outcomes were congruent with the value that parent involvement is important.
2. The project reached its target groups of parents and teachers by operating at local level through the PLAs.
3. The project offered a service to interested schools and parent groups. Some schools did not accept, but very many did. The PLAs noted that change was less likely to occur where a school principal was not interested to increase parent involvement.
4. The project operated within the State's education system. This gave credibility and resources to a statewide project, but drew some criticism about a parent involvement project owned by educators. Parents were recipients rather than partners in practice, especially with regard to project planning.
5. Staff communication between the regions was considered to be valuable by all project staff.
6. Teachers Centres in each region provided excellent resources and support. All PLAs appreciated the support of the Executive Officer of each Teachers Centre.
7. Each member of the project staff fulfilled her role with

enthusiasm and commitment, each providing an invaluable contribution to the project as a whole.

8. As the PLA position had no precedent, PLAs felt some isolation and uncertainty in aspects of their work. They would have liked more staff development activity for aspects of their work.
9. PLAs had insufficient time to meet job expectations within a part-time position. They were unable to work at any depth with individual groups and found this to be frustrating on many occasions. They worked overtime, without pay, continuously because of their interest and belief in the importance of the work.
10. PLAs were paid insufficiently for the nature and responsibility of the work. They had no pay increase or professional training throughout the four years of the project.
11. Individual staff members were interested in evaluation throughout the project. However, evaluation processes were not built in with program planning so evaluation efforts were insufficient and lacking in direction.
12. Project staff have sufficient contact with schools, parent groups and individual teachers and parents to implement a more systematic survey for evidence of the wider impact of the project in schools throughout Tasmania.
13. PLAs experienced some difficulties relying on communication channels to teachers and parents through some principals

and some Parents and Friends Associations.

14. Many Parents and Friends Associations invited project staff to speak about the project. PLAs generally had more requests from schools and parent groups than they could handle in the limited time available.
15. Parent and teacher responses to seminars and activities, facilitated by PLAs or promoted through the project, indicate that considerable participation, learning and enjoyment took place. This highlights the importance of the project staff's educating as well as facilitating role.
16. After four years of experience, project staff concluded that the aims and activities of the project were still relevant and important to pursue. The Schools Commission concurs with this view in as much as it was prepared to continue funding into a fifth year.
17. Although central and regional education structures supported the project, once Schools Commission funding was discontinued, the positions of the PLAs were not continued. Support for parent involvement was re-directed into the Tasmanian School Improvement Program. The development of this program would be directly and indirectly based on the experience gained through the Parents as Partners Project. For example, consultation with parents in project planning within schools has been acknowledged as one lesson gained from the experience of the Parents as Partners.

The evidence contained in project documentation and participant interviews gives many individual examples of project outcomes occurring through each project transaction. It also contained many of the judgements, opinions, observations and values of the participants along the way. This, along with the literature and educational views and priorities of the major resource providers, as well as the views of the evaluator, provided a basis for making evaluative statements about the project and the relation of the PLAs to the project.

In summary

In summary, this Chapter has described how the data were gathered and organised, how features of the project were selected for analysis, how judgement criteria were decided upon, and how a single feature of the project, that is, the role of the PLAs, was analysed and evaluated for the purpose of illustrating the evaluation process.

CHAPTER FIVE

REVIEW OF PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

The review of documentation of the Parents as Partners Project is intended to indicate the nature of the project, its structure and transactions. The documentation consisted of four kinds of primary source materials which, when cross-referenced with secondary source descriptions and reports, allowed for the construction of as broad and coherent a picture as possible of the developments that took place during the life of the project. These categories of primary documentation are:

- (a) literature sources acknowledged by the project as influential in project thinking;
- (b) documentary evidence of the project;
- (c) project literature and materials for publication and dissemination; and,
- (d) transcripts of interviews with project participants.

Although a representative sample of documentation is referred to in this chapter, a more comprehensive listing is provided in the bibliography of this evaluation study.

The four kinds of primary source materials were:

- (a) literature used by project personnel as reference materials; that is, source documents for the project, acknowledged as influential in shaping the directions of some aspects of the project;
- (b) documentary evidence compiled during the design and implementation of the project, such as, guidelines, submissions, progress reports and correspondence;
- (c) materials and literature specifically designed for distribution by the project team; and,
- (d) documentation that resulted from interviews with those participants who had direct experience in the implementation of the project.

A. Literature sources acknowledged by the project

Several texts and documents were acknowledged sources of reference for the development of the Parents as Partners Project. These sources provided research evidence which gave weight to project proposals, ideas that were adapted to an Australian context, and the impetus for innovation.

A prime example is the development of the project's "Listen to Me Read" home reading scheme which involved parents in listening to their children read for ten to fifteen minutes each day. The scheme was designed and implemented based on reports of

the success of the Haringey Reading Project, a British research project which was set up from 1976 to 1979 (see pp.29-30).

Kudelka describes the Tasmanian "Listen to Me Read" scheme in "Parents - the Unlimited Resource!" (Kudelka, 1980)¹ and Listen to Me Read - a Tasmanian Beginning (Kudelka, 1982).² The initial, small pilot study was run at Howrah Primary School in 1979, followed by similar tests at Geeveston and Cygnet schools. By 1980 fourteen schools in Tasmania had tried the scheme. By the end of 1981 over forty schools had utilized the program and it was still going well in 1982, even after the closure of the Parents as Partners Project. Although funds were sought for an evaluation of a home reading scheme "where reading did improve dramatically in three to four months"³ the project was not successful in gaining funds for implementing the more specific pre and post measurement procedures of children's reading ability.

Reports of the Haringey Reading Project (Hewison, 1981)⁴ were reproduced in pamphlet form (Edwards, 1982)⁵ and continue to be distributed as Education Department material after the closure of the project.

Similarly, other reference materials have been sources of ideas for the project, often quoted as research evidence or adapted for local purposes. Much of the literature reviewed at the beginning of this chapter, American and British research studies and reports, were utilized in this way. Some of the material simply provided the indirect influence of educational

thought that was under general discussion by educators at that time. The references most frequently made throughout the duration of the project were to writings by Douglas (1964),⁶ Plowden (1967),⁷ Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1979),⁸ Levenstein (1978),⁹ Bausell and Bausell (1979),¹⁰ Glynn (et al., 1980),¹¹ Keynes (1980),¹² Cove (1980),¹³ and, reports about the American Head Start, Home Start and Follow Through Programs.

