

Innovation in Early Childhood Education: Tapping the Potential for Generating Social Capital

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The challenge ...

If it takes a village to raise a child, then what might it take to rebuild the village?

Outline of Presentation

- **what we mean by family centred practice**
- **some inspiring exemplars of innovative services in early childhood**
- **some ideas on how we might tap the potential of innovative approaches**

Family Centred Practice

Allen & Petr (1998):

- **Family as central unit of attention**
- **Maximise families choices**
- **Strengths rather than deficits**
- **Cultural sensitivity**

The Practice Trinity

Values

Knowledge

Skills

Values

Genuine commitment to working inclusively and in partnership with all of those in a child's kith and kin system, including fathers and extended family members.

Knowledge

An ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner)

Social capital (Putnam)

The inner and the outer world of the family (Schofield)

Ecological Model

Emphasis on the multiple contexts of the child:

microsystem

mesosystem

exosystem

macrosystem

Social Capital

Bonding Social Capital

Bridging Social Capital

Inner and Outer Worlds

Inner worlds affect outer worlds

Outer worlds affect inner worlds

Past worlds affect present worlds

Skills

Centrality of Relationships in:

- **Engaging families and children**
- **Responding to inner world and outer world needs**
- **Nurturing hope**

Maternal and Child Health: Role Expansion

**From a traditional core role based on
paediatric surveillance to
encompassing :**

- emotional and social well-being of
the family**
- community development**

First Time Mother Groups (Scott, Brady & Glynn)

1. After 18 months, 80% of women had made at least one significant, continuing friendship via the group
2. After one year, 18 of 24 groups were still meeting despite 60% of women resuming employment
3. Nurse “pearls of practice wisdom”

Innovation in Early Childhood Education

**SDN Children's Services: Parent
Resource Programs, Sydney**

SHELLS – University of Newcastle

**PaL - Napranum Pre-School
Centre, Qld**

SDN Children's Services

Parent Resource Program:

- socially disadvantaged children**
- staff training in working with vulnerable parents**
- group sessions**
- inter-agency networks**

SHELLS

Home –based emergent literacy program for 0-2 year old children and socially disadvantaged parents. Group support strengthens parent networks.

Napranum Pre-School

Home based early literacy program for 4-6 year old children in a remote indigenous community. Indigenous women are employed as home tutors to coach parents in doing daily exercises built around a book.

Common Elements

1. **Universal, non-stigmatised base**
2. **Holistic approach (health, education)**
3. **Family centred practice skills**
4. **Parental social network building**
5. **Inter-agency collaboration**
6. **Staff supported by organisation**

Tapping the Potential of Innovation

- Innovation
- Evaluation
- Dissemination
- Transplantation

Innovation

Should we sow what we know?

Evaluation

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Transferability
- Sustainability

Dissemination

- How best to communicate the innovation to others

Transplantation

**Adaptation to suit other settings
while not disrupting the key
elements**

Sustaining Hope

What are the sources of hope for us and for the children and families we serve?