

# NIACE Development and Research



## Key Findings



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### The contribution of Family Learning to the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals

#### Abstract

The aim of this UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) funded project was to produce a scoping paper which, using models and lessons from research and evaluation, would consider the applicability of Family Learning in meeting the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. Family learning provides one practical solution to two of the six Education for All goals; to expand early childhood care and education and to expand adult literacy by 50 per cent by 2015. Similarly, the eight Millennium Development Goals, which are agreed to by all the countries of the world and all leading development institutions, include achieving universal primary education by 2015.

The paper scopes UK developments in family literacy and family learning over the past two decades. Evidence of improvements in literacy for parents and children is detailed. Family literacy and learning within a wider international context is also considered looking at provision in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, South Africa and Uganda.

The key features of effective community-based Family Learning are considered and a number of recommendations are made.

#### Research methodology:

This project involved desk research. Key words were identified to search for the relevant documentation and a literature review undertaken to draw out current ideas and relevant references.

#### Key Findings

##### The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ Much family learning appears to be based on the Kenan model. This model from the USA developed from Parent and Child Education programmes piloted in 1986. The programme aimed to develop the skills and confidence of parents.
- ❖ Most of the programmes identified were family literacy focussed: the exceptions were New Zealand and Canada, where some of the activity is of a kind that, in the UK,

would be identifiable as more general family learning. Schools were the main settings for much of the international activity although other community locations such as public libraries were used in the USA, Canada and Ireland. The cultural element of family literacy and family learning practice emerged as a strong feature in the examples identified in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

- ❖ Cultural appropriateness emerged as a fundamental consideration when planning and developing learning programmes whilst the role of a co-ordinator in a community can be crucial to the success of a family learning programme in providing a link between communities and educational institutions. By far the most important element of a family learning programme in sub-Saharan Africa would be that learning is intergenerational involving family, however, that may be defined, from at least one younger and one older generation, and practice must be situated within families' cultures.
- ❖ Family learning presents one practical approach to two of the six Education for All goals; to expand early childhood care and education and to expand adult literacy by 50 per cent by 2015 and the Millennium Development Goal to achieve universal primary education by 2015, since it focuses on both adults and children. In some circumstances adult literacy may be more easily advanced where it is linked with early childhood education and, conversely, early childhood education is better promoted in situations where it is linked with parental learning. Family learning may be used to engage women in learning to promote maternal health, HIV/AIDS awareness and education, an understanding of child development and the importance of parental involvement in children's education.

## Recommendations

- ❖ A further study may wish to explore the extent to which approaches other than those based on the Kenan model have developed in some detail and how family learning practitioners in the UK and in sub-Saharan Africa can work collaboratively to improve practice in both regions.

## Output

- ❖ Rachel Spacey with Jeanne Haggart and Janine Eldred, 2006.  
*The Family Learning Approach: the contribution of Family Learning to the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals.*  
A Report to the Education for All Working Group and Education Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO by NIACE.  
(Forthcoming, currently being published by the UNESCO National Commission).

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**Project Manager: Jan Eldred**

**Email: [rachel.spacey@niace.org.uk](mailto:rachel.spacey@niace.org.uk)**

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**niace**  
promoting adult learning

21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester LE1 7GE

Tel: +44 (0)116 204 4200/1  
Fax: +44 (0)116 2854514  
Website: [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

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