B. Documentary evidence of the project

Parents as Partners Project personnel gave access to many records of the project as evidence of how the project was structured and what events actually took place over the four years. Documents included guidelines, submissions, monthly report sheets, reports by individual project staff members, budgets, Committee annual reports, correspondence and so on. The material was primarily descriptive. Project data collection and documentation had not been specifically directed towards evaluation activities as a formal part of project planning and management, although PLAs' monthly reports and attendance figures at seminars were two effective forms of monitoring progress. At an informal level, some individual project staff members had expressed an interest in evaluation at earlier stages in the project and subsequently had produced a small number of quite full accounts of their activities and their perceptions of the responses to the project from their regions.

The prime project document outlines the aims of the

Parents as Partners Project. From it follows the project's activities and the job descriptions of project personnel. For evaluation purposes it provides one set of criteria by which to ascertain the congruence between project intentions, actual activities and related outcomes.

The project's aims were:

- * to increase parent awareness of educational issues;
- * to promote parent education activities that enhance student learning;
- * to improve generally the quality of parent involvement in education; and,
- * to have all such activities assist in developing partnerships between parents and teachers.

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The project worked towards its aims by developing the following activities:

- * a Home Reading Program for young children, involving their parents and teachers;
- * a Mobile Resource Van stocked with relevant literature, materials and displays for teachers and parents;
- * Parent Liaison Advisor's visits to schools and parent groups to organise discussions, seminars and activities relevant to the aims of the project; and,
- * a state-wide newspaper for parents, with parents on the editorial staff.

From this essential framework project records assisted in tracing the evolution of the project; for example, the role of the Parent Liaison Advisors.

The suggested criteria for the selection of Parent Liaison Advisors was:

The selected person should: (a) have the capacity to gain the confidence of parent groups and teachers; (b) understand the concepts involved in this work (that parental involvement in a child's education is a major contributing factor in achievement); (c) ... communicate these ideas effectively...; (d) translate these ideas into practical terms...; (e) have the capacity to organise activities and materials that would lead to the development of the required knowledge and skills (for the implementation of these ideas)...; and, (f) be prepared to read widely, be self-starting, and be available at flexible times. 15

In brief, the Parent Liaison Advisors were employed, at an Education Assistant salary level, to work on the project for twenty hours per week, each based at a regional Teachers Centre. Their duties included visiting schools and parent groups to arrange seminars and discussions, and to support activities relevant to the aims of the project.

The Parent Liaison Advisors reported to the State Co-ordinator of the project on a "Monthly News and Statistics" sheet.¹⁶ They gave attendance figures for seminars, mentioned new contacts, parent and teacher responses to the project's activities, suggested reading and resource materials, and noted issues of local and current concern. The Co-ordinator received these monthly reports, extracted relevant statistical information and re-circulated the current information amongst all Parent Liaison Advisors in each region.

By the end of the first year of the project, the State Services and Development Committee reported:

Through their links with established parent associations, their representation on Schools Commission committees and their contacting of all organisers of development activities involving parents, the project members have performed a most important function. They have established a flow of information between parents and the schools, Schools Commission committees and the Education Department, including the Division of Further Education.¹⁷

Further, the Development Committee describes the 'snowballing' effect of the project's efforts throughout 1979 and 1980, stating that the "notable increase in the number of parent attenders is an indication of the successful work of the Parents as Partners team".¹⁸ It supports its claim from the Committee's "Statistics Sheet for 1980"¹⁹ which states that although the number of activities provided for teachers and parents fell by 22.3% from 1979, the number of parent attenders increased by 136% to 2,392 parents attending in 1980.

As they felt the need arise, some of the Parent Liaison Advisors also produced reports about their activities, their own observations of the project and the responses of the parents and teachers with which they worked. Two examples are an early report by Godman, entitled North West Parent Liaison Advisors Report for 1979 (Godman, 1979),²⁰ and Some Thoughts on the Parents as Partners Project (Phelp, 1980),²¹ the latter containing the views of a number of parents as part of a description of how far things had progressed in the Northern region.

These project records, and many similar documents and

reports, contributed to the construction of an overall picture and provided factual background for those project features that were selected for evaluation.

C. Project literature and materials for distribution

Project literature was especially prepared for communication to parents and teachers. There were two main forms of communication. These were the distribution of a newspaper, Parent,²² to all schools and their Parents and Friends Associations, and the production of a range of useful and informative brochures, cards and pamphlets.

Parent reached publication numbers of 50,000 per edition. Its content reflected the aims of the project and included contributions from parents and teachers. The newspaper format, use of photographs and language, was aimed at a wide general audience of readers. The paper highlighted the positive parent involvement activities that were occurring in schools. A number of parents also formed part of the paper's Editorial Committee. At the close of the Parents as Partners Project the paper was initially offered to the Tasmanian State Schools Council of Parents and Friends but has since become an Education Department publication with one page available for parent contributions.

Project materials were printed through the Education Department's Services Branch. They were displayed, publicised and distributed through the efforts of project personnel and the Mobile Resource Van. They assisted such aspects of the project

as the "Listen to Me Read" program and film discussions with parents. As the project became more widely known requests for materials have increased, including some requests from interstate. At the close of the project the Education Department has continued to produce some of the materials; and, requests for materials, both locally and from other interested organisations around Australia, has also continued.

A representative list of project materials included the following titles:

- "Your Instant Guide to the Parents as Partners Project"²³
- "Transition from Primary School to High School"²⁴
- "Parent Teacher Interviews" ²⁵
- "Millie and Walter went to Read" ²⁶
- "Parents as Partners Mobile Resource Van" ²⁷
- "Parents as Partners Feedback Sheets" ²⁸
- "Listen to Me Read" ²⁹
- "Home Reading Cards" ³⁰

D. Interviews with project participants

Documentary evidence was vital for the purpose of the evaluation, but it did not convey the enthusiasms and frustrations that were also a valid part of the experience of working on an innovative educational project, such as Parents as Partners. Nor could it portray the range of viewpoints and different values that each individual brings to the collective endeavour of a state-wide project that attempts to promote parent participation

to more than 320 schools.

A fuller description was gained by interviewing the main participants, that is, those who were employed to work on the project and some others who had direct experience of supporting the project. The nature of the evaluation study prevented a more extensive sample of people being interviewed, in particular, a representative sample from the many teachers, parents and students who had shared in Parents as Partners assisted activities over its four year duration.

The results of the personal interviews were a series of transcripts containing a wide range of personal observations, critical reflections, anecdotes, and correlations with the documentary evidence of the project. The list of interview questions are reproduced in Chapter Four of this evaluation study.

CHAPTER SIX

PORTRAYAL OF THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT WITHIN THE STAKE MODEL

This chapter contains an analysis of the Parents as Partners Project using the Stake Model of Evaluation as a framework. Twenty main features of the project were selected for evaluation and then "meshed" into the two data matrices - the Descriptive Matrix and the Judgement Matrix - of the evaluation model. The standards held by relevant groups are made explicit as part of the evaluation of the features, as illustrated in Chapter Four. A summary of the analysis is given in table form here.

