The Urban Review, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1992

Changing Organizations by Changing Individuals: A Model of Leadership Training

Paula Jorde Bloom and Marilyn Sheerer

Through a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services, National-Louis University delivered a leadership training program to Head Start personnel in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. The model, which was grounded in adult learning theory, encouraged a facilitative role for the teaching faculty, active decision-making on the part of the participants, collegial support, and linkages between theory and practice. A social systems approach was used to promote the idea of leaders as change agents.

The effectiveness of the training model was assessed through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Results indicated that the training had a positive effect on participants' level of perceived competence, the quality of teaching practices in their classrooms, and the organizational climate of their centers. Additionally, case study data documented feelings of increased self-confidence and self-efficacy on the part of participants. Outcomes suggest that this training model improved the expertise of Head Start directors and teachers and promoted substantive change and improvement in their centers.

Considerable evidence has accumulated that the director of a child care center is the "gatekeeper to quality" by setting the standards and expectations of others to follow. It is the director who sets the tone and creates the climate of concern that is the hallmark of a quality program (Bredekamp, 1989; Decker & Decker, 1984; Jorde-Bloom, 1988; Peters & Kostelnik, 1981; Greenman & Fugua, 1984). The causal link to program quality, however, is usually an indirect one. The director shapes the work environment for the teaching staff who in turn provide the critical link to the children. Thus, the director's ability to train and supervise staff who have had limited experience or formal education is critical (Jorde-Bloom, 1988, 1989b; Powell & Stremmel, 1989).

Unfortunately few directors of child care programs have had formal training

Paula Jorde Bloom, National-Louis University. Marilyn Sheerer, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Requests for reprints should be sent to Paula Jorde Bloom, National-Louis University, 2840 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

in the principles of organizational theory, the dynamics of organizational change, program administration, staff development, clinical supervision, or group dynamics. This has created an unstable situation at best. Many directors feel they are ill-prepared to assume the myriad of responsibilities associated with their roles and as a result often experience high levels of stress (Berk, 1985; Jorde-Bloom, 1982; Whitebook, Howes, Darrah, & Friedman, 1982). The situation is no different in Head Start programs around the country. Most directors, supervisors, education coordinators, and others in leadership positions in Head Start programs have been promoted to their positions because of exemplary performance as classroom teachers or because of longevity in their agency, not because they have specialized expertise in program leadership.

In an effort to upgrade the leadership capabilities of Head Start personnel, the Department of Health and Human Services awarded a training grant to National-Louis University in 1989. The candidates selected to participate were chosen because of their leadership potential for becoming mentor/trainers of other Head Start supervisory personnel. The 31 participants represented Head Start programs geographically distributed throughout the Chicago Metropolitan Area. The Early Childhood Leadership Training Program began in September 1989 and culminated in December 1990.

The content of the leadership training covered all components of the director's role: organizational theory and leadership style; child development and program planning; legal and fiscal issues; and parent, community, and board relations. The training took place over 16 months. Participants met for approximately 77 training sessions which were four hours in length. In addition, individual conferences were held as necessary to assist students with their assignments. A full description of the curriculum and the logistics of the leadership training is provided elsewhere (Bloom, Sheerer, Richard, & Britz, 1991). Participants received 32 semester hours of graduate credit leading to a master's degree in Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy.

This paper will provide an overview of the training model and document outcomes in three areas: 1) participants' level of perceived competence; 2) the quality of classroom teaching practices; and 3) the quality of work life for staff. In addition, a case study of one of the participants will be presented to document in greater detail the impact of training.

THE TRAINING MODEL

The Early Childhood Leadership Training Program is unique both in its content and the way in which it was implemented. The conceptual framework underpinning this model of leadership training is grounded in adult learning theory and a social systems approach to organizational change. The design of the training model was based on evidence gleaned from research on successful

training interventions. For example, research provides strong evidence that one-time workshops on broad, global topics have little lasting impact on behavior. Training is far more effective when it focuses on participants' perceived needs, takes place over a period of time, and addresses the site-specific concerns of the individuals' work settings. Effectiveness is further enhanced when training is structured to support collegial sharing of resources and information between programs (AACTE, 1986; Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987).

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory takes into account the distinctly different orientations, needs, and interests of adults who return for graduate study after working for several years. The typical student in this program, for example, was female, had worked in the field of early childhood education for twelve years, had family responsibilities, and was generally uncertain about her academic ability.

Consistent with adult learning theory, the model encouraged a facilitative role for the teaching faculty. Where the traditional instructor frequently presumes the ignorance of students, a "facilitator" is more concerned with helping students take responsibility for their own educational and professional growth. Essential to this focus is helping students take an active role in structuring relevant learning experiences that are consistent with their career aspirations. This approach promotes self-awareness, an integral part of adult learning.

We know that the professional role of early childhood educators is often a lonely one, so it was important in designing this training model to weave in ample opportunities for collegial support. The program was structured so that participants received training in an intact cluster group. The collegial model creates an atmosphere of mutual trust that encourages the sharing of ideas and collaborative learning. Instructional activities were designed to foster cooperation and the exchange of ideas and insights. Hence, each class session exemplified a model of staff development that participants could incorporate into their own work environments.

One of the frustrations that many adult learners experience in training is the inevitable gap between the theoretical ideas they encounter in their studies and their ability to apply these ideas in their work. This training model rests on the assumption that immediate application from new learning to real life situations reinforces what is learned. It emphasizes the links between theory, research, and practice in a very useful and pragmatic way. Indeed, a central goal of this training model is to help nurture "reflective practitioners" (Schon, 1983). The instructional strategies used were designed to challenge participants to move beyond simple comprehension of concepts and theories into higher order thinking of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of ideas and practices.

