

AN INVESTIGATION OF PRIVATE CHILDCARE CENTRES
IN NEWFOUNDLAND

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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SPECIAL AREA OF STUDY:
An Investigation of Private Childcare Centres in Newfoundland

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INTERPRETATION OF TERMS

It is appropriate at this point in the report to define the common educational terms that are somewhat unique to this particular internship experience. These are as follows:

- (a) "Department" means the Department of Education of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- (b) "Division of Supervision" means one of the divisions or branches of the Department of Education.
- (c) "Chief Superintendent" means the Head of the Division of Supervision.
- (d) "Assistant Chief Superintendent" means the assistant to the Head of the Division of Supervision.
- (e) "District Superintendent" means the person appointed by each School Board under Section 18 and Section 19 of the Schools Act, 1969. This person is responsible to the Board for the day to day operation of educational services within the School Board area.

(f) "Child-care Centre" means any place where five or more children, not of the same family, are cared for, for any part of the day. The term includes day-nurseries, day-care centres, pre-school centres, and any private schools for children between the ages of two and sixteen.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The internship is designed to provide a practical experience of educational administration enabling the intern both to carry responsibility and make decisions, and to learn from the day to day close association with the cooperating administrator.

Objectives of the Internship

This particular internship at the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education had three-fold objectives:

1. To provide the intern with a broad understanding of the educational organization and structure of the Province of Newfoundland together with an idea of the division of responsibility within the administration of the Provincial educational system.
2. To provide a close association with one of the Department's chief administrators in order that the intern would learn from his observations of day to day functions and of the administrator's approach to the fulfilment of his role.
3. To provide the intern with the opportunity to participate in the administrative process of the Department.

Specification of Duties

With the above objectives in mind, the specification of duties drawn up at the commencement of the internship period was as follows:

1. To observe the functions and operation of the Division of Supervision at the Department of Education.
2. To observe the functions and day to day work of the Chief Superintendent in the Division of the Supervision at the Department of Education.
3. To attend and participate in the various committee and other meetings attended by the Chief Superintendent and Assistant Chief Superintendent. These will include:
 - (i) meetings of Schools Sub-Committee on DREE financed schools.
 - (ii) meetings planning District Superintendents' Conferences.
 - (iii) meetings of Committee preparing School Standard Manual.
 - (iv) meetings of Department officials, Architects and Denominational Education Committee officials on approval of school plans.
4. To participate increasingly during the duration of the internship in the day to day operation of the division.
5. By visiting and observing the operations of other Divisions of the Department of Education, to achieve a broad general view of the organization and working of the Department.

6. To carry out as a project an investigation of pre-school and other private child care centres within the province of Newfoundland. The specifications of this project are attached.
7. To participate in and assist the Advisory Committee on school construction standards and to carry out such projects in this connection as may become necessary from time to time.
- 8. Where possible and practical accompany the Chief Superintendent and Assistant Chief Superintendent on visits to attend to School Board matters or School Tax Authority matters.
9. To carry out any other such projects which may be initiated during the internship, such as preparation of a Handbook for School Board Personnel.

CHAPTER II

FULFILMENT OF SPECIFICATION OF DUTIES

The internship experience will be considered in relation to the specification of duties outlined in Chapter I.

Observation of Functions and Operations of the Division of Supervision

Daily presence at the Department of Education, within the Division of Supervision, permitted thorough observation of the Division's functions and operations. There was primary emphasis on a responsibility for the administration of legislation relating to education, particularly the School's Act, 1969, which helped to give an overview of the educational organization and structure of the Province. This, together with a responsibility for certain areas of school bus transportation and DREE school construction, the approval of plans for new school buildings and, under the Local School Tax Act, 1970, for School Tax Authorities, helped also to give an indication of the division of authority in Provincial educational administration between the Department of Education, the School Boards, and the Denominational Education Committees.