Selection of Project Features

The selection of twenty features of the project for evaluation was a subjective activity. In this instance, selection was made with reference to each feature's relevance to the project's underlying rationale, as well as to those aspects that were continually referred to as important by the participants of the project, or seemed to be of relevance from the outside point of view of the evaluator.

The material comprising the twenty main features of the Parents as Partners Project was distributed into one of three data categories. These categories are:

- (a) antecedent data which describes the conditions existing prior to the project which may relate to the outcomes;
- (b) transactional data which describes the actual activities of the project; and,

- (c) outcome data which is information about the results of the project.

Thus, with reference to the Parents as Partners Project, there were four antecedent conditions that influenced the project and its directions; ten transactional features (that is, four that contributed to project structures and six that comprised project activities); and six outcomes that occurred, in some part, as a consequence of the project. These twenty features are listed in Figure ⁹, in relation to the project's rationale.

The Descriptive Matrix

Once the twenty features of the project had been identified and categorised (Fig. 9), all features were then described in some detail in relation to, (i) the intentions, stated or implied, which had some effect on the plans or activities of the project, and, (ii) observations of what was seen to actually occur through the project. Information organised in this fashion was summarised and placed in the Descriptive Matrix, tabled in Figure 10 on the following pages. Although represented here in summarised table form, particular points are discussed more fully in the final chapter concerning particular issues and outcomes.

The method for analysing data was illustrated in detail in Chapter Four (pp.74-83).

Fig.9 : TWENTY FEATURES OF THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT
SELECTED FOR EVALUATION

<u>UNDERLYING RATIONALE</u> Parents do influence their children's learning achievement, and educators can turn this to positive account in children's learning.	
TWENTY PROJECT FEATURES	
ANTECEDENTS	1. Research evidence from USA and UK 2. Commonwealth funding through Australian Schools Commission 3. <u>Parents as Partners</u> was conceived and operated within the structures of the State education system 4. The project was intended as a means to seek appropriate ways to gain parent interest in education and parent involvement in schools and children's learning
TRANSACTIONS	<u>PROJECT STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT</u> 5. Central support: Committee, Executive Officer, State Co-ordinator, Services Branch 6. Regional support: Teachers Centres 7. Parent Liaison Advisors' roles and activities 8. Project documentation, communication and evaluation <u>PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND USE OF RESOURCES</u> 9. Home Reading Scheme for children 10. Mobile Resource Van 11. Publication of project materials 12. Statewide newspaper for parents and teachers 13. Activities in schools: staff, principal, P&F and parents 14. Seminars to involve parents
OUTCOMES	15. An increase in parental awareness 16. Improved quality of parental involvement 17. Parental education activities to help children learn 18. Partnerships between parents and teachers increased 19. Parent networks and relations with schools improved 20. Implications for future parent involvement in education

Fig.10: DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX: CONTAINING TWENTY FEATURES OF THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS	INTENTS	OBSERVATIONS
	Feature No.	
	1. <u>Research evidence from USA and UK</u> <u>Intents.</u> To assist children's learning; to provide evidence of the importance of parent involvement in this process.	Considerable impact on Australian educational developments, in particular, on Australian Schools Commission and <u>Parents as Partners Project</u> .
	2. <u>Commonwealth funding through Australian Schools Commission</u> <u>Intents.</u> To encourage innovation, devolution of decision making and community participation in education.	Interested educational organisations and community groups were invited to submit for funding; by 1975, 10% of Development Funds were stipulated for activities involving parents; <u>Parents as Partners</u> was approved and received funding over four years.
	3. <u>Parents as Partners operated within the structures of the State education system</u> <u>Intents.</u> To implement the aims of project.	The project was developed from within the structures of the State education system, primarily through the efforts of Deputy Director of Services, rather than from a parent or community initiated source; its Committee was the State Professional Development Committee (with reps. from Catholic and Independent schools also).
	4. <u>The Parents as Partners Project</u> <u>Intents.</u> To design a project to find and try ways to increase and improve parent participation; to implement the program according to project aims and Schools Commission guidelines.	The project was set up and implemented as a statewide education project for four years. Its program included six major activities (see Features 9-14, under TRANSACTIONS below). Aspects of all but one of those activities continue in some form after the project's completion.

Fig10: DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX con't...

TRANSACTIONS	INTENTS	OBSERVATIONS
	Feature No.	
	5. <u>Project structure and central support:</u> State Professional Development Committee, project's Executive Officer and State Co-ordinator, Education Dept Services Branch. <u>Intents.</u> To support project statewide.	Key members of Committee directly assisted project. Central organisation included: budget, statewide newspaper, Mobile Resource Van, staff communication network, and central liaison and promotion activities. Education Dept support from Services Branch, i.e., the Executive Officer and publication facilities.
	6. <u>Project structure and regional support:</u> Teachers Centres in three regions <u>Intents.</u> To support project at regional level.	Regions represented on central Committee. Parent Liaison Officers (PLAs) based at Teachers Centres with access to administrative and seminar facilities, and services of education consultants, including supportive interest of the Executive Officer of each Centre.
	7. <u>Three Parent Liaison Advisors (PLAs): roles and activities</u> <u>Intents.</u> To implement project in each region by: promoting project's aims and services; assisting schools, parent groups and others with activities that increase understanding of the value of parents as partners in their children's learning.	PLAs were available to all schools in Tasmania (over 320). Their 20 hours per week spent responding to requests to: provide project materials; speak to or work with teachers, parents and interested groups; organise guest speakers, discussions, parent seminars; liaise between groups and act as contact point. Administrative tasks included record keeping and monthly reports which also acted as an information exchange.
	8. <u>Project documentation, monitoring and evaluation</u> <u>Intents.</u> To monitor project progress; communicate between PLAs and State Co-ordinator; provide evidence of project activities achieving aims.	Data for evaluation: project aims, job descriptions, budgets, PLA monthly reports and statistics, personal records by staff, Committee's Annual Report, <u>Parent</u> newspaper, project literature, occasional reports. Unsuccessful effort to fund evaluation of Home Reading Scheme. Systemmatic evaluation not planned into project, but much informal evaluation has taken place. Summative evaluation of project undertaken.

Fig.10: DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX con't...