These links were accomplished in three important ways. First, the curricu-

lum of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program was problem-centered and site-specific. The examples used during class presentations all related to real issues and concerns that participants faced in their work settings on a daily basis. The training did not focus on theory alone, but weaved theory into the idiosyncratic issues that confronted the students in their professional roles. Thus, theory and knowledge were used to enlighten and enlarge experience. The manner in which Head Start Performance Standards relate to different aspects of organizational effectiveness is one example of this kind of application.

Second, participants had an opportunity to be actively involved in applied research. They each identified an issue relevant to their professional needs and designed a research study around that issue. Their project thus served as a catalyst, blending theory and experiential learning. In the process they became not only consumers of research who study and apply the work of others, but also researchers themselves, creating knowledge and learning to think critically about educational ideas and practices. Finally, the instructors visited each participant at his/her work site. These visits allowed the instructors to assess participants' training needs and monitor their progress during the course of the training.

A Social Systems Approach to Organizational Change

An overriding goal of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program was to empower participants to effect change in their respective Head Start programs. In order to achieve this goal, the program had to expand participants' understanding of how change takes place in organizations. Most directors began the training program with a limited view of how their programs functioned as organizations. They were apt to think of incidents that occurred in the everyday life of their programs as isolated events, failing to see the interconnections between problems. This hampered their ability to respond to situations appropriately.

The social systems perspective of organizations used in this training drew on the work of organizational theorists such as Beer (1980), Bronfenbrenner (1979), Getzels and Guba (1957), and Moos (1976). Figure 1 presents a visual schematic of child care centers when viewed from a social systems perspective. This model includes several components: the external environment, people, structure, processes, culture, and outcomes. A description of the key elements that comprise each component of the system is shown in Table 1. Each component of the subsystem is definable and separate yet also interrelated and interdependent. A more detailed description of the specifics of the model are described in greater detail elsewhere (Bloom, 1991).

Central to a social systems perspective is the notion that change in one component of the system will have a rippling effect throughout the social system. To understand the dynamics of change in child care centers, participants were introduced to current research on change in different organizational contexts (Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991; Dyer, 1984; Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1986; Hall & Loucks, 1978; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Jorde-Bloom, 1986) and to the specifics of organizational assessment as it applies to the quality of work life and quality of program services in child care programs (Bowditch & Buono, 1982; Jorde-Bloom, 1989a; NAEYC, 1984).

One important implication of this model as it applies to training is that organizational improvement (change) involves first describing the system, then identifying (diagnosing) problems, and finally analyzing various alternatives in an attempt to remedy problems. There are different schools of thought about the best way to create change in child care centers. Some focus on changing individuals through staff training and educational programs; other emphasize

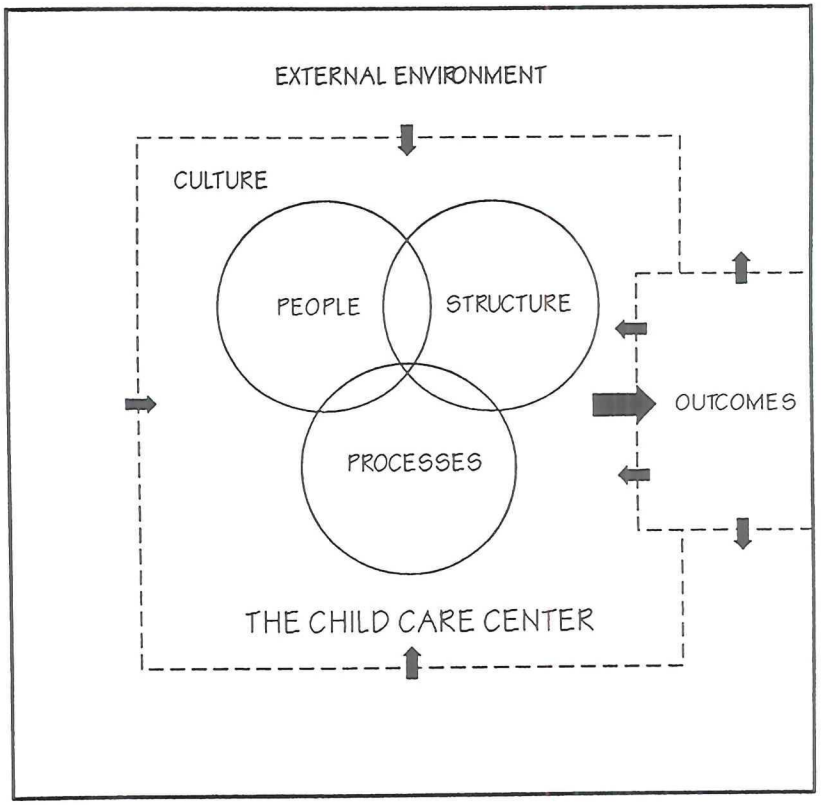

FIG. 1.
Child care centers as organizations: A social systems perspective.

TABLE 1.
Components of the System

Environment	People	Structure	Processes	Culture	Outcomes
sponsoring agency local community and immediate neighborhood professional community (prof. associations, other child care centers, universities, unions) legislative bodies and regulatory agencies economic, social, and political climate business community technological environment	Individuals sex age ethnic/cultural heritage socio-economic group family history educational level training work experience interests/skills/talents personal traits (level of abstract thinking, temperament, learning style, degree of flexibility, general dispositions, self-confidence, energy level) needs and expectations adult development stage career stage commitment motivation professional orientation beliefs and values concomitant roles Groups dominant coalitions	legal governing structure size (student enrollment, total number of staff) program composition (type of program, hours, services provided) policies regarding children (enrollment, group size, group composition, ratios) policies regarding parents (roles/responsibilities) policies regarding staff recruitment and training division of labor (job title, roles and responsibilities) supervisory and performance appraisal policies pay and promotion system accounting and financial management system physical environment (arrangement of space) materials and equipment size (square footage of indoor/outdoor space) philosophy/mission/vision (center goals/objectives) written curriculum	leadership style decision-making processes problem-solving processes communication networks planning and goal setting processes group meeting processes interpersonal relations conflict management supervisory and training processes performance appraisal processes center evaluation processes socialization practices child assessment practices teaching practices	shared values and beliefs norms history of the center traditions of the center organizational climate ethics	Organization reputation of the center fiscal viability internal efficiency Staff absenteeism turnover level of competence job satisfaction commitment to center professional fulfillment Children social competence cognitive competence overall health Parents satisfaction with center perceived support Community/society service provided