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Observation of Functions and Day to Day
Work of the Chief Superintendent and
Assistant Chief Superintendent

A large period of the internship was spent accompanying either the Chief Superintendent or the Assistant Chief Superintendent as they carried out their administrative duties. In this way it was possible to observe closely the manner in which both approached their tasks, which varied from conducting large meetings of District Superintendents to answering mail or giving advice on sections of the legislation over the telephone. The Chief Superintendent and his Assistant worked extremely closely, each being familiar with the other's particular responsibility. The Chief Superintendent was largely concerned with the administration of educational legislation on a day to day basis. Additionally he was also concerned, together with the Assistant Chief Superintendent, with the administration of DREE financed school building projects. The Assistant Chief Superintendent was particularly concerned with School Board liason, School Tax Authority matters, and, until the recent appointment of a Department engineer, the approval of school building plans.

The Chief Superintendent also maintained close liason with other Division Heads within the Department as well as with personnel from other Government Departments, particularly in relation to the financing and construction

of schools under the Federal Government DREE programme.

Participation in Committees

During the course of the internship it was possible to attend and participate in various meetings attended by the Chief Superintendent and Assistant Chief Superintendent.

One meeting of the Schools Sub-Committee on DREE financed schools was held during this period, attended by both Division personnel and those representing other Government Departments and the Federal Government. The business conducted at this meeting, included discussion of both current and future projects, together with any problems of land acquisition, engineering, equipment, or financing associated with the projects.

Two meetings planning a District Superintendents' conference were held, attended by both Division personnel and representatives of the Superintendents and the University. The business conducted at these meetings was largely concerned with developing an agenda for the up-coming Superintendents' conference.

Several meetings of a Committee preparing a School Standards Manual were held, attended by both Division

personnel and representatives of the District Superintendents, the University, and the Denominational Education Committees. The full Committee appointed a sub-committee, of which the Intern was a member, to prepare a draft document for its consideration. Details of the work of this sub-committee are given later in this report.

Several meetings of Department personnel were held for the purpose of approving school building plans. At these meetings consideration was given to site location and building design before approval was given.

A District Superintendents' conference was held, during the period of the internship, attended by Department personnel and Denominational Education Committee representatives in addition to the Superintendents. At this conference the Superintendents were informed of current Department thinking and of any proposed changes in legislation. They, in turn, had the opportunity to request information and discuss items of common interest.

Observation of other Divisions

The period of the internship did not permit observation of the functions and operations of the other Divisions within the Department of Education in any great detail. While there was regular contact with those

responsible for Administration, Special Education, Educational Planning, and Curriculum and Instruction, it was only with the Supervisor of Information, Statistics and Youth Travel that any time was spent. A description of the functions of the Supervisor of Information was given, together with examples of her day to day work. Some time was spent assisting with this work, particularly in the preparation of replies to correspondence inquiring about the functions and structure of the Department of Education.

Participation in Day to Day Operation of the Division of Supervision

It was not possible initially, because of the nature of the Division's functions, to participate actively in its day to day operation. However, as the internship progressed, an increased awareness of the Division's work permitted an increased degree of participation. In addition to taking an active part in the various Committee and other, informal, meetings, this participation took the form of preparation of replies to correspondence. Also, as the investigation into child-care centres proceeded, the Intern was able gradually to take on responsibilities requiring the giving of advice in connection with Sections 67 to 72 of the Schools Act, 1969, which refer to private schools.

Project - The Child-care Centre Investigation

Throughout the Province a number of child-care centres are operating, with new ventures continually being initiated. Many are operating, and have been for some time, with neither the knowledge nor the approval of the various agencies whose statutory duties include control of such centres.

The Chief Superintendent had felt for some time the need for information concerning actual child-care facilities, particularly since certain of them seemed to be conducting educational programmes which might affect a child's later performance in the regular day school. He thus suggested that an investigation of pre-school and other private child-care centres be undertaken as part of the internship.

Objectives of the Investigation

The specific objectives of the study were formulated as follows:

1. To determine which privately operated child-care centres presently exist in the Province.
2. To determine by personal visit
 - (a) the situation and environment of the centre.
 - (b) the numbers of staff and students.

(c) the qualifications and experience of the staff.

(d) the organization's view of the objectives of the programme offered at the centre, and the means employed to achieve these objectives.

