

Page J., Clare A. and C. Nutbrown, C. (2013) *Working with Babies & Children from Birth to Three* (2nd Edition). Pp 230 (pbk). London: SAGE ISBN 978-1-4462-0906-6

Working with Babies and Children from Birth to Three seeks to re-emphasise the importance of practitioners having the underpinning theoretical knowledge, important when supporting young children's learning and development. Therefore, it makes essential reading for all those undergoing training, up to and including graduate level. The book also has a place for experienced practitioners undertaking CPD as a way of updating and reminding members of the workforce about the on-going research being done on how young children develop and the importance of planning to support children to achieve their potential.

After the introduction the book is divided into eight chapters. The first two examine, firstly, the messages from research with regard to babies and toddlers' language, literacy and communication and, secondly, their learning, development, cognition and play. The second chapter '*broadens the research lens*' by moving away from 'educational' research and incorporating the insights gained by research carried out in other disciplines such as in the field of neuroscience and neuropsychology, as a means of clarification of what we already know. It also incorporates and facilitates questioning and re-interpretation of established theories. This allows the reader to gain a fuller understanding of babies' thinking and thereby rationalise their actions when establishing '*environments and routines*' for the under threes. The chapter ends with a section titled, 'Why love matters' which discusses the impact of affection on a baby's brain development. It highlights the importance of practitioners in understanding that post-natal brain development is linked to relationships which in-turn links to development of a child's cognition and learning. These two chapters are built on the premise that if practitioners know why they do what they do, then they are more likely to do it and ensure others do it too. To this end, it achieves this goal.

Chapter 3 focuses on policy, historical and current, that has shaped the care and education of our youngest children, making links to the practitioner's role in supporting early intervention and safeguarding. It also looks at the changes that have taken place with early-years practitioners' qualifications and training. The chapter remarks upon the pace at which changes have taken place, the '*extensive and rapid changes in care and educational policy*'. This book appears to be a casualty of such rapid change as this section would have been the ideal place to embark upon discussion of the new Early Years Teacher Status qualification which is currently being rolled out in universities across the UK. At the time of publication the government's plans were still unclear with regard to the Nutbrown review. However, the EYTS is a hotly debated topic that belongs in this book; as such one would hope that there is some urgency surrounding publication of the second edition.

The two longest chapters in the book, chapters 4 and 5, focus respectively on child development and the creation of learning environments for children. This is refreshing as over recent years, knowledge of child development has become an optional extra on level 3 courses, with students able to gain practitioner status having carried out only a nominal amount of observations during the course of their studies. How then do they gain the '*secure knowledge base*' needed in order to '*make judgements about their [babies and young children] learning and developmental needs*'? The 'how-to' of observations continues

in chapter 6. Chapter 4 goes on to explore how young children develop and the adult's role in facilitating their development and learning, with play as a focus. Chapter 5's examination of environments for learning offers ideas for practice in a range of settings and challenges the notion that the more skilful practitioners are best placed with the older children as *'anyone can work with babies'*. The preceding chapters succeed in laying the foundations in recognition of babies and young children's capacity to learn. This chapter, then, emphasises the importance of planning to maximise the opportunities to allow this learning to take place. It should allow managers to consider the youngest children in the setting and aid planning with regard to staff and resources.

Chapter 6, 'Understanding Every Child' considers the role of observations, record-keeping and assessment when planning for learning. It begins with a discussion of the *key person approach* and its connotations as opposed to the *key worker system*, and explores the expectations and possible barriers associated with executing this role. The use of practice examples in this and other chapters are excellent in that they allow the reader to reflect on their own practice and are also useful as a means of cementing learning. The sections 'Observation for planning' and 'Recording for planning and progression' serve as reminders that it is the quality of the observations and how these observations are recorded, that may influence planning overall.

Planning for positive transitions in chapter 7 looks at the *'emotional complexity of everyday transitions'* for babies and young children and the impact separation has on them and their parents. The 'Ideas for practice' can be used as a means of stimulating discussion in work settings in order to facilitate change.

The final section of the book is unique in that it looks at the concept of 'professional love' through the lens of research carried out by Jools Page. 'Permission to Love Them' opens up a powerful, thought-provoking debate that challenges the notion of 'education' and 'care' being the only prerequisites of the early childhood professionals' role and argues for the place of love. *'...To deny the place of love is to deny what lies at the heart of human existence...love really does matter; never more so than to our youngest children who need love and affection to help their minds, bodies and souls grow strong...to learn and...be emotionally resilient throughout their lives'*(p 196.) The research extract, though short, does what it sets out to do.

Throughout the book there are questions for reflection, real-life extracts, case studies and ideas for practice which enhance its readability. I would recommend this book to early-years students and professionals already working in the field. It provides a deep understanding of babies and young children's care, development and learning. This knowledge is vital if we are to enable all children to achieve their potential. The book begins by stating *'Babies are amazing!'* and by the end of the book it would be difficult not to agree.

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