direct intervention in the processes of the center (e.g., changing decision-making processes); still others focus on changing the structures of the center (e.g., pay and promotion policies). A central tenet of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program, however, is that lasting change will be more successful if it takes a total systems approach. In other words, changes in one component will be more successful if they are supported by changes in other components of the system. Through identifying problems in their own programs, participants were guided in analyzing alternative strategies to effect change by viewing themselves as change agents. In the process, they were helped to see that a variety of interventions were often necessary and that these changes often needed to happen concurrently.

A social systems view of organizations in itself is not a planning strategy nor does it predict outcomes or results. It is merely a way of looking at centers as an integrated whole made up of interrelated, interacting parts. By helping directors begin to ask what impact a particular change might have on all components of the system, it was hoped they could begin to capitalize on the positive aspects of change and be better prepared to manage the negative aspects of change.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRAINING MODEL

There are many ways to assess the effectiveness of a training model—feedback from the participants regarding changes in their knowledge and skills; feedback from supervisors and colleagues attesting to changes in behavior or attitudes; and independent observations by an outside party documenting changes in actual on-the-job behavior. Multiple perspectives increase the reliability and validity of results by decreasing the possibility of bias. The evaluation design utilized to assess the effectiveness of this training model utilized all of these approaches.

Level of Perceived Competence

The participants' level of perceived competence was measured by using the Training Needs Assessment Survey (Bloom, Sheerer, Richard, & Britz, 1991). The TNAS assesses level of perceived competence in 28 knowledge and skill areas related to early childhood program leadership. These 28 knowledge and skill areas can be clustered under five task performance areas: personal/professional self-knowledge (4 items); child development and early childhood programming (8 items); organizational theory, leadership, and program administration (6 items); parent and community relations/public policy and advocacy (7 items); research and technology (3 items). On a 5-point scale, respondents are asked to indicate their level of knowledge or skill in each of the 28 areas (from

1 = no knowledge in this area to 5 = extremely knowledgeable in this area). The total possible range of scores for the items assessed on this scale is 28 to 140.

The Training Needs Assessment Survey was administered before the training sequence began to help assess each participant's training needs and to provide baseline data on participants' level of perceived competence. The Training Needs Assessment Survey was administered again at the end of the 16-month training cycle to document any changes in perceived level of competence in the 28 knowledge and skill areas.

A comparison of pretest and posttest data revealed a strong statistically significant increase in participants' level of perceived competence in all five clusters. As noted in Table 2, participants reported an increase in their level of knowledge and skill in all 28 areas. The pretest mean score summing all areas was 81.13; the total posttest mean score was 113.23, for an average increase of 32 points. The results of the data analysis provide strong support that the Head Start Leadership Training Program had a significant impact on participants' perceived level of competence in the knowledge and skill areas assessed.

When asked to reflect on how they had grown professionally from participating in the program, the most common responses seemed to relate to a gain in self confidence, which in turn seemed to translate into a stronger professional conviction and a resurgence of energy and enthusiasm relative to early childhood education. The statement, "I feel much more confident as an early childhood educator," was echoed by many of the participants in their reflections. They appeared to look for and find support and reinforcement for many of the practices that they had established through experience. And, on a broader basis, participation in and completion of the master's program enhanced their self esteem.

Related to these perceptions were statements about increased self understanding and consequent improvement of interpersonal skills. Many participants commented on the positive nature of the group process and the growth experienced through group interactions. In similar fashion, other participants spoke of their increased assertiveness, their more professional behavior, and their willingness to advocate for young children and the profession. The comments of two participants captures the sentiments of many regarding the impact of the program on their professional identity:

* I stretched this year. I stepped out with both feet and didn't fall. In fact, I flew! I thank you all for touching my life so inspirationally, so positively.
* Thank you, you saved my life! I was slowly dying professionally—I was in a rut. You have opened my eyes, enhanced my self-esteem, and motivated me to get involved in early childhood issues. I've always liked young children, but I had begun to get stale. I've developed pride in my career choice and feel competent. I hope

TABLE 2.
Pretest and Posttest Means for 28 Knowledge and Skill Areas (N=31)

Item	Pretest M	Posttest M	t
Personal/Professional Self-Knowledge	14.10	17.15	5.43*
Knowledge of oneself as a growing professional and how that professional identity translates into a code of ethical behavior.	3.67	4.50	
Group participant and observer skills and proficiency in communication techniques including active listening, and giving and receiving feedback.	3.60	4.23	
Knowledge of one's learning/teaching style and how to apply that style as situationally appropriate.	3.37	4.50	
Ability to use a variety of individual and organizational strategies to reduce job stress and burnout.	3.47	3.92	
Child Development and Early Childhood Programming	26.10	33.23	5.32*
Knowledge of major theories and current research in the social-emotional, cognitive, perceptual, and physical-motor development of children.	3.20	4.04	
Knowledge of the historical and theoretical bases for early childhood programs.	2.90	3.96	
Ability to articulate a personal philosophy of education.	3.33	4.35	
Skill in observing and recording young children's behavior.	3.80	4.46	
Knowledge of the types and appropriateness of child development assessment procedures and instruments.	3.23	3.96	
Skill in program planning for children from diverse cultures and family backgrounds, including children with special needs.	3.37	3.96	
Skill in evaluating learning environments and outcomes of different curricular models as they relate to NAEYC center accreditation standards.	2.53	4.15	
Knowledge of how to design and equip indoor and outdoor learning environments.	3.73	4.35	