3. To make a personal assessment of the various programmes and their implementation.
4. To determine whether the learning experiences acquired by pupils in these centres provide adequately for transfer to the appropriate level in the regular day school.
5. To suggest criteria for the establishment and approval of such centres by the Department of Education.
6. To suggest educational standards for all such centres together with means of control and supervision by the Department of Education.

Methodology of the Investigation

To achieve the objectives of the study it was necessary to use a variety of approaches, particularly as a good number of the centres were well outside St. John's and inaccessible to personal visit within the limitations of time and cost.

Considering each objective individually, the methods used were as follows:

1. To determine which privately operated child-care centres

currently existed in the Province.

- (a) a list of centres, mostly operating in St. John's, prepared by the Early Childhood Development Association, a local interest group, and obtained from the Supervisor of Information, Statistics and Youth Travel, was utilized initially. Contact was made, by telephone with those centres listed for St. John's and by letter with the remainder, to discover whether or not they were still operational.
- (b) a subsequent, more up to date, list was obtained directly from the Early Childhood Development Association after contact had been made with the Organization's President. Centres new to this list were also checked to discover whether or not they were still operational.
- (c) Registry files on private schools, back to 1960, were searched, and all those who had written to the Department requesting information on the setting up of private child-care centres were circularized asking whether or not they had proceeded with the establishment of such a centre.
- (d) Registry files on private schools, back to 1960, were searched, and all those who had been given approval by the Minister of Education to operate a private school were contacted by letter to discover whether or not the centre was still operational.

(e) the Department of Social Services and Rehabilitation, whose responsibility it is to license child-care centres under the Welfare Institutions Licensing Act, 1966 - 67, was approached and provided a list of all such centres currently licensed. Any of these centres not previously included in the survey were approached in order to discover whether, or not they were still operational.

(f) a circular was sent to all District School Superintendents asking for information concerning any child-care centres which they knew to be operating within their school district.

(g) a letter was sent to the Town Clerks or Town Managers of all communities with a population in excess of 1,000. This letter asked for information concerning any child-care centres which they knew to be operating within their Municipal areas.

(h) those who were, or had been, operating child-care centres, and who had been contacted by one or other of the methods above, were asked if they knew of the existence of any other such centres.

2. Personal visits were only possible to the St. John's centres. The information detailed in the second objective was obtained from other centres by correspondence. A questionnaire was prepared and circularized to all those child-care centres listed

outside the City.

3. Similarly, a personal assessment of the various programmes, whilst possible sketchily on the basis of replies to the questionnaire, could only be carried out with any degree of confidence for those centres visited.
4. To determine whether the learning experience acquired by the pupils in child-care centres provides adequately for transfer to the appropriate level in the regular day school, contact was made with three schools known to include such pupils in their enrolment. The Director of Special Education with the Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's was approached, and suggested that information be sought from Mary Queen of Peace Primary School and from St. John Bosco Elementary School, both in St. John's. MacDonald Drive Elementary School was visited at the invitation of the Principal.
5. In order to suggest criteria for the establishment and approval of child-care centres by the Department of Education, each of the other nine Provincial Departments of Education, and, where appropriate, Provincial Departments of Social Services, were contacted and asked to provide details of their legislation and regulations concerning such centres.
6. In order to suggest educational standards, and means

of control and supervision for child-care centres, use was made of the legislation and regulations of the other nine Canadian Provinces. Additionally a meeting was held with the executive of a local interest group, the Early Childhood Development Association, to discuss their ideas on the educational objectives of child-care centres. Finally, reference was made to published source material on child-care centres in North America.

Limitations of the Investigation

The limitations of the methods described above may be summarized as follows:

1. While probably most of the child-care centres in the Province will have been contacted during the course of the study, it is still likely that others may exist and be operating, particularly in private homes.
2. Where information was sought by mail the response was not 100%. A few centres did not respond to the questionnaire despite a second letter. Not all Town Managers replied, despite, in some cases, a telephone reminder.
3. Where centres did complete and return the questionnaire there was no means of verifying information given.
4. The personal assessment of programme implementation was based upon one visit of from one to two hours to each centre. This visit was not in the nature of an

"inspection" and the assessment was therefore in the form of general impressions of the activities taking place at the time of the visit together with materials and equipment in use or on display.

