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## Monitor Newsletter August 11, 2003

Bowling Green State University

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## Booth examines impact of culture on education in Swaziland

**Margaret (Peggy) Booth**, educational foundations and inquiry, has spent most of her professional life seeking the answers to two fundamental questions: How does the cultural context of learning affect learning? And, how does the cultural context of the teacher affect learning?

She has recently completed a nine-year longitudinal study of education in Swaziland in which she examined the many factors that help determine whether students will remain in school and how well they will do. Her findings will be published in a book titled *Culture and Education: The Social Consequences of Western Schooling in Contemporary Swaziland*, to be published in December by University Press of America.

The study has also resulted in 10 journal articles and several presentations by Booth at academic conferences.

Rather than academic ability, societal variables turned out to be the biggest predictors of a student's school achievement, she found. Surprisingly, gender emerged as perhaps the strongest factor, though not always in the ways one might have predicted, Booth said. The tension between traditional societal values and everyday realities has produced some unexpected results.

The impact of migrant labor has also been a huge factor in families' and children's lives, and thus their schooling, she said. Her findings about "the cultural phenomenon of the absent father" could be applicable to many other societies in which migrant labor is a fact of life, she noted.

There is also a cultural disjuncture between home and school in Swaziland, as in many former colonial countries, Booth noted, where the schools still follow the British educational system that is not related to children's home environments. Since its independence from Britain in 1968, the country is "still very British," Booth said, although there has been a "huge cultural impact" from its neighbor South Africa.

"A country of contradictions" is how she describes the African country where she followed a group of 80 students from the time they were just preparing to enter school in 1990 until 2000. A highly patriarchal land in which men are allowed more than one wife, the greatest power—secret of rain making—is nevertheless held by the mother of the king, the "Great She-Elephant."

Booth, a specialist in educational psychology, chose Swaziland because, unlike most African nations, it is ethnically homogeneous, which eliminated other possible variables from the study. She also focused on rural families since they are less likely to be affected by outside influences than those in cities.

The last true monarchy on the African continent, Swaziland has been "fighting to remain traditional. It is fighting democracy and attempting to remain as traditionally Swazi with a heavy monarchical presence," she said. A tiny nation not much bigger than Hawaii or the country of Wales, it is encompassed by its larger neighbors, South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana.

Schooling is mandatory from age 6, but not free. The fees charged and the cost of the required uniforms constitute a heavy burden, especially on rural families who are cash-poor. Booth's foremost recommendation for the country's educational progress is that education should be free for all, though she said she doubts that this will be adopted.

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Wealth in rural Swaziland is measured in cattle, but, paradoxically, the cattle are not sold to provide cash for necessities (another of the contradictions Booth found). Therefore, many if not most men travel to South Africa to work in the mines, which has had enormous consequences for Swazi families.

Booth's study found that at the very beginning children's schooling, the fathers' absence had a detrimental effect on both boys and girls. However, as time went on, it actually began to have a positive impact on girls' chances of school success and a negative impact on boys'.

Reasons for this could be that, while boys are the ones for whom education is deemed most important, with fathers away, boys often have to stay home to tend the cattle. Girls' traditional chores, though many, can be completed around the school schedule. Also, the mothers and grandmothers at home tend to make sure the girls' school fees are paid, recognizing that for a Swazi woman to be successful, she must be educated. Even if she only marries, her dowry price will be higher if she has gone to school, Booth said.

When fathers are at home, they tend to motivate the boys to do well in school, Booth found. Boys of absent fathers also see that their fathers are making a salary in the mines even without an education, another disincentive to dedicate themselves to their studies, she said.

The educational achievement of those girls who manage to stay in school has been higher, with many fewer being held back to repeat a year, Booth found. By the second year of secondary school, the remaining girls were mostly at grade level, while the boys were spread out from fifth grade upwards.

