

***Early Childhood Education and Care: An Introduction.* By S. Nutkins, C. McDonald, M. Stephen. Pp 339 (pbk). London: SAGE. 2013. ISBN 9781446207123**

This book aims to examine key concepts and issues of early childhood education and care. It is divided into four key areas: child development and learning, socio-cultural contexts and the views of the child that it holds within these, international education approaches and professional practice of early childhood. Each part unfolds around five chapters written by a diverse and experienced author team. The book helps early childhood studies students to connect with critical and contemporary theory, research and educational aspects of early years practices and applications at national and international levels. It focuses on the importance of early childhood studies and practice of offering a variety of topics to support students with their professional development in broader cultural contexts.

Part 1 of the book deals with Child development and Learning. The focus on this part is to understand children's development from conception to birth with emphasis on brain-constructed learning (Chapter 1), play (Chapter 2 & 3) and introduces a number of ideas and theories such as the Kodály method (Chapter 4) and transient art (Chapter 5) and relates them to professional practice of early childhood education and care.

Part 2 explores the socio-cultural contexts and offers an understanding of how children's development and learning is viewed in relation to the environments that children are growing up (Chapter 6 & 7). It also addresses the key issue of how our views about early childhood and care are changing over time and over different sociological and cultural views (Chapter 8, 9 & 10), once again relating them to and reflecting upon professional practice. This part deals with complex socio-cultural concepts of childhood in an accessible format raising important questions for practitioners.

Part 3 covers international early childhood educational approaches: the Swedish system (Chapter 11), Reggio Emilia (Chapter 12), Te Whāriki (Chapter 11), High Scope (Chapter 14), and the Ferre Leavers (Chapter 15). This part presents key examples of effective early childhood practice and care to provide a platform for understanding different practices based on informed base for engagement into discussion and debate about the field of education of young children. This part stimulates an interesting debate to every professional practitioner in recognising their own values and how these reflect on their practice in relation to the socio-cultural contexts in which these are taking place. I would have welcomed a more critical approach in this part, however, with links to the issues that effectively were raised in Part 2 to move this debate to another level.

Part 4 should be required reading to all who are interested in constructing their professional identity in the field of early childhood education, either as practitioners or early-years teachers. It addresses key issues of what is a professional in early years (Chapter 16), what the issues, challenges and opportunities are in inter-professional practice (Chapter 17), an inspiring introduction to the world of the practising professional as a researcher (Chapter 18), elements of team work (Chapter 19) and it offers an in-depth understanding of the development of professional autonomy (Chapter 20). This part is highly recommended especially for students and professionals interested in acquiring an in-depth understanding of issues of professionalism in early childhood studies. It draws from a number of studies and it is a comprehensive text that is able to present aspects that early childhood students will deal with in their professional life.

Key features such as reflective activities and case studies highlight important questions that students will face. The conclusions at the end of each chapter offer students the opportunity to delve deeper into the chapter activities, reflect and apply it to real work situations. The further reading section that includes books, chapters, articles and web pages and guide the students to find information and extend issues that are raised in each chapter.

The authors have done a good job in making this book accessible to students. Their focus on how developmental, sociological and educational theoretical approaches apply in practice is particularly helpful. The examples, case studies and reflective activities are dealing with up to date issues related to early childhood education and care and the writing style makes this book an informative and engaging text for the students.

Overall this book is an invaluable resource for all students in the field of early childhood studies who envisage a career as professionals in the field as it introduces a number of concepts of early childhood education and care that can benefit enormously the professional practitioner in recognising today's issues of their practice and support children and families in a broader socio-cultural context.

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