5. In order to judge whether attendance at a child-care centre was beneficial or otherwise when the child came to attend regular school, a full-scale statistical survey would be necessary. The material obtained in this study was sufficient to give certain general impressions and to serve as a basis for further investigation.

Results of the Investigation

Around thirty child-care centres were found to be operating within the Province, together with an additional thirty centres in the Terra Nova area operating with Federal Government assistance under a Local Initiatives Project-grant. Details of these centres were collected and tabulated.

It was felt necessary to distinguish between those centres providing a service for profit, or at least, in exchange for fees, and those which provided a free service to "underprivileged" children. One school principal felt that the "underprivileged" children attending his school greatly benefited from an experience they had received the previous year at a centre, charging no fees, and concentrating on

teaching social skills

There was little evidence, however, that the children of those able to afford private school fees achieved any better than they would have if they remained at home. It seemed that parents whose children were not quite old enough to enter regular kindergarten in any particular year would pay fees so that the child could attend a private institution. In the following year they would expect that the child enter regular Grade I. In some cases children would be made to feel let down when transferred to kindergarten rather than Grade I of the regular school system.

It was noted that other Provinces tended to be more prescriptive with regard to the establishment and control of child-care centres. There seemed to be an awareness, reflected in the provision of Government grants to centres for the "underprivileged", of the benefits of pre-school socialization programmes. It was also noted that the Federal Government, under the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan, will provide funds on a cost sharing basis for the establishment and operation of such centres.

The collection of data for the investigation was completed during the period of the internship, but there was insufficient time during that period to complete the report. This was commenced immediately following the conclusion of

the internship and will be completed at a later date, and presented to the Department of Education.

Project - The School Standards Manual

As a member of the three man sub-committee entrusted with its preparation, the Intern initially prepared suggested objectives and contents, and secondly prepared certain sections of the Manual. Particular responsibility was held for the preparation of sections dealing with suggested facility areas and designs. In these sections figures had to be given for the following:

- Overall size of facility

- Classroom/specialist centre floor areas

- Storage areas

- Office areas

- Cafeteria and kitchen areas

- Cloakroom/washroom areas and facilities

for both elementary and high schools.

In order to obtain these figures reference was made to Canadian statistics for school buildings. Where possible mode figures were used, that is, the figure given for each particular facility was, where possible, the one most commonly adopted across the ten Provinces.

This work was largely finished prior to the

completion of the internship. Some, however, was completed subsequently, and the Intern will continue to work on the Manual and on the parent Committee until the Manual is published.

Visits to School Boards or School Tax Authorities

No time or opportunity was found during the period of the internship to fulfil this particular suggested duty.

Other Projects

No other projects were undertaken during the period of the internship.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION - ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Since the Chief Superintendent is responsible for the administration of the various pieces of legislation governing education, the Intern was in an ideal position to obtain an understanding of the educational organization and structure of the Province. Furthermore, observation of, and participation in the various committees, gave a good idea of the division of responsibility within the administration of the Provincial educational system, between the Department of Education, the School Boards and the Denominational Education Committees.

A close association with the Chief Superintendent and Assistant Chief Superintendent led to valuable observations of the manner in which both approached their duties.

Experience of the actual administrative process was gained in the day to day administrative process of the Division, together with participation in the various committees. The investigation of private child-care facilities throughout the Province also provided experience of a particular administrative process from start to finish, while the preparation of the School Standards Manual gave experience of a cooperative committee approach to a problem.

Lack of time to fulfil two of the duties specified at the start of the internship, namely observations of other Divisions and

visits to School Boards or School Tax Authorities meant that some useful experience was missed, but this did not seriously limit the value of the internship. All in all, a great deal of experience was gained in an adequate period of time.

Suggestions for Future Internships

It is suggested that the following two points be born in mind for any future internships at the Department of Education.

1. A project, such as the investigation into child-care centres, is essential since it provides a continuous thread to the experience, and enables the Intern to follow through an administrative process from beginning to end.
2. Short visits to other Divisions within the Department of Education should be arranged early on in the internship period to enable the Intern to grasp the overall administrative structure of the Department soon enough for this to be beneficial to his experience.