TABLE 2. (*Continued*)

Item	Pretest M	Posttest M	t
Organizational Theory, Leadership, and Program Administration	16.13	23.77	5.31*
Ability to develop a set of personnel policies to guide administrative practices in recruitment, hiring, training, and evaluation of personnel.	3.03	4.08	
Knowledge of relevant theories and concepts of organizational climate, leadership, and group dynamics and how to apply these concepts to one's own work setting.	2.70	4.12	
Ability to apply research in the areas of adult learning, job satisfaction, and motivation theory in the supervision of staff.	2.67	3.96	
Knowledge of licensing requirements and procedures for starting an early childhood program.	2.83	4.12	
Skill in budgeting and fiscal management.	2.53	3.54	
Knowledge of the legal aspects of administering programs.	2.37	3.96	
Parent and Community Relations/Public Policy and Advocacy	18.33	27.23	6.32*
Knowledge about the diversity of family service and child care delivery systems.	2.73	3.77	
Knowledge of the social and cultural traditions of different families.	3.20	4.08	
Skill in using oral and written communication to deliver information to diverse audiences.	3.00	3.89	
Skill in evaluating existing family support services in the community.	2.87	3.81	
Skill in evaluating funding sources and writing a grant proposal.	2.07	3.31	
Ability to analyze social and public policy issues which affect the well-being of young children.	2.40	4.08	
Knowledge of the legislative process and advocating for children.	2.07	4.31	
Research and Technology	6.47	11.85	8.58*
Knowledge of research design techniques and statistical concepts.	1.87	3.62	
Ability to critique early childhood research.	2.53	4.15	
Ability to design and implement a research study.	2.07	4.08	
Total knowledge and skill	**81.13**	**113.23**	**6.79***

*$p < .0001$.

other "dying" early childhood professionals are given the opportunities that I have become aware of and explored. My life has been enriched and I am grateful!

Quality of Teaching Practices

A modified version of the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Scale (Bredekamp, 1986) was used to assess changes in the quality of teaching practices. This observation tool was developed to assess program quality for centers seeking accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. It is a measure of the "developmental appropriateness" of teaching practices in a particular classroom. This observation tool has been used previously in several large-scale studies (Holloway, 1988; Jorde-Bloom, 1989c). The modified version of the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Scale used in this evaluation assessed four areas of teaching practices: interactions among staff and children (11 items); curriculum (15 items); health, safety, and nutrition (17 items); and the physical environment (15 items). Each criteria was rated on a scale of 1 (not met) to 4 (fully met). Thus the total classroom quality score could range from 58 to 232.

TABLE 3.
Means and Standard Deviations for Background Characteristics of Entire Sample, Target Group, and Control Group

	Entire Sample (N=31)		Target Group (N=22)		Control Group (N=22)	
Variable	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.
Age	39.41	8.03	37.95	8.56	37.71	9.56
Education level*	4.81	.80	4.50	.51	4.05	1.17
Specialized coursework**						
ece/child development	26.10	22.60	25.18	22.40	29.60	22.10
administration	7.00	14.50	5.36	7.62	4.81	7.08
In-service training***						
ece/child development	69.00	60.00	60.05	50.84	66.10	55.60
administration	34.00	60.00	17.09	11.93	13.60	24.20
Experience						
total years in ece	12.41	5.53	11.73	5.40	10.43	5.71
years in present position	7.05	5.97	6.23	3.50	5.73	4.11

*Education level: 1 = high school diploma; 2 = some college; 3 = associate degree; 4 = bachelor's degree; 5 = some graduate work; 6 = master's degree; 7 = post master's coursework; 8 = doctorate.
**semester hours of credit
***clock hours

A subsample of the group was selected comprising those individuals who had direct responsibility for the quality of classroom teaching practices. This included the classroom teachers and those directors who had immediate supervisory responsibility for teaching practices in their centers. This subsample was labeled the target group. To provided comparison data, a matched sample of Head Start teachers and directors who did not receive training was invited to participate in the study. They comprised the control group. A total of 44 classrooms (22 in each group) were included in the pretest/posttest analysis. Table 3 provides a summary of the background characteristics of the entire sample, the target group, and the control group. A t-test was conducted on a number of background variables to discern if there were statistically significant differences between the target group and the control group before the training cycle began. In all areas, the groups were well matched.

An early childhood specialist served as the classroom observer in conducting both the pretest and posttest observations. It was decided to use a single observer to ensure reliability of observations from one program to another and between the pretest and posttest observations.

Table 4 provides a summary of the pretest and posttest means and standard deviations of the four classroom quality subscales as well as the total classroom quality score. A series of t-tests were conducted to discern if the two groups were evenly matched at the beginning of the training period. The mean pretest scores for overall quality for the target group was 174.08; the mean pretest

TABLE 4.
Pretest/Posttest Means and Standard Deviations for Classroom Quality

	Target Group (N=22)		Control Group (N=22)	
Variable	M	S.D.	M	S.D.
Pretest				
Interactions among staff/children	32.12	7.26	31.91	7.59
Curriculum	42.69	8.57	42.70	10.49
Health and nutrition	57.60	7.23	56.30	8.35
Physical environment	41.77	9.64	42.20	10.93
Overall classroom quality	174.08	27.50	173.00	32.80
Posttest				
Interactions among staff/children	41.00	3.37	30.63	9.79
Curriculum	52.32	6.76	42.92	12.19
Health and nutrition	62.00	4.82	55.63	9.96
Physical environment	51.95	8.15	40.58	11.64
Overall classroom quality	207.26	19.70	169.75	39.50

TABLE 5.
Mean Change Scores for Classroom Quality

Variable	Target Group (N=22) M	S.D.	Control Group (N=22) M	S.D.	t
Interactions among staff and children	8.06	7.03	−1.70	9.25	3.83***
Curriculum	9.39	8.86	−.26	10.66	3.16**
Health and nutrition	4.61	8.40	−1.04	8.13	2.17*
Physical environment	11.28	10.86	−1.87	9.20	4.11***
Overall classroom quality	33.33	29.48	−4.87	32.52	3.94***

*p < .05
** P < .01
*** P < .001

score for the control group was 173.00. None of the four subscales on the pretest revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups. In looking at posttest scores, it can be seen on this table that the mean overall quality score for the target group was 207.26 (an increase of 33 points). The mean posttest score for the control group was 169.75 (a decrease of 3 points).