The effect of this male migrant labor has also cast women in a new role as de facto leaders of the family, and many had very frank discussions with Booth about their feelings on men's and women's positions in society.

Booth has been driven since she was a high school teacher in Kenya as a Peace Corps worker and later in Cleveland to find the answers to the two questions about cultural context and learning. Her curiosity led her to go back to school to obtain her master's degree and, later her Ph.D., in educational psychology and comparative education, from Ohio University.

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#### **BGSU collaboration wins national science award**

The collaborative effort of four northwest Ohio educational institutions to boost the quality of science instruction in area schools has received national honors, and the program's success has been confirmed by a study conducted by the University of Toledo's Urban Affairs Center.

The Toledo Area Partnership in Education: Support Teachers as Resources to Improve Elementary Science (TAPESTRIES), a collaboration among BGSU, the University of Toledo and Toledo Public and Springfield Local schools, is one of only four programs in the country to receive the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Professional Development. The award recognizes outstanding programs in teacher professional development at member institutions.

TAPESTRIES, which began in 1998 with a \$5.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation, is designed to develop comprehensive school science programs through sustained professional development of all K-6 teachers in Toledo and Springfield schools. The program is co-directed by Jodi Haney, a BGSU science and environmental education faculty member, and Charlene Czerniak, a UT faculty member in curriculum and instruction.

\*Universities have an important role to play in partnering with elementary and secondary

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schools. TAPESTRIES is a dynamic example of how higher education and K-12 education can work together for their mutual benefit," said President Sidney Ribeau. "The program helps teachers give students the science foundation they will need for their future education and careers. At the same time, it addresses the state's expectations for schools to prepare students for the high-tech economy they will enter after graduation."

"This award is a great honor for our community," said UT President Dan Johnson. "Not only does it recognize the exemplary work and dedication of the universities and schools involved, it acknowledges the proven success the TAPESTRIES program has had on our area students' science education and proficiency scores. This also points to the value of our collaborative activities with BGSU and TPS."

According to the Urban Affairs Center study, the more involved school administrators and teachers were in TAPESTRIES, the greater the improvement in their students' performances on the science portion of state proficiency tests. Specifically:

- Since implementation, science proficiency scores improved in Toledo Public Schools;
- Sixth-grade proficiency scores were improved at schools highly involved in TAPESTRIES as compared to those minimally involved in the program;
- Student achievement differed significantly between the schools with the highest and the lowest percentage of teachers' professional development hours; and
- The cumulative effect of TAPESTRIES-trained teachers is linked to increased student achievement.

"It is becoming increasingly clear that well-prepared, dedicated teachers and visionary school and university leaders do indeed make a difference. Often the road to reform seems steep and unattainable, yet receiving an award such as this helps us realize our collective and sustained efforts matter," said Haney.

"School reform is a slow process, and school/university partners must promise long-term commitments to sustain systemic change," explained Czerniak. "To improve both science education and student proficiency scores, schools and teachers must follow the lead of the Toledo and Springfield teachers, administrators and district boards, and actively support TAPESTRIES programs to help maintain and further refine these effective educational innovations."

**Top communication scholars, students gather on campus**

The University was the site Aug. 3-6 for the National Communication Association Doctoral Honors Seminar. Hosted by the School of Communication Studies, the event featured nine nationally known scholars and 38 students, representing 19 states and England.

The students comprised a cohort of soon-to-be Ph.D. graduates whose research projects were judged among the best in the field. The daily seminars focused on three areas: Communications and Culture; Media and Democracy, and Rhetoric and Performance. Presentations of the top three papers from each area were given as well as student seminar presentations, including six by BGSU students.

Among the participants were BGSU faculty members Lynda Dee Dixon, Laura Lengel and John Warren, all of interpersonal communication, and Melissa Spirek, journalism.

J. Michael Sproule, director of the School of Communication Studies, oversaw the event, which was funded by the school, the NCA, the Florence and Jesse Currier Endowment, the Graduate College and the College of Arts & Sciences.

