
An Introduction to Child Development, by T. Keenan, S. Evans and K. Crowley. Pp456 (pbk). London: Sage (2016). ISBN 978-1-4462-7402-6

An introduction to childhood development by Keenan, Evans and Crowley is an excellent introduction to the field of developmental psychology. It is aimed at anyone looking for a foundational textbook on developmental psychology and to this end the book covers a wide variety of topics in the field of development. It starts with an overview of the key psychological theories which underlie the various types of development to be discussed later as well as an introduction to some of the research methodologies used by developmental researchers. All of this lays a very effective foundation upon which any reader who was entirely new to this field could build their understanding of topics featured in the later chapters. In the main body of the book there is a comprehensive selection of topics covering familiar areas of development such as cognitive, emotional and moral development, as well as equally valid but less familiar areas such as biological, linguistic and social development. The book finishes with an exploration of certain developmental disorders.

Each chapter contains a selection of useful elements to help guide and stimulate learning in the reader. There are inserts which focus on specific examples of research in the area of the chapter and reflection points which encourage independent thought. These would also be able to serve as discussion points in a class which drew on that chapter as a resource. There is a glossary of new terms at the end of each chapter and key new terms are highlighted in the body of the text. These features are likely to be of use to any reader, but particularly to those readers who may be coming to this book without a background psychology. To anyone who is in that group I would say this was a very good choice as an introductory text with a good mixture of depth on the one hand and accessibility on the other.

The only reservations I have about the book are relatively minor. The first issue centres on the decision to present the book as a review of 'childhood' development. This appears to be a standard approach in modern developmental psychology textbooks; to state their focus as either 'lifelong' development or 'childhood' development. I always feel this is a false dichotomy which might put people off a book for the wrong reasons. So for example, to characterise this book as part of the 'childhood' development camp I feel is slightly misleading. The processes and concepts mention in this book are not exclusive to children and would be just a relevant to someone who works with adults. The only other potential issue is with the chapter

on developmental disorders. It is interesting to note that although this final chapter never explicitly addresses the issue of disability it's clearly approaching these disorders from the perspective of the biomedical model rather than a social one. This lack of discussion of the social model in these disorders is an oversight and it may limit the appeal of the book to students of disability studies.

While this is not a book that is explicitly aimed at education it explores a large number of concepts that would be of interest to many educators. As such, I would recommend it to staff and students on Education Studies courses who wish to get a deeper understanding of development beyond the brief mentions of Piaget and Vygotsky that they might find in many Education Studies textbooks. This book will offer greater depth on those topics and others but in a way that is accessible to a student without a psychology background.

In summary, a really good book for anyone who is looking to introduce themselves or their students to the field of child development, and the key theories and concepts in developmental psychology.

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