Table 5 summarizes the mean change scores for each group (the average increase or decrease between the pretest and posttest observations). A series of t-tests were conducted to discern if there were statistically significant differences in the mean change scores that might be attributable to training. On all four subscales and on the overall classroom quality scores, there were statistically significant differences. The target group of Head Start teachers (those receiving training) consistently had higher scores on the posttest observations.

Quality of Work Life—Organizational Climate

Ten individuals who took part in the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program had direct administrative responsibility over a center-based program. The total student enrollment of these programs ranged in size from 40 to 231 students with a mean enrollment size of 104 students. The number of teaching and support staff at these centers ranged from 9 to 18 with a mean staff size of 13.

During the first month of training, the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (Jorde-Bloom, 1989a) was administered to all employees who worked at the centers these ten individuals directed (N = 98). The ECWES measures ten dimensions of organizational climate (collegiality, opportunities for professional growth, supervisor support, clarity, reward system, decision-making structure, goal consensus, task orientation, physical environment, and innovativeness). Organizational climate is defined as the collective perceptions of staff regarding these ten dimensions. A score of 0 to 10 is generated for each

dimension of organizational climate by averaging employee responses to ten items for each dimension.

The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey also measures the staff's level of current decision-making influence and their level of desired decision-making influence (each subscale ranges from 0 to 10). Finally, the ECWES measures staff's perceptions of how their current work environment compares with their ideal (scores range from 10 to 50). Reliability and validity data on the ECWES are available elsewhere (Jorde-Bloom, 1989a).

As part of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program, a work environment profile was generated from the data for each program and given to the program director as a tool for assessing programmatic areas in need of improvement. At the end of the 16-month training cycle, the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey was again administered to the teaching and support staff working in these Head Start centers.

Table 6 summarizes the results of the aggregate data from centers participating in the pretest and posttest administration of the ECWES (N = 72). (In the intervening months, one of the directors changed positions and became the director of a new center. The agency employing another one of the directors

TABLE 6.
Means and Standard Deviations for Pretest and Posttest Organizational Climate, Commitment, Congruence with Ideal, and Decision-making Influence (N = 72)

Variable	Pretest M	S.D.	Posttest M	S.D.	t
Organizational Climate					
collegiality	6.53	2.36	6.99	1.96	1.37
professional growth	5.49	2.47	6.24	2.04	2.15*
supervisor support	7.17	2.31	7.68	2.33	1.39
clarity	6.51	2.31	7.54	1.96	3.13**
reward system	6.13	2.01	6.60	2.05	1.42
decision-making structure	7.08	2.24	7.56	1.90	1.49
goal consensus	7.12	1.81	7.64	1.83	1.79
task orientation	7.24	2.12	7.64	2.06	1.21
physical environment	7.55	2.08	7.33	1.96	−.68
innovativeness	6.33	1.87	6.96	1.51	2.33*
Congruence with ideal	36.08	9.50	42.53	7.00	4.37***
Commitment	7.01	1.83	7.69	1.64	2.53**
Decision-making Influence					
current	6.30	2.25	7.05	1.77	2.33*
desired	7.72	2.45	7.77	1.93	.16

*p < .05
** p < .01
*** p < .001

experienced a funding cut and her program was closed.) Previous research in this area would lead one to be cautious in expecting changes in staff's attitudes about organizational climate in such a short period of time, but the results of the data analysis revealed a surprising increase in positive perceptions. On 9 of the 10 dimensions, the staff employed at these Head Start centers expressed more positive attitudes about the climate of their programs. In three of the ten dimensions (opportunities for professional growth, clarity, and degree of innovativeness) the differences in mean scores reached statistical significance.

In addition to more positive attitudes in the dimensions associated with organizational climate, Table 6 also shows that staff expressed stronger levels of commitment to their centers at the end of the training period ($t = 2.53$, $p < .01$). Another interesting result surfaced in the area of staff's perceptions of their current decision-making influence. Here there were also statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest administration of the ECWES that may be attributable to the training these directors received. The strongest differences in staff's perceptions, however, occurred in the congruence with ideal subscale. The pretest mean score on this subscale was 36.08; the posttest score was 42.53 ($t = 4.37$, $p < .0001$).

If one looks at the pattern of changes that occurred in these directors' centers, it appears that those areas that achieved the greatest degree of positive change were those areas in which the director (the participant in this training) had more control. These dimensions included clarity, providing opportunities for professional growth, and the degree of innovativeness exhibited at the center. As well, significant changes were noted in the level of decision-making influence accorded to staff; an area most certainly regulated by the director's leadership style. It is possible that as the directors became more confident of their own leadership abilities, they were better able to institute organizational practices that improved the quality of work life for their employees.

At the outset of this training, it was hoped that pretest and posttest data regarding organizational climate could be collected from a matched group of Head Start programs whose directors did not receive training. The Early Childhood Work Environment Survey was administered to a matched control group of programs at the beginning of the training cycle. Unfortunately, during the intervening 16 months, over half of the centers in this control group had changed directors. These programs also experienced high levels of employee turnover. The result was that there were insufficient data to do a valid and reliable comparative analysis. This situation is not uncommon in educational research investigating program changes over a period of time. The experience underscores the difficulty of executing research designs of this nature.