TRANSACTIONS	INTENTS	OBSERVATIONS
	Feature No.	
	9. <u>Home Reading Program, "Listen to Me Read"</u> <u>Intents.</u> To improve children's interest and ability to read; to involve parents in their children's reading; to involve teachers in collaborating with parents in the program.	The program followed similar lines of programs that had achieved measurable success elsewhere. It was available to all interested schools and more than 40 Tasmanian schools used the program. It appeared to be used to best effect around the Grades 2 to 4 level, although not exclusively. The program continued, particularly in a number of smaller schools, after <u>Parents as Partners</u> finished, and, requests continued for the accompanying program literature.
	10. <u>Mobile Resource Van</u> <u>Intents.</u> To publicise the aims and services of the project; in particular, to provide materials and information appropriate to increasing parent understanding of education, and, teacher and parent interest in parent involvement in their children's learning.	The Resource Van operated in one region per term, bringing its displays, literature and materials to schools and the community. It was constantly booked and was particularly appreciated by isolated areas. At the end of the second year it was withdrawn to be restocked and not returned to circulation.
	11. <u>Publication of Project Materials</u> <u>Intents.</u> To make materials available, in formats suitable for both parents and teachers, that increases communication between home and school, increases parents' understanding of education, and promotes the importance of involving parents in children's learning.	Materials were printed through Education Dept's Printing Section, Services Branch. They were displayed, publicised and distributed through the Resource Van and project personnel. As the project became known, requests for material have also been received from interstate. After the project, the Education Dept continued to produce some of the materials. Local and interstate requests continued also.

Fig.10: DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX: CONTAINING TWENTY FEATURES OF THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

TRANSACTIONS	INTENTS	OBSERVATIONS
	Feature No.	
	<p>12. <u>"Parent" Newspaper, Statewide distribution</u> <u>Intents.</u> To inform teachers and parents about current education issues, activities in schools and parent involvement; to encourage parent contributions to the paper and participation on the Editorial Committee.</p>	<p>Distributed to all Tasmanian schools for teachers and parents. Reached publication numbers of 50,000 per edition. Content followed project's aims. Parents and teachers contributed articles. The format, language and photography aimed at a wider, community audience. Not all schools actively circulated copies to potentially interested parents. Some parents worked on the Editorial Committee. At the closure of the project, <u>Parent</u> was offered to Tas. Council of State Schools P.&F., but became an Education Dept. publication.</p>
	<p>13. <u>Activities in schools: teachers, principals, parents and children</u> <u>Intents.</u> To create a suitable learning environment for children; establish positive relations between home and school, and suitable forms of parent participation.</p>	<p>Of 320 schools, interest came primarily from Primary Schools. Many schools were pleased to have assistance to initiate new efforts or build on existing levels of involvement. Many P&F groups invited PLAs to speak. Parent and teacher activities, like "Listen to Me Read" and "Big Book" programs were well received. Project communication through some Principals and P&Fs was problematic. Limited hours for PLAs meant limited assistance.</p>
	<p>14. <u>Seminars to involve parents</u> <u>Intents.</u> To increase parents' confidence, understanding and educating skills, in order to improve the extent and quality of parent involvement.</p>	<p>Parents consulted about seminar topics. Teachers Centres assisted with resources. Project funds for childcare and guest speakers. Access to Adult Ed interstate visitors. Parent attendance increased, eg. by 136% to 2,392 in 1980. Literature indicates active parent involvement within seminars.</p>

Fig. 10: DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX: CONTAINING TWENTY FEATURES OF THE PARENTS AS PARTNERS PROJECT

	INTENTS		OBSERVATIONS	
	Feature No.			
OUTCOMES	15.	<u>An increase in parental awareness</u>)	The Parents as Partners Project aimed to achieve an increase in the quality and extent of the outcomes described. These outcomes were congruent with the project's aims and evidence indicates an increase in the quality and extent of all outcomes aimed for. However, the amount of increase in these outcomes, in relation to 320 Tasmanian schools and the long term benefits to children's education, is not ascertainable from this evidence.
	16.	<u>Improved quality of parental involvement</u>)	
	17.	<u>Parental education activities to help children learn</u>)	
	18.	<u>Partnerships between parents and teachers increased</u>)	
	19.	<u>Parent networks and relations with schools improved</u>)	
	20.	<u>Implications for future parent involvement in education</u>)	Following the closure of the project, the following related outcomes exist as antecedent conditions for future developments: (a) all project staff have continuing commitment to the concept of parent involvement and increased experience and skill of benefit to future educational development; (b) the Project newspaper, <u>Parent</u> , publication of project-related materials, parent seminars, parent activities in schools and aspects of the Home Reading Scheme have all continued in some form after the project; and (c) parent involvement in education remains a comparatively important issue in schools and within Education Department development activities; for example, the Tasmanian School Improvement Program, which includes greater consultation with parent groups in the planning processes of education, and, current interest in legislation for School Councils.

The Judgement Matrix

Using the Stake Model of Evaluation, the first stage of critically analysing the project data, in order to determine the extent of the project and its outcomes, was to compare each of the intended aims of the project with its actual outcomes. Stake refers to this as finding the contingencies among antecedent, transactional and outcome data, and, finding congruence between intents and observations.

For example, the Parents as Partners Project intended to achieve its aims through a number of means. One way was to offer its services to schools across the State and operate where possible at the parent-teacher interface. Contingent upon this intention, three Parent Liaison Advisors had duties intended to assist parent involvement activities in schools. The role and the activities of the PLAs were logically contingent on the aims of the project. The intended outcomes of the project were also logically contingent on the project's aims and activities. The fact that outcomes occurred that were planned for, or intended, makes them congruent with the aims of the project.

As with the logical contingency between each project intention, transactions and outcomes, there were no difficulties in identifying the congruence between each intent and what was observed to occur in Parents as Partners. This assisted not only in the processing of descriptive data but in judging the logical consistency of the overall project design and structure. It can be concluded that the project's activities, and many of its outcomes

were consistent with its stated aims. However, the difficulty arises in determining the degree of success, or otherwise, of these congruent outcomes.

Determining the extent of the Parents as Partners Project and its outcomes required not only analysis and interpretation of existing available information, but other kinds of information as well. Apart from project documentation, antecedent research material and interviews with project participants, it would have been useful to have information from the following sources: (a) more specific pre-project data by which to compare the kinds and extent of changes that occurred as a consequence of the project; (b) means of measuring the influence of variables on children's learning, in particular parental influence in relation to school-based parent involvement and interest in education; (c) a full understanding of comparable education projects with similar aims by which to make relative comparisons; and (d) information from project recipients, in particular parents and teachers, whose views contribute a valid source of evidence about the impact of the project.

