

Children

IN THE COMMUNITY



higher education
& training

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TRANSFORMING EDUCATION



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Written by the Community Education Programme at the Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training.

Design, typesetting and proofreading by Rabia Benefeld.

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Community education emerges out of people's experiences and social interests generated within communities.

Community Education enables democratic agendas to emerge at local levels to challenge and eradicate oppression linked to exploitation, marginalisation, cultural dominance, powerlessness and violence.

Community Education exists neither to help people enter into the workplace, nor to place profit as the main objective. Instead it focuses on education that benefits the whole of society, bringing about social transformation.

WHAT IS CEP AND WHAT WILL WE DO?

The Community Education Programme (CEP) is based at the Centre for Post-school Education and Training at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth.

CEP focuses on establishing a progressive model for a Community Education College. It sees the purpose of community education as supporting youth and adults to organise themselves to work and learn collectively, to provide mutual support and build unity, to claim their rights, and to develop their community and transform society.

It aims to broaden community participation in establishing more responsive community education linked to forms of socially useful work, livelihoods, and co-operatives.



LEARNING CIRCLES

A community education learning circle is a group of 10-15 adults who meet regularly for a period of time to learn about something they are interested in. A learning circle is different from a formal classroom with a teacher and learners. In a learning circle learners are teachers too and a facilitator helps the group to share and build new knowledge. Everyone brings what they know, and they teach and learn together.

Anyone interested in the topic of a learning circle can join, there are usually no age, gender, language or literacy barriers. The facilitator works to ensure everyone can participate in a language they feel comfortable with, regardless of formal educational level or literacy.

This education usually explores something that affects participants lives and communities. Many circles start because community members come together over a community problem and then want to learn more and find out what they can do about it.

Many learning circles help people to improve their literacy, but they also help people to become critical thinkers, co-operative learners and confident investigators, so that they can continue to learn about things that interest them and work together to change their communities.

HOW TO USE THESE PICTURES

This collection of pictures was taken during planned walks through the neighbourhoods where we live. We looked carefully at our communities to find things which we saw that interested us or were of concern to community members. We used photographs to show what we saw. We call this representation of a problem in its picture form a code. You could also represent a problem by drawing a picture or by writing a description of what you see, or by making a play.

These pictures focus on children and the community. They show the social and physical environment in which working class children grow up. The pictures provide a visual representation of issues and problems faced by children in the community. The pictures can be used individually or organised into thematic groups by the participants.

Each picture or group of pictures can be used to generate a critical dialogue within a community education learning circle. The discussion uses the knowledge and thinking of the group. Through dialogue the group focuses collective attention on the issue in the picture or group of pictures and connects the issue to their own experience and reality. The aim of this dialogue is the transformation of our understanding of ourselves and our world.



Participants use their own words to name problems and issues in the community, analyse the causes of these problems and start the process of working towards solutions.

The task of the facilitator is to use questions to get the discussion of the group to move from the specific – the detailed description of the situation represented in the pictures – to a critical analysis that reveals the root of the problem, and eventually back to the specific through exploring collective responses to the issue.

Possible questions:

- What do you see in the picture?
- What thoughts or concerns does this child have?
- What concerns this child's parents?
- What issue or problem connects your picture to other pictures?
- Has this issue or problem always been there? What changed?
- What could this group do about this issue or problem?

The facilitator documents the discussion and helps the group to develop a common list of issues or problems.

MOVING INTO ACTION

Often we think of action as the same thing as protest or confrontation. These forms of action are sometimes necessary, but there are also other forms of action.

The group might decide that a first step is to find more information around the problem they identified. Taking action could then mean speaking to other community members, organising a meeting to discuss the problem, meeting representatives of local government, a school or a crèche to explore options. Or, investigating the problem in depth through community research, before taking the next action.

It is helpful to also think of action as a series of connected activities. Through action a problem can be addressed, but long term change requires working together as a democratic and collective group and connecting our actions to wider struggles.

Through action we participate in the life of our community. Through action we create hope, by showing that oppressive conditions can be changed by people acting collectively.



OFFERING A CE WORKSHOP

Encourage participants to listen to each other by listening carefully yourself and not always talking or providing the answers

Allow the group to lead you into the next stages or different areas of the topic, or use questions to help keep the group on topic or heading into the next part of the workshop.

Use questions to help people to think widely and deeply about an issue or problem

Use participants' words to build on an idea, to show that their contribution is useful.

Start where people are.

The workshop has three parts:

- **Current reality:** What have we seen in the community about this problem?
- **Critique:** Why is it like this? What is wrong with this situation?
- **Alternatives:** What have others done about similar situations? What might we want to learn about to change the situation?

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

Current reality: Where do children in your community play? What have we seen in the community about this issue? What forms of play can you see in the pictures: rough and tumble play, make-believe play; play with an object; play with all senses; play with rules

Critique: "Play is the leading source of children's development in the early years and is essential for their full development" Why is play important? What threatens children's opportunities for play?

Alternatives: What have others done about similar situations? What might we want to learn about to make play possible for children in our community? What can we do now to make safe places for children to play?

The sections, Free Play and Circle of Courage offer ideas for input into the group discussion before exploring alternatives

FREE PLAY

Play is the leading source of children's development in the early years and is essential for their full development. Free play engages children fully and involves all their senses

During free play, rules about playing come from children
Free play happens when playing is motivated by the children themselves

Free play involves the imagination of children
Children make meaning of their own during free play
Free play happens when children control the nature of their playing

Free play happens when playing is more important than the outcome of the game

CIRCLE OF COURAGE

The Circle of Courage is based on the idea that all children's emotional health is based on a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. When these needs are met, children grow and thrive. But when these growth needs are frustrated, multiple problems follow in the development of the child.

The Spirit of Generosity: unselfish, caring, sharing, loyal, emphatic, loyal

The Spirit of Mastery: achiever, creative, problem solver, motivated, persistent

The Spirit of Independence: autonomous, confident, responsible, inner-control, self-discipline, leadership

The Spirit of Belonging: attached, loving, friendly, intimate, trusting

The Circle of Courage was developed, in Canada, by Brendtro, Brokenleg and van Bockern. It draws on western psychological theories; but also on native American beliefs and perspectives towards life.



PICTURE CODES

1. Soweto on Sea, Young boy playing on building rubble
2. Soweto on Sea, Children playing hopscotch
3. Soweto on Sea, Children playing house
4. Rolihlahla, Friends walking home
5. Rolihlahla, Girls playing on rubbish dump
6. Zwide, Children walking in street
7. Zwide, Boys fixing bicycle
8. Soweto on Sea, Crèche
9. Veeplaas, Joy of swimming in the river
10. Veeplaas, Boys sliding down hill on car bumpers
11. Soweto on Sea, Boy playing near Chatty river
12. Ramaphosa, Girl fetching water from tap
13. Zwide, Children with mother selling vegetables
14. Soweto on Sea, Young father and daughter
15. Rolihlahla, Child playing with traditional drum

































Telephone: +27 11 482 3060

Email: info@educationpolicyconsortium.org.za

Website: www.educationpolicyconsortium.org.za

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Contact Information

Education, Work & Society: Community Education Programme

Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training

DVC: Research & Engagement

Rm402 Building 519,

Missionvale Campus

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