CASE STUDY—MONICA DAVIS

Case study data, as expected, provided more descriptive, personalized feedback relative to participants' experiences in the program. This feedback served to support and enhance the quantitative findings of the training outcomes. The following brief summary documents one participant's growth through her involvement in the leadership training program. Because of the sensitive nature of some of this information, a fictitious name is used.

Background Information

Monica Davis, a single widow, is a softspoken, warm, 39-year-old black woman who entered the training program with a Bachelor of Science degree in child development. She had taught preschool for eleven years and was currently the acting director of a Head Start center. Monica noted that her reason for entering the Leadership Training Program was to better prepare her for her administrative role. In a personal statement, she said, "It will provide me with the technical training that is needed to improve my program's administration and management, while giving sound direction to staff and others."

Monica reflected a belief system that the early childhood profession address the issue of the relationship between the children we teach, the school, and the broader community. She showed a strong concern that children receive the services they need, both educationally and socially-emotionally.

Monica rarely spoke in class and was often late arriving. Her concern about her abilities as a student and her perception of the assignments (particularly the research project) overwhelmed and frightened Monica and eroded her confidence. In her journal at the beginning of the training, she voiced her fears about whether she would make it through the program.

Process of Change

Despite a number of obstacles in her personal life, Monica persevered in the program. She was sustained mostly through a deep conviction that the program was right for her. Her commitment to study was reinforced by the social ties she built in class. The support of classmates was important to her. After one of the first classes she wrote in her journal, "Were we all matched, selected by a computer for the Tuesday class? We have so much in common. Good! I finally found other people that are just like me!" Her confidence was buoyed by the feeling that she was not alone in her efforts to achieve and learn in the program.

At the beginning of the second term, Monica's level of confidence was stronger. She wrote in her journal, "I really enjoy the instructors, and my classmates. The cohesiveness and collegiality of our group is strong. It has helped me through this term, with smiles, looks, words, and touches. I have truly enjoyed this learning experience. One of my goals is to be a better writer and speaker."

Monica appeared to be at the renewal stage in her career development. She was searching for new challenges in the area of supervision. Her role identity was changing from thinking of herself as a teacher to thinking of herself as a

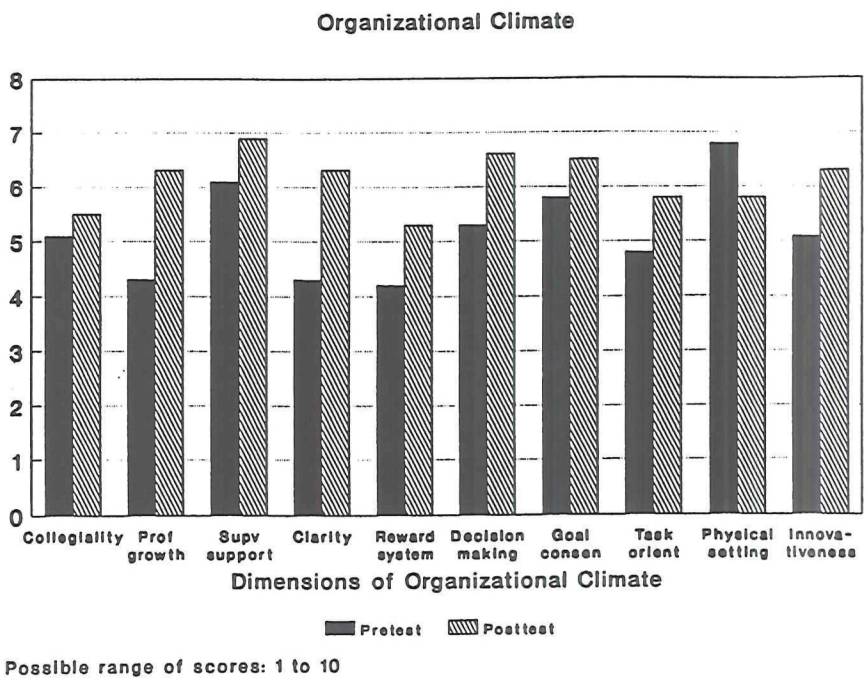

FIG. 2.
Pretest/posttest comparison.

full-time administrator. She demonstrated a great deal of openness in her desire to understand new ideas in her assigned work. She put a great deal of effort into each assignment.

Monica's ability to express herself both verbally and in writing were areas of difficulty for her. During the course of the training, her ability to think abstractly improved. She became more able to look at situations in her work with families, children, and teachers from multiple perspectives and analyze problem areas by taking many different viewpoints into consideration. In examining her own growth through the program, she said, "I have learned that there is not only one right way to do something. Through group discussions, I have come to learn more about myself by listening to other teachers' problems." Monica showed an ability to organize ideas and draw conclusions more in personal discussions than in her writing. Nevertheless, she exhibited an increased ability to think reflectively about herself and her work.

In her journal entries, Monica reflected a more intense emotional response to her environment than what she demonstrated in her behavior. Affectively, she seemed rather low-keyed and easy-going in her manner. However, her inner intensity was reflected in her motivation to succeed and in her willingness to

adapt to new situations. When confronted with the possibility of termination from the program due to absences, she immediately changed her lifestyle to ensure that she got to class on time. Toward the end of the program, Monica began to participate more in class discussions, offering comments, reflecting on ideas, and asking questions.

Growth and Change

One need only compare the pretest/posttest results of the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey administered to her staff to see the tremendous impact the training had on Monica's ability to provide a more nurturing work climate for her staff. As noted in Figure 2, in nine of the ten dimensions of organizational climate, her staff's perceptions were more positive at the end of the training; in six of these dimensions, the differences reached statistical significance. Her staff's collective perceptions about how their current work environment compared with their ideal also improved. The most exciting change can be see in the staff's perceptions of their current decision-making influence (Figure 3). The mean pretest score on this subscale was 3.75 (out of 10); the mean posttest score was 6.3.