With the information available, many of the judgements and conclusions drawn about the project and its outcomes can only be general statements. Such statements are qualified by stating that they are based on information from, (i) educational thinking, research and fieldwork at the time, (ii) Australian Schools Commission guidelines and views, (iii) the personal experience of project participants who were interviewed, and, (iv) the views and interpretations of the evaluator. Standards and judgement of project features is tabled in Figure 11: The Judgement Matrix.

Fig. 11: JUDGEMENT MATRIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT FEATURES

FEATURES 1-4 (ANTECEDENTS)	STANDARDS	JUDGEMENTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Research evidence from USA and UK</u> 2. <u>Commonwealth funding through Australian Schools Commission</u> 3. <u>Project operated within the structures of the State education system</u> 4. <u>Project designed to increase and improve parent involvement in children's education</u> 	<p><u>Standards held by:</u> educators in this field, Australian Schools Commission, Education Department, Project staff, Project Committee and the Evaluator</p> <p><u>Standards:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) parent involvement is valuable to children's learning (b) research evidence supports this and is accepted by educators (c) it is important for Australian education to respond to change and increase parent involvement (d) field-based change is desirable and schools should progress beyond the "fortress" model of school (e) rather than centrally imposed policies for change, its "more important to enhance the capacities of committed people to generate their own improvements" <p>(NB. Not all groups mentioned share these values to the same extent. Different priorities and approaches may be the source of differing views)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the project's aims, activities and outcomes were congruent with the value that parent involvement is important - the project reached its target groups of parents and teachers by operating at local school and community level - the project did not impose change from above, but offered a service to interested schools, teachers, parents; consequently, some schools did not accept assistance, but very many did - the project structure evolved within State education structure. This gave credibility and resources to a state-wide project, but drew some criticism about a parent involvement project owned by educators to the extent of not involving parents in the project planning - recipients rather than partners in practice - the project was innovative within its Tasmanian context; its activities reflected newly emerging trends in Australia.

Fig. 11: JUDGEMENT MATRIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT FEATURES

FEATURES 5-8 (TRANSACTIONS)	STANDARDS	JUDGEMENTS
<p>PROJECT STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT</p> <p>5. <u>Project structure and central support</u></p> <p>6. <u>Project structure and regional support</u></p> <p>7. <u>Three Parent Liaison Advisors (PLAs): roles and activities</u></p> <p>8. <u>Project documentation, monitoring and evaluation</u></p>	<p><u>Standards held by:</u> educators, project planners, Australian Schools Commission, Regional Teachers Centres, Project Committee, Project Staff, and the Evaluator.</p> <p><u>Standards:</u></p> <p>(a) parent involvement is valuable and schools should increase and improve parent involvement</p> <p>(b) rather than centrally imposed policies for change, field-based change is desirable, and regional support assists this</p> <p>(c) parent involvement is only one priority in providing for children's education and resources are finite</p> <p>(d) project staff must be flexible, communicate aims effectively, and work well with teachers & parents</p> <p>(e) evidence of successful parent involvement, its relation to learning, is important for increasing support</p> <p>(f) educational evaluation is useful to educational development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the project's central Committee supported the project with interest and utilized funds and resources efficiently. Project reached whole State. - staff communication between regions considered valuable by all staff - Teachers Centres provided excellent resources. All PLAs appreciated support of Centres' Executive Officers. - each member of project staff fulfilled their role with enthusiasm and commitment, providing an invaluable contribution to the overall whole - as PLA positions had no precedent, PLAs felt some isolation, uncertainty. Would have liked more staff in-service activity. - PLAs had insufficient hours to meet job expectations, were unable to work at any depth, worked overtime continuously - PLAs paid insufficiently for the responsibility, no pay increase or professional training over 4 years - individuals interested in evaluation during the project, but evaluation not built in with planning, so efforts insufficient and lacking in initial, overall direction.

Fig. 11 : JUDGEMENT MATRIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT FEATURES

FEATURES 9-14 (TRANSACTIONS)	STANDARDS	JUDGEMENTS
<p>PROJECT ACTIVITIES, USE OF RESOURCES</p> <p>9. <u>Home Reading Program</u> <u>"Listen to Me Read"</u></p> <p>10. <u>Mobile Resource Van</u></p> <p>11. <u>Publication of</u> <u>project materials</u></p> <p>12. <u>"Parent" Newspaper,</u> <u>statewide distri-</u> <u>bution</u></p> <p>13. <u>Activities in</u> <u>schools: teachers,</u> <u>principals, parents</u> <u>and children</u></p> <p>14. <u>Seminars to involve</u> <u>parents</u></p>	<p><u>Standards held by:</u> Australian Schools Commission, Education Dept, teachers, parents, project staff and the evaluator</p> <p><u>Standards:</u></p> <p>(a) parent involvement is valuable, schools and parents should be assisted to increase this</p> <p>(b) children's reading improved with parent assistance</p> <p>(c) improved parent-teacher col- laboration</p> <p>(d) aims, services of project should be widely understood and materials suit target group</p> <p>(e) education issues and examples of parent involvement more widely communicated</p> <p>(f) notion of 'parents as partners' can mean different things to different schools and parents</p> <p>(g) key people in organisations must be 'on side' for change</p> <p>(h) parent-teacher willingness im- portant, but time and collab- orative skills also necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home Reading Schemes well received, many continue based on apparent benefits to children's reading and home-school re- lations. Specific evaluation of reading improvement was a lost opportunity to gain influential evidence similar to Haringey Reading Project. - Resource Van circulated aims, services and materials to whole State. Appreciat- ed by outlying areas. Like other project resource vans elsewhere, it enjoyed a period of school and public interest - Project materials were readable and use- ful and continue to be requested here and interstate. Initially materials were innovative, but other projects now pro- vide a wide array, including materials derived from parents and schools - <u>Parent</u> now a familiar newspaper in Tas- mania, sought to involve parents and in- crease their sense of 'ownership' in the paper. Ultimately did not achieve this to extent hoped for. Development of the paper, with its positive parent image, was a substantial achievement and is now an Education Dept publication - ('Judgements' column continued next next page...)

Fig.11 : JUDGEMENT MATRIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT FEATURES

FEATURES 9-14 (TRANSACTIONS)	STANDARDS	JUDGEMENTS (Continued from previous page)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - schools had differing ideas about parent involvement for them. Many appreciated assistance to build up or initiate new kinds of involvement. Some schools were not interested, but overall, PLAs had more requests than could be attended to in any great depth. - Principals were key people and affected the extent of parent involvement considerably. There was a wide range of responses from indifference to active support. - PLAs experienced some difficulties relying on communication channels to teachers and parents through some principals and P&F Associations - many P&F Associations invited project staff to speak about the project - existing parent and teacher feedback on seminars and activities in schools indicates that considerable participation, learning and enjoyment took place. This highlights the importance of project staff's educating, as well as facilitating role. - project staff have sufficient contact with schools, P&F Associations, parents and teachers to implement a more systematic survey for evidence of the wider impact of the project in schools throughout Tasmania.