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## IN BRIEF

**Two officers join BGSU police force**

The BGSU police force is almost back to full strength with the recent hiring of two officers, James Wiegand, director of public safety, has announced. The two new staff members were sworn in Aug. 7, leaving only one opening in the department, which the police chief said he expects to be filled very soon.

Hired were Charles Langford, who comes to Bowling Green from Louisville, Ky., where he served with the Kentucky State Department of Corrections, and Jon Luidhardt of Bowling Green, formerly court constable with the Wood County Common Pleas Court.

Wiegand said he was eager to fill the vacancies left by the recent resignation of three department members. "It's important that we be at full staff for the security of the campus," he said, adding he expects to have the remaining staff member in place by the start of school.

**Add your voice to choral society**

The University Choral Society will hold open auditions from 6-8 p.m. Aug. 18 in Bryan Recital Hall, Moore Musical Arts Center. Admission to the group is by audition, and open to anyone from high school age and older. The UCS provides the opportunity for members of the University and town communities to join together and sing great choral literature.

Participation in the ensemble can be on a non-credit basis or for University credit. Weekly rehearsals are scheduled for Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m., beginning Aug. 25.

This season, the choir will perform Mozart's "Requiem" with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra on Oct. 24, 25 and 27, and Mahler's "Symphony No. 2" and Brahms' "Nänie" with the Bowling Green Philharmonia on April 25.

Those interested in auditioning may sing a prepared solo in any language. An accompanist will be provided. For more information, and to set up an audition time, call the College of Musical Arts at 2-2181.

**Karen Dauterman shows spirit of BG**

Karen Dauterman, business office, is the June winner of the classified staff Spirit of BG Award. Dauterman was nominated by a fellow employee whom she assisted, and was cited for her professionalism, patience and "bright and positive attitude."

Dauterman received \$75 in recognition of her award-winning spirit.

## CALENDAR

**Wednesday, Aug. 13**

**Classified Staff Council**, 9 a.m.-noon, 316 Union.

**Monday, Aug. 18**

**University Choral Society Open Auditions**, 6-8 p.m., Bryan Recital Hall, Moore Musical Arts Center. Open to anyone from high school age upwards by audition. Participation can be on a non-credit basis or for University credit. Those interested may sing a prepared solo in any language. An accompanist will be provided. For more information, and to set up an audition time, call 2-2181.

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**Continuing Events**

**Children's Theatre Production, "The Ice Wolf,"** by Joanna Halpert Krauss, performed by the Caryl Crane Children's Theatre, McBride Auditorium, BGSU Firelands and directed by Ronald Ruble. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Friday (Aug. 15) and Saturday (Aug. 17) and at 2:30 p.m. Sunday (Aug. 18). Call 419-433-5560 for tickets. The box office is open from 1-7 p.m. daily.

**JOB POSTINGS****FACULTY**

There were no new listings this week.

Contact the Office of Human Resources at 419-372-8421 for information regarding classified and administrative positions. Position vacancy announcements may be viewed at [www.bgsu.edu/offices/ohr](http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/ohr).

Employees wishing to apply for these positions must sign a "Request for Transfer" form and attach an updated resume or data sheet. This information must be turned in to Human Resources by the job deadline.

**CLASSIFIED**

The deadline to apply for the following position is 1 p.m. Monday, Aug. 18.

**Account Clerk 2 (C-27-Md)**—University Libraries/Acquisition Unit. Pay grade 6/\$12.62.

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**Director of Gift Planning (V-046)**—Development Office/University Advancement. Administrative grade 18. Review of applications will begin Aug. 15. All applicants will receive full and fair consideration until the position is filled.

**Women's Diving Coach (R-028)**—Intercollegiate Athletics (Search extended). Salary is commensurate with education and experience. Part-time, eight-month position beginning Sept. 1. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.