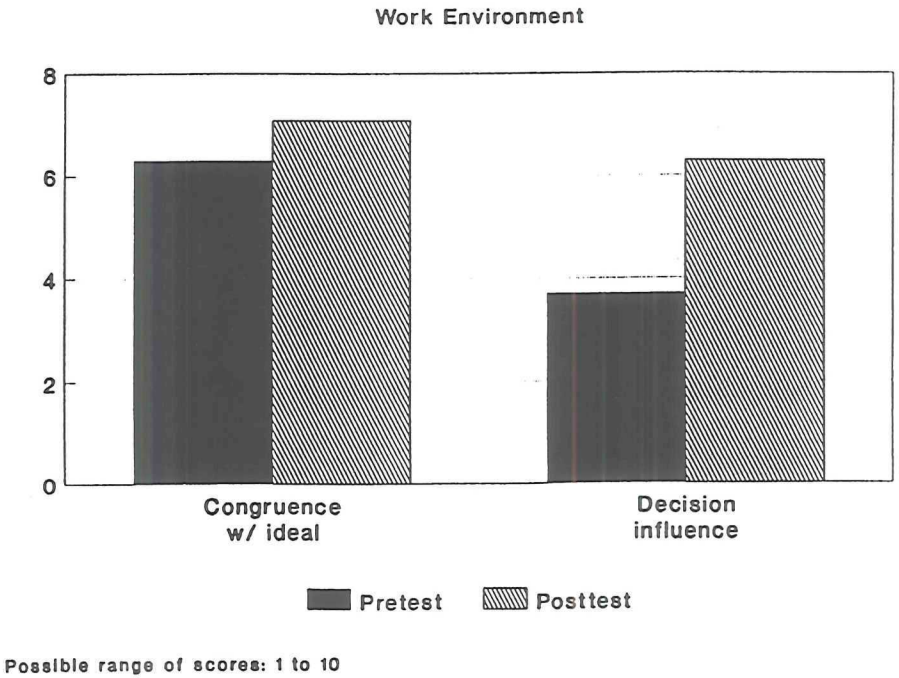

FIG. 3.
Pretest/posttest comparison.

On a personal level, Monica feels that her attitude about herself improved through participation in the program. "I am much more self-confident and better able to function as an administrator and supervisor. I used to think that being an administrator called for leadership abilities I didn't have. Now I see things more clearly. I know what it means to be a director and supervisor."

Monica stated in an interview at the end of the program, "My attitude is more professional. I can handle difficult situations at work much better now. I am calm when crises happen because I understand what my role is and I know I can do it." She feels she has learned to relate to people better because she can put herself in a parent's or a teacher's place and understand their point of view. She also believes she has gained the ability to use a variety of strategies to find solutions to both personal and professional problems.

Finally, Monica demonstrated an increased sense of confidence in her role as advocate of children. "I have learned to speak up for children. I have learned to speak to government administrators about our program and not be afraid or intimidated."

DISCUSSION

Two important themes emerged from the evaluation data collected to assess the outcomes of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program. These themes focus on the potency of training as it related to participants' increased feelings of self-efficacy and participants' ability to effect positive changes in their respective programs.

With respect to self-confidence and self-efficacy, participants reported significantly higher levels of perceived competence in 28 knowledge and skill areas. These data were supported by personal reflections of how individuals had grown and changed through this educational experience. The program format, based on an adult development model, encouraged the sharing of experiential knowledge. It also emphasized the written and verbal expression of a variety of strategies and ideas reflecting sound knowledge of child development. As students received positive feedback as well as constructive criticism from instructors who validated their efforts and ideas, they were more willing to take risks in communicating; and sometimes they modified their own views. In commenting on the nature of the assignments and the value of the research project, many participants articulated that the gap between theory and practice had been narrowed as a result of their participation in the program. At the conclusion of the 16-month experience, participants were more willing to offer and substantiate their views, as well as advocate for change. Self empowerment—the feeling that one person can have an impact on their program—no doubt resulted from the increased self-confidence.

The overriding goal of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program was to empower participants to effect change in their Head Start programs. Feedback from the participants' colleagues and their supervisors provides evidence regarding the strength and direction of these changes. It appears that improving participants' repertoire of administrative and organizational skills had a direct impact on many organizational practices. Significant changes in employees' perceptions of organizational climate with respect to the clarity of program policies and procedures, the degree of program innovativeness, and opportunities for professional growth were seen in the posttest administration of the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey. In addition, a significant increase in level of employee commitment to their centers and more favorable attitudes about their perceived level of decision-making influence were noted.

The observations of classroom quality conducted as part of the evaluation confirms that the training may well have also had a pronounced impact on the quality of teaching practices in the classroom. A significant improvement in the interactions between adults and children, the classroom curriculum, the arrangement and use of the physical environment, and health, safety, and nutritional practices was noted at the end of the 16-month training. These same changes were not detected in the control group.

The rich anecdotal evidence received from participants at the culmination of the Early Childhood Leadership Training Program provides first-hand accounts of how conducting action research changes the early childhood profession from the inside out and from the bottom up, through changes in early childhood educators themselves. It appears that the research component of this training model has the potential to play a significant role in improving the quality of services provided to children and their families. Bissex and Bullock (1987) suggest that "by becoming researchers, teachers take control over their classrooms and professional lives in ways that confound the traditional definition of teacher and offer proof that education can reform itself from within" (p. xi). The results of this training would underscore the validity of this statement.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal barrier in carrying out this training was the time factor. The original proposal called for a 20-month training program. The funding cycle that was approved for the grant necessitated that training be condensed to 16 months. It was feared even before the project was launched, that the pace of the program might be too rigorous for the participants. While the dedication and commitment of the individuals who took part in this training was outstanding, we have some concerns about the level of stress they may have experienced due to the accelerated pace of the training. But it is also possible our fears are unfounded. This program experienced only a 9% attrition rate—somewhat lower than the university's other graduate programs on campus. It may be that

the individualized nature of the training and the personal attention participants received from the instructors helped reduce potential sources of stress. Nevertheless, it is recommended that future endeavors to replicate this training model be structured to ensure a full 20 to 22 months of training.