Fig. 11: JUDGEMENT MATRIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT FEATURES

FEATURES 15-20 (OUTCOMES)	STANDARDS	JUDGEMENTS
<p>15. <u>Increase in parental awareness</u></p> <p>16. <u>Improved quality of parent involvement</u></p> <p>17. <u>Parental education activities to help children learn</u></p> <p>18. <u>Partnerships between parents and teachers increased</u></p> <p>19. <u>Parent networks and relations with schools improved</u></p> <p>20. <u>Implications for future parent involvement in education</u></p>	<p>Standards held by: educators, project planners, Australian Schools Commission, Education Dept, Project staff and Committee, teachers, parents and the evaluator.</p> <p><u>Standards:</u></p> <p>(a) a clear understanding of what a partnership between parents and teachers can be within a school</p> <p>(b) empirical evidence of improvement</p> <p>(c) realistic statements of desired outcomes, related to specific information of existing need and antecedent conditions in order to make pre and post project comparisons</p> <p>(d) information about other, similar projects in order to make relative judgements</p> <p>(e) perceptions of project implementers, supporters and recipients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - early project perceptions were that generally parents were not actively involved in educational matters nor expecting much interaction with schools. The extent of parent involvement in schools varied widely with many operating on models 1 & 2 (Schools Comm.) - most schools value these outcomes in theory, but achieving them can be difficult and time-consuming, especially when first teacher priority is direct contact time with students. The extent of project assistance and influence could begin to be assessed by surveying teachers and parents at this level. - After 4 years of experience, project staff conclude that the aims and activities of the project are still important - The evidence contained in project documentation and participant interviews gives many individual examples of these outcomes occurring through each of the project transactions. However, conclusions can't be revealing in the absence of more systematically gathered information for comparative purposes - Each aspect of the project contributes to make an impressive statewide education project

In summary

This chapter contains an analysis of the Parents as Partners Project in summarised table form (Figures 9,10, and 11), according to the Stake Model of Evaluation. The twenty main features of the project were described within the Descriptive Matrix and evaluated within the Judgement Matrix. The standards held by relevant groups was made explicit, as a particular feature of this evaluation model.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter refers to the original purposes of this evaluation study, the questions raised by the project participants and the evaluation of project outcomes. The evaluation study concludes with a list of recommendations for future developments in the area of parent involvement in children's education.

Gaining an Understanding of the Parents as Partners Project

This evaluation study set out to examine the nature, extent, objectives, operation and outcomes of the Parents as Partners Project. The nature, objectives and operation, in particular, were clear and accessible through project documentation, antecedent research material and interviews with individuals who had worked on or closely supported the project. However, assessing the actual extent of the project and its outcomes, that is, its qualitative and quantitative influences in education is a more difficult task. Using the Stake Model of Evaluation, this study sought the values and views of a number of groups in order to evaluate the project's outcomes. Conclusions drawn about the project and its outcomes can only be general statements. These statements are qualified by stating that they are based on information from, (i) educational thinking, research and fieldwork at the time, (ii) Australian Schools Commission guidelines and the Education Department's views in education reports, (iii)

the personal experience of project participants who were interviewed, and, (iv) the views and interpretations of the evaluator. It is hoped that together the literature review, the descriptive analysis of the project and the following list of findings will provide an increased understanding of the Parents as Partners Project in its broader educational context.

Project Findings

1. The project's aims, activities and outcomes were congruent with the value that parent involvement is important.
2. The project reached its target groups of parents and teachers by operating at local school and community level.
3. The project did not impose change from above, but offered a service to interested schools, teachers, parents; consequently, some schools did not accept assistance, but very many did.
4. The project structure evolved within the State education system. This gave credibility and resources to a statewide project, but drew some criticism about a parent involvement project owned by educators to the extent of not involving parents in the project planning - recipients rather than partners in practice.
5. The project was innovative within its Tasmanian context, and, as a whole, within Australia, although aspects were in practice in other states. Its activities reflected newly emerging trends in Australian education.

6. The project's central Committee supported the project with interest and utilized its funds and resources efficiently. The project reached all parts of the State.
7. Staff communication between the regions was considered valuable by all project staff.
8. Teachers Centres in each region provided excellent resources. All Parent Liaison Advisors (PLAs) appreciated the support of the Centres' Executive Officers.
9. Each member of project staff fulfilled their role with enthusiasm and commitment, providing an invaluable contribution to the overall whole.
10. As PLA positions had no precedent, PLAs felt some isolation and unsureness in aspects of their work. They would have liked more staff in-service activity.
11. PLAs had insufficient time to meet job expectations in a part-time job. They were unable to work at any depth with individual groups and worked overtime continuously because of their interest in the work and its importance.
12. PLAs were paid insufficiently for the nature and responsibility of the work. They had no pay increase or professional training throughout the four years of the project.
13. Individual staff members were interested in evaluation activities throughout the project, but evaluation processes were not built in with program planning, so efforts at evaluation were insufficient and lacking in initial, overall direction.

14. The Home Reading Scheme was well received and continues in many schools based on apparent benefits to children's reading and home-school relations. Specific evaluation of reading improvement, in the manner of the Haringey Reading Project, was a lost opportunity to gain influential evidence.
15. The Resource Van circulated project aims, services and materials to the whole State and was particularly appreciated by outlying areas. Like other project resource vans in other states, it enjoyed a period of school and public interest.
16. Project materials were readable and useful and continue to be requested locally and interstate. Initially, such materials were innovative, but other projects now provide a wide array also including materials derived from parents and schools.
17. Parent, now a familiar newspaper in Tasmania, sought to involve parents and increase their sense of 'ownership' in the paper. Ultimately, the project did not achieve this to the extent hoped for. However, the development of the paper, with its positive, parent image, was a substantial achievement and is now an Education Department publication.
18. Schools had differing ideas about what was suitable parent involvement for them. Many appreciated assistance to build up or initiate new kinds of involvement. Some schools were not interested, but overall, PLAs had more requests than could be attended to in any great depth.

