

Parents were amazed by their children – Work with parents and educators in the townships of Cape Town

Nomathemba Tindlini

There are 17 Waldorf schools in South Africa, and connected to these are approximately 50 Waldorf early childhood settings – toddler groups (2 to 3s), playgroups (3 to 4s) and kindergartens (4 to 6s). Some of the Waldorf schools are currently involved in initiating birth to three groups. More and more early childhood centers that are already established in the townships (catering for birth to school-going age) are keen to participate in the Waldorf movement. This is realized through teacher training, mentoring, and sharing-gatherings held each term.

Training. Tertiary training for Waldorf teachers takes place at the Centre for Creative Education (CFCE), situated in Cape Town. The CFCE has acquired state accreditation and offers a level 4 and level 5 certificate in early childhood development, a Bachelor of Arts (Dance) in Eurythmy and a Bachelor of Education in primary school teaching. The early childhood training primarily serves teachers in the townships. About 20 early childhood teachers receive certificates each year. The CFCE also offers a Birth to Three course with modular training, workshops and mentoring for those who work with this age group in underprivileged settings. (You can find more information about Waldorf early childhood in South Africa [here](#)).

For many years, the Birth to three courses and the mentoring in the townships have been supported by the regular presence of Elbjørg Paulsen, kindergarten teacher in Norway. She retired recently and Nomathemba Tindlini is now alone responsible for this work. In the following article she gives some impressions about her work with teachers and parents of Early Childhood settings in the Township called "Educare Centres".



2017 has been a busy year, doing the module training without Elbjørg G. Paulsen was a huge learning curve for me; I missed having her by my side. Although it was scary I had support from my colleagues and I gained the strength and confidence needed.

Helping to build a good social mood

At the beginning of the year I continued the mentoring with the seven centres who had participated in the training in 2016. With five of these centres we have managed to build a good team between the principal

(director), teacher and myself. This has helped the principal to understand what the Birth to Three carer is wanting to do and has created a really good communication between the teacher and principal. This has enabled us to talk openly about concerns and changes needed in the baby room. Hopefully this team building will help to avoid the main challenge of losing good teachers because of lack of communication.

Now with the 2017 training group there are 17 centres that I work with.

Birth to three training

In May 2017 the Birth to Three training started. Being alone I took the opportunity to do both modules in isiXhosa language. This was very helpful. The students felt freer to ask questions and because we gained time, we were able to make dolls and felt balls as well.

At our last session of the year we did a recap of the work we had covered. It was amazing to hear how much they have taken in from the course. Two of them gave feedback that really shows how what they have learnt has been implemented and how it has had a positive effect for the children: One shared how the course helped her to understand her own child who didn't like to be touched, and how to touch him without making him feel bad. As a result the child doesn't push the mother's hand away anymore. The mother learnt how important the sense of touch is. Another shared how much free play freed her from talking the whole day; as she started to make the toys available for the children to play freely, the children are no longer screaming and fighting, but rather they play nicely together.



Workshops with teachers working in the Townships

In July 2017 a Nutrition workshop was held at Zenzeleni School, facilitated by Eefka Young and me. We focused on the importance of breastfeeding and different kinds of food that can be cooked in the educare centre and how to cook for children. Eefka showed some herbs that can be used instead of using spices in the children's food.

In October 2017 Robyn Davis and I ran a "Hero Book workshop", that is how we call workshops on self – development and meditation. 12 students attended the workshop. This workshop is always really heavy for all of us at the beginning, but at the end it brings such a relief for the students. It heals, and unburdens the loads that were on people's shoulders for many years.



Workshops with parents of the “Educare Centres”

We organized two workshops on ‘The Importance of Sleep for the young children’. The attendance was good, about 17 parents were there. They were positive about the topic and they asked good questions, like ‘What if the child doesn’t want to sleep before the parent goes to sleep?’, which happens a lot in our townships for different reasons. Another mother shared that she never knew that the light has an impact on children’s sleep. She was wondering why her children don’t sleep easily. A father mentioned, that he didn’t mind when the child doesn’t sleep, as long as she is not crying he will let her play, but now he knows that sleep is important for the child.

In another workshop we wanted that the parents experience the mood of play. The classroom was set up for play. Some parents came with their children and the children went straight to play. Some parents were trying to stop the children, because they were not told to play. I asked parents not to stop children but observe them. Robyn gave a short talk about how children learn and then she did a morning ring with them; it was such a joyful day. They really enjoyed the morning ring and afterwards they gave feedback of what they learnt from the morning ring. We ended the day with a puppet play. Parents were amazed by their children – how quiet they were during story time.

Helping to build nicer surroundings for the children

In May 2017 Eldbjorg and her colleagues donated some money towards the upgrade of Khuseleka educare centre in Khayelitsha. The baby room walls were painted and the floor was renewed. With some wonderful ideas from Clara Aerts new furniture was designed and installed in the room – a version of a play cot, shelving and cupboards.



Before



After

Success and Gratitude

Although there have been ups and downs this year and we miss Eldbjørg terribly, I feel that the project is getting stronger and beginning to consolidate most of our wishes and intentions. Sometimes changes are very small in the centres but when I see how the carer-teachers are growing in confidence and really trying to implement what they have learnt, then I know the work we are doing is good. When I see the children playing and moving freely in their spaces and their happy faces this gives further courage to continue. The parent workshops have been incredibly positive and I look forward to that aspect of the work going from strength to strength.

Our work with the Birth to Three Project would not be possible without support from IASWECE and Eldbjørg's kindergarten, Stjerneglimt Steinerbarnehage; The Learning Trust; Mahle Stiftung and the enormous good will and love that surround our project. It was a highlight of the year in 2017 to meet members of the IASWECE council and to feel the connection to the world movement and the interest and care for children from Birth to three all over the world.

Thank you.

Noathemba Tindlini was born in Cape Town SA in 1972. In 1996, after finishing high school, she became a part-time domestic worker and later, after the birth of her first daughter, she became a full-time nanny. In 1998 she began to study early childhood development at the Centre for Creative Education. After her second daughter was born, she worked as a kindergarten assistant at Michael Oak Waldorf School for five years. In 2012, she joined the Birth to Three Project and worked with Eldbjørg Paulsen with training sessions and mentoring in the centres. In 2015 she became a full-time Birth to Three Project mentor, and since 2016 she has worked as a trainer and mentor.



Nomathemba



Nomathemba and Eldbjørg