CONCLUSION

Motivating child care directors to pursue advanced training in early childhood leadership can be problematic. Limited financial resources, time constraints, and the lack of external support are but a few of the obstacles directors and teachers experience when considering advanced training. The structure and design of this training model helped alleviate some of these problems. For example, many individuals feel insecure about attending university courses after having been out of school for a period of time. The small group format of this training model provides the collegial support that many mid-career teachers and directors need to reduce initial anxiety about reentry into a degree program. Moreover, knowing that the degree can be completed in less than two years provides additional incentive to the potentially reluctant, full-time professional. Perhaps the most important incentive, however, is the fact that participants quickly appreciate the emphasis on linking theory to practice. Individuals realize that what they will be doing in the program will have direct relevance to them in their respective child care settings.

There are many aspects of the model of leadership training detailed in this report that are unique: the length and sequence of training, the multi-disciplinary content of the curriculum, the cluster group format, the site visits by the instructor, the work-related research project, and the linking of completion of training to graduate credit. The results of the data analysis suggest this may be a promising model for providing professional growth experiences for early childhood personnel around the country. As a cost-effective, easily-implemented in-service model, it has broad implications for improving the professional expertise of child care directors and teachers while at the same time promoting substantive change and improvement in their centers. This study provides compelling evidence that training can have a direct effect on participants' perceived level of competence, the quality of their teaching practices in the classroom, and the organizational climate of their centers.

NOTE

Some of these data were presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1992.

REFERENCES

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (1986). *Educating a profession: Profile for continuing professional development*. Washington, DC: Author.

Beer, M. (1980). *Organization change and development: A systems view*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Berk, L. (1985, Summer). Relationship of caregiver education to child-oriented attitudes, job satisfaction, and behaviors toward children. *Child Care Quarterly, 14*, 103–109.

Bissex, G., & Bullock, R. (1987). *Seeing for ourselves: Case study research by teachers of writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bloom, P. J. (1991, October). Child care centers as organizations: A social systems perspective. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 20*(5), 313–333.

Bloom, P. J., Sheerer, M.,& Britz, J. (1991). *Blueprint for action: Achieving center-based change through staff development*. Mt. Rainier, MD: Gryphon House.

Bloom, P. J., Sheerer, M., Richard, N., & Britz, J. (1991). *The Head Start Leadership Training Program: Final report to the Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Division*. Evanston, IL: The Early Childhood Professional Development Project, National-Louis University.

Bowditch, J., & Buono, A. (1982). *Quality of work life assessment*. Boston: Auburn House.

Bredekamp, S. (1986). The reliability and validity of the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Scale for accrediting early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 1*, 103–118.

Bredekamp, S. (1989, March). *Measuring quality through a national accreditation system for early childhood programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Decker, C. A., & Decker J. (1984). *Planning and administering early childhood programs*. Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill.

Dyer, W. (1984). *Strategies for managing change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The meaning of educational change* (2nd edition). New York: Teachers College Press.

Getzels, J., & Guba, E. G. (1957, Winter). Social behavior as an administrative process. *The School Review, 65*, 423–441.

Greenman, J. T., & Fugua, R. (Eds.). (1984). *Making day care better*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Guskey, T. (1986, May). Staff development and the process of teacher change. *Educational Researcher*, 5–12.

Hall, G., & Loucks, S. (1978, September). Teacher concerns as a basis for facilitating and personalizing staff development. *Teachers College Record, 80*(1), 36–55.

Holloway, S. (1988). The relationship of day care quality to children's free-play behavior and social problem-solving skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 3*(1), 39–53.

Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W., Huling-Austin, L., & Hall, G. (1987). *Taking charge of change*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Jorde-Bloom, P, (1982). *Avoiding burnout: Strategies for managing time, space, and people in early childhood education*. Mt. Rainier MD: Gryphon House.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1986, Fall). The administrator's role in the innovation decision process. *Child Care Quarterly, 15*(2), 182–197.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1988). *A great place to work: Improving conditions for staff in programs for young children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1989a). *Measuring work attitudes: A technical manual for the Early Childhood Work Environment Survey and the Early Childhood Job Satisfaction Survey*. Brandon, VT: Psychology Press.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1989b, Winter). Professional orientation: Individual and organizational perspectives. *Child and Youth Care Quarterly, 18*(4), 227–240.

Jorde-Bloom, P. (1989c). *The Illinois Directors' Study*. Springfield, IL: Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Moos, R. H. (1976). *The human context*. New York: Wiley.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1984). *Accreditation criteria and procedures of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs*. Washington, DC: Author.

Peters, D. L., & Kostelnik, M. (1981). Current research in day care personnel preparation. In S. Kilmer (Ed.), *Advances in Early Education and Day Care* (vol. 2., pp. 29–60). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Powell, D., & Stremmel, A. (1989). The relation of early childhood training and experience to the professional development of child care workers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *4*, 339–356.

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Showers, B., Joyce, B., & Bennett, B. (1987, November). Synthesis of research on staff development. *Educational Leadership*, 77–87.

Texas State Department of Human Resources. (1977). *A needs assessment of Texas child care administrators with implications for potential training strategies*. Denton, TX: North Texas State University.

Whitebook, M., Howes, C., Darrah, R., & Friedman, J. (1982). Caring for the caregivers: Staff burnout in child care. In L. Katz (Ed.), *Current topics in early childhood education* (Vol. 4, pp. 212–235), Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.