19. Principals were key people and affected the extent of parent involvement considerably. There was a wide range of responses from indifference to active support from principals.
20. PLAs experienced some difficulties relying on communication channels to teachers and parents through some principals and P&F Associations.
21. Many P&F Associations invited project staff to speak about the project.
22. Existing parent and teacher feedback on seminars and activities in schools indicates that considerable participation, learning and enjoyment took place. This highlights the importance of project staff's educating, as well as facilitating role.
23. Project staff have sufficient contact with schools, P&F Associations, parents and teachers to implement a more systematic survey for evidence of the wider impact of the project in schools throughout Tasmania.
24. Early project perceptions were that, generally, parents were not actively involved in educational matters nor expecting much interaction with schools. The extent and nature of parent involvement in schools varied widely with many schools operating on models 1 & 2 (Schools Commission, pp. 3-4). The extent of parent interest, awareness, confidence and skill to participate also varied widely.

25. Most schools value the outcomes that Parents as Partners aimed for, in theory; but achieving them can be difficult and time-consuming, especially when a teacher's first priority is direct contact time with students and the preparation required for contact. The extent of the project's assistance and influence could begin to be assessed by surveying teachers and parents at the school level.
26. After four years of experience, project staff concluded that the aims and activities of the project are still important to pursue.
27. The evidence contained in project documentation and participant interviews gives many individual examples of these project outcomes occurring through each of the project transactions. However, conclusions can't be revealing in the absence of more systematically gathered information for comparative purposes.
28. Each aspect of the project contributed in total to make an impressive and worthwhile statewide education project.

Addressing the Questions

From these conclusions, the evaluation study considered the following three questions that project participants hoped would be explored through the evaluation process.

- A. Who should assist parents in the task of building their confidence for participation in children's education?

Fitzgerald's view (p.5) of parents is that they are influenced by their own previous experience of school. They believe that they lack both the time and knowledge to contribute usefully, and by and large perceive their role to be supportive of teachers in the task of inculcating knowledge and skills.

Plowden (p.29) stresses the importance of parental attitudes in the educational system and revealed that parents were greedy for information about their children at school, the school itself and how children learn. The Plowden Report argues that educational policy should assist to establish a more direct relationship between teachers and parents in the interests of children's learning, that "they should be partners in more than name; their responsibility became joint instead of several" (p.29). Instead of relying on voluntary membership in parent-teacher associations, education authorities should positively encourage parents to become far more actively involved in their children's education.

In Tasmania, the Parents as Partners Project represented the "awareness-raising" stage of interest in parent involvement as a statewide endeavour. In the process, project staff were aware that both teachers and parents had varying degrees of interest, awareness, and confidence in order for parents to become effectively involved. The project sought to assist schools and parent groups to provide activities in which parents felt comfortable, welcome and able to participate prior to

becoming involved in children's learning activities. It sought to achieve this through the parent newspaper, seminars, talks, meetings, home-school and school-based activities.

The resources of the project were finite. The amount of responsibility for actually assisting parent confidence-building was limited. In particular, the PLA's worked only half-time. In such a new role, they experienced some difficulties in assessing work priorities in relation to their individual capabilities; although they had a strong desire to improve their skills. Subsequently, in progressing past the "awareness-raising" stage, it would now appear appropriate to formally develop the PLA role to include an understanding of the principles of advocacy, adult learning and participative planning in education.

The Education Department and schools recognize the value of parent participation, but actual resources are still directed to the prime activity of training teachers to teach children, and servicing their teaching efforts, rather than to providing teachers with the time, skills and resources needed to collaborate with parents.

The Education Department did support the project through regional resources, and does continue to inform parents through Parent newspaper, parent seminars and publication of some project materials, such as the 'Listen to Me Read' materials. This is important in the absence of parent groups having the

resources to do these things. For example, the Council of State Schools Parents and Friends was unable to take over the Parent newspaper because they could not employ someone to manage it.

The School Improvement Program superseded and built upon the gains in awareness of the importance of parental involvement that were made by the Parents as Partners Project. However, the Education Department did not absorb the project structure as a continuing responsibility when Australian Schools Commission funds were re-directed. It did not incorporate the valuable aspects of the regionally-based PLA role and continue to develop or adapt the position despite evidence of its usefulness.

In conclusion, the task of developing parent confidence for participation in children's education becomes the responsibility of Education authorities when schools seek direct involvement by parents in order to further children's learning. However, since expertise in the adult education process does not lie with teachers alone, and their time is already fully utilized, others must be employed to assist and draw upon educating resources both within the Education Department and other organisations. The responsibility of projects, such as Parents as Partners, and funding sponsors, like the Australian Schools Commission, is to provide evidence, through experience gained and project evaluation, of the most useful ways that parent involvement can be developed. They must continue to publicize its importance in the bid for funds and recognition.

B. How is it determined whether the project was good value as a resource user in the face of competing priorities?

This question was raised in relation to the responsibilities of the regional Teachers Centres. Facilities and administrative support, access to education consultant expertise, and Executive Officer interest in the work of the PLAs throughout the course of the project were considered excellent by all project staff. But as the Australian Schools Commission funding was re-directed from Parents as Partners, the question became one of how important it is to continue to support parent involvement activities with Centre resources in the face of competing educational priorities.

The decisions about resource distribution are the responsibility of each Teachers Centre, but decisions are likely to be better if made with accurate information. This evaluation study provides one source of information towards an assessment of educational priorities in order to distribute resources fairly and to best effect. It provides a project overview, a compilation of information about the project that can be used for comparative purposes with other educational programs or services.

The conclusions reached in this study were that Parents as Partners used its funds and available resources efficiently in pursuing activities that were congruent with the project's aims. The resources reached the target groups for which they were intended. This study also confirms the valuable

contribution the Centres made to the overall effectiveness of Parents as Partners Project.

The extent to which the project succeeded in promoting its aims and increasing parent involvement, however, requires further information before it can be assessed. Teachers Centres themselves are in a better position to survey schools and parent groups about increases in parent involvement. Centres are also able to utilize their own resources to evaluate their own overall program, monitoring, for example, the distribution of resources, nature of requests, provision of services and feedback responses of the field. Evaluation of one project, such as Parents as Partners, can only be seen in relation to other services or activities that also use funds. In evaluating the comparative aims and outcomes of services provided by a Centre, decisions need to be made about: (a) the importance of each Centre activity to short-term and long-term outcomes in education; (b) the ratio of resources required in relation to the importance of the outcome; (c) the extent to which one service duplicates, complements or is essential to the success of related activities; and (d) the extent to which new activities require protection during their developmental stages.

In conclusion, parent involvement is one variable, inter-related with many others, that influences children's learning. It is not easy selecting the best alternatives for the use of resources in the face of equally valid priorities. However, the best basis for decision-making is to have information that is as comprehensive, accurate and relevant as possible.

C. How can the impact of the project be measured?

Evaluation has several important purposes.

Generally, it can be used:

- * to satisfy the requirements of accountability;
- * to assist in ongoing program planning and development (formative evaluation);
- * to promote and publicize aims, activities, outcomes of a program to particular audiences;
- * to assist in related education decision-making, for example, resource distribution, or comparison of alternative teaching approaches; and,
- * to provide a record of the program's experiences, outcomes and contribution for comparative purposes, or, to contribute towards future educational developments (summative evaluation).

There are a number of different approaches to gathering and analysing project information in order to provide material suitable for evaluation and decision-making. Every evaluation study is unique. The data to be collected are heavily influenced, if not determined, by feasibility.

In this case, with the assistance of the Stake Model of Evaluation as a framework, the evaluation study provided a basis for measuring the wider impact of the Parents as Partners Project. It included a body of documentary evidence, the education context, a descriptive analysis of project features and the views and

educational values of those groups who have opinions relevant to the evaluation of this project.

As previously stated, the conclusions can only be general statements because much of the evidence is incomplete. In this case, there was no obtainable, systematically gathered pre-project and project information prepared with evaluation in view from the commencement of the project. Further, it was not feasible to obtain more extensive information from schools, parent groups, teachers and parents within the limitations of an evaluation study for a Masters of Education dissertation.

Given the resources, what alternatives are available to evaluate the wider impact of the Parents as Partners Project? The following points may provide some continuity for further evaluation:

- a) Project staff have sufficient contact with schools, P & F associations, parents and teachers to implement a more systematic survey for evidence of the wider impact of the Parents as Partners Project in schools throughout Tasmania.
- b) Individual project staff members were interested in evaluation activities throughout the project. They retain some detailed documentation including some parent responses to parent seminars, discussion of educational films and other materials, parent involvement in their schools and other aspects of the project. Further, most staff have

remained associated with parent involvement in education and would be aware of the post-project influences on subsequent developments in education.

- c) The regional Teachers Centre staff, including the regional Development Officers who were on the project's central Committee, had close association with the PLA s and project implementation, could provide another source of information. This information about the project could be based on their own experiences and views, as well as Teachers Centres' records and documentation.
- d) Although there would be difficulty in undertaking detailed evaluation of the project's Home Reading Scheme, there is sufficient evidence from comparable studies to provide a framework for comparative evaluation. Also, records have been kept of those schools that embarked upon the scheme. From this basis, it would be possible to consult a representative number of schools, teachers, parents and children who had been involved. Information sought should also examine why some schools stopped the scheme in the light of evidence that it has improved children's reading.

In conclusion, only a limited amount of further evaluation can be undertaken to assess the wider impact of the Parents as Partners Project. Information can be sought from parents and teachers about their increased interest, awareness and confidence to undertake parent involvement activities; and, they would have views about how the services of the project

assisted the development of that involvement.

In particular, schools, educational administrators, and school liaison officers working with the School Improvement Program or introducing School Councils may be able to say to what extent Parents as Partners work had made the present developments possible compared with parent involvement in the early seventies.

The Role of Evaluation in Educational Planning

In using the Stake Model of Evaluation as a framework for this evaluation study, the evaluator hoped that the model would assist in achieving the following:

- a) that it would assist to satisfy the evaluation interests and requirements of those project participants who sought an evaluation of the project;
- b) that its descriptive nature would allow the project to be set in a broader educational context;
- c) that it would provide a cohesive overview of the project, for future educational development, through its framework for collecting and analysing data, making evaluation criteria explicit, and judgement process;
- d) that some information would be gained about the usefulness of the Stake Model through practical application.

In conclusion, the Stake Model did assist with the above

intentions and has many useful aspects that can assist evaluation with data collection, analysis and judgement. Once understood, the framework is useful, systematic and comprehensive; but it requires persistence to make the analysis within the matrices work. I would not recommend the model in total in preference to other evaluation approaches for project evaluation activities to be conducted by project staff, except with the assistance of an evaluation facilitator who has the time and commitment to making the model work.

However, the Stake Model is sensitive to the validity of a wide range of data, including people's experiences and values, and descriptive documentation, as well as the more statistical and empirical data. It attempts to break away from the mechanistic frameworks for evaluation, such as the CIPP model. Such models subject human experience and critical reflection, which provide a natural basis of evaluative activity, to a complex, rationalistic approach to evaluation.

Ideally, the worth of evaluation needs to be clear in the minds of those participants undertaking an education project or program at the beginning of a program. Formative evaluation is the most useful kind of evaluation to a program, and it does occur informally to a large extent. To build on this informal evaluation by formalising some aspects of the process and being clear about how evaluation can serve an education program is desirable. This also needs to be supported with resources and access to acquiring evaluation skills and techniques.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were compiled from recommendations made by those project participants who were interviewed, and from the assessment of project transactions and outcomes in relation to the personal experience, and observations of the evaluator.

1. Based on the evidence, Education Departments should make policies, provide resources and implement education programs that encourage parent involvement in children's learning. The need is evident for continued support to schools, teachers and parents in this regard. This also involves aspects of parent or adult education as part of the responsibility, no matter how indirect the relation between the process and the intended benefit to children's learning achievement.
2. Teacher training needs to include units on adult learning and parent-school relations.
3. Suitable amounts of school time and resources need to be made available for teacher preparation and collaboration with parents.
4. There needs to be greater consultation with P & F associations and parent groups in the planning of education projects, particularly projects intended to involve parents in some capacity.
5. The need for regional, school cluster or school-based Parent

Liaison Advisors should be legitimized within the Education Department personnel structure with suitable remuneration, work conditions and in-service training. In particular, training needs to encompass advocacy, principles of adult learning and participative planning.

6. Parent Liaison Advisors need to be employed full-time and to work with small clusters of schools in greater depth; for example, to maintain regular contact with parent-teacher groups and to assist parents to acquire skills to participate on School Councils.
7. Project sponsors need to make funds and evaluation facilitation services available as an essential part of project implementation, in particular to assist internal, formative evaluation activities that are useful to program development.
8. Staff development activity on how to undertake program evaluation activities needs to be made available to all staff implementing an education program. Such skills assist at a personal work level as well as contribute to the overall cohesive direction and development of a program.
9. Although, the Stake Model for Evaluation is useful, a range of more recent self-evaluation, participative evaluation and action-research approaches are more suitable for the developmental needs of education programs similar to the Parents as Partners Project.

In summary

This chapter concluded the study with references to the original purposes of the evaluation. It listed twenty-eight findings reached in evaluating the Parents as Partners Project. This constituted the last part of the presentation of an overview of the project. From these findings, each question raised by project participants was addressed, and the usefulness of the Stake Model was reviewed in relation to a preferred purpose for evaluation which is to assist participants in program planning and implementation. The evaluation study concluded with a list of nine recommendations for the future development of parent involvement in children's learning.

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