



Book Review of Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Throughout the history of early education development, there are many shining ideas and methods of early education in the theoretical and practical fields of early education. Learning and comprehending the basic concepts and practices of scientific early education will effectively improve the professional ability of preschool teachers. The book “Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education” written by American scholar Lissanna Follari, and this book systematically sorts out the most influential theories and educators in the development of early education in the world, with a large number of practical cases, various mainstream models of early education and high scope courses, as well as Reggio and Waldorf education, etc., helps teachers to form a systematic view on children’s views, the role of teachers, the use of educational environments and materials, and apply them to practice.

Subject Areas

Early Education

Keywords

Book Review, Practice, Early Education

1. Introduction

Author Dr. Lissanna Follari has been working with and for young children and families for 23 years, beginning as a teacher of infants through the elementary grades, and most recently as an ECE teacher educator for the past 14 years. She currently serves as faculty and Director of the Bachelor of Innovation in Inclusive Early Childhood Education at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs and Senior Consultant with Inclusion University. Her work focuses on innovative approaches to inclusive early care and education and she actively partici-

pates with numerous community agencies and schools advocating for high quality practices in early childhood education. Her educational concepts were found in her book: *Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education*, which inspire me to finish this book review.

Each chapter of the book has “Chapter Learning Goals” to help readers understand the key concepts of each chapter. Most chapters include “Classroom View”, a glimpse into the diverse educational environment and key concepts from each chapter, providing readers with an opportunity to reflect on their own observations and experiences [1]. The part of “Putting It into Practice” provides highly practical and suggested practice activities, which aims to help preschool teachers establish a connection between theory and practice, reflect on their own practice activities, and improve the professionalism and quality of practice. The summary part at the end of each chapter summarizes the key content of this chapter with concise text, which is easy to deepen the reader’s understanding. The final self-assessment, application activities and auxiliary resources can help preschool teachers reflect on their theoretical learning achievements and their own practical activities, so as to improve their own concepts and practice levels. In addition, each chapter of the book has a number of professional portfolio activities that help readers document their growth as a developing teacher or as a teacher education student. In other words, the process of reading this book is a process of in-depth exploration of the basic concepts and classic practice models of early education, a process of reflecting on one’s own professionalism, and a process of striving to create a suitable localized preschool education curriculum.

2. Foundations

There are a number of themes that run through the book, such as the role of the teacher, views on children, inclusive education, and diversity. These key contents play an important role in helping readers to reflect on their own practice and improve their professionalism. The first chapter of the book starts with the concept of early education, expounds the key content of the development and learning of children aged 0 - 8, and explores the scope and characteristics of early education. It is worth mentioning that the content of this chapter attaches great importance to the important role of early educators in child development. The book discusses the roles and tasks of students in teacher education, describes the complex role of early educators, and points out that early educators are not only teachers, but also perform roles such as researchers, lifelong learners, children and Multiple roles such as the spokesperson of his family. Professional workers are charged with influencing practice, enhancing professionalism, realizing lofty ideals, and empowering children and their families. Teaching is complex, professional and at the same time personal, and at its core is building relationships, including with children and their families. The book also specifically points out that play is the primary medium for children’s learning and development. Each of the following chapters in this book is designed to assist edu-

cators in making the lives of all children successful and meaningful. The second chapter expounds the historical evolution of early education philosophy and practice, providing readers with a broad historical background, allowing readers to freely think and choose values and ideas that are suitable for them and can guide practice. With the development of the times, in today's increasingly diverse world, teachers must use cultural echo practices and pay attention to the culture and background of each family.

Constructivist theory is one of the key guiding ideas of the book, as the authors explain in chapter 4, "Influential Theories: Bioecological Models and Constructivism. Constructivism assumes that knowledge is constructed within the individual and is influenced by surrounding matter, phenomena, and people" [1]. Children actively construct a body of knowledge through meaningful experiences and interactions with their surroundings, people and objects. So how can constructivist theory be applied to curriculum practice? The authors list the following strategies: sharing, scaffolding instruction, balancing direct child experience with teacher guidance, and conducting authentic assessment. Chapter 5 emphasizes the integration of educational and family diversity and encourages a multiple intelligences theory perspective to support children's development. Each child and his or her family has different experiences, identities, values, and backgrounds, and only by strongly integrating family culture and individual diversity into all aspects of educational practice, and by sensitively adapting and balancing activities, teaching strategies, curriculum goals, interactions with children and their families, and materials based on identified differences, can we ensure that all children develop their strengths and are supported to develop their full potential.

3. Models, Approaches, Integration

Chapters 6 - 11 list some of the classic curriculum models in the field of early education and describe how they can be appropriately and selectively applied in educators' own practices, including the project-based approach, the Reggio curriculum, Montessori education, and Waldorf education. The high scope curriculum emphasizes respect for children's interests and abilities, active participation in learning, and a plan-work-review process that encourages children to take the initiative in implementing plans and reflecting on them, laying the foundation for children to grow into thoughtful, responsible individuals. High quality teacher-child interaction, planning and family involvement are the hallmarks of the high scope program.

The project-based approach is divided into three phases. The first phase is Planning and Questioning: Planning begins with children's interest and after recording all of their questions and ideas, the whole class works on creating a concept network map. The second stage is investigation and research: children find answers to their questions through hands-on activities such as field trips and present children's experiences in a variety of representations. The third stage

is generalization and summarization: the class reflects on the process and proudly shares what was learned, which is an important process for summarizing and enhancing the experience. Recording successes in the final stage is also a way for teachers to collect data on children's assessments. At the heart of the project-based approach is the promotion of fun, personalized, and meaningful inquiry into children's own worlds. At the heart of the Reggio curriculum model is an emphasis on respect for children's abilities, the influence of the family, and attention to beauty and detail. Children learn primarily through exploration of generative curriculum, dialogue, reflection on experience, and representation. The teacher's primary job is to observe, listen, and record. Although the Reggio model of curriculum has considerable appeal, to learn from the Reggio model, educators must understand the local culture and actively involve parents in children's learning; they cannot simply transplant the Reggio model. The book also discusses the environment, materials, and methods of the Montessori curriculum model, as well as the basic role of the Montessori teacher. In addition, Waldorf education, which advocates the harmonious development of the whole person, is discussed, showing the key elements that make up the Waldorf approach to education, including its history, philosophical foundations, and pedagogy.

The final chapter, *Integration: Imagining and Growing*, identifies the professional qualities of respect, enthusiasm, and commitment that teachers should possess, and re-emphasizes the importance of creating one's own professional portfolio. Through these chapters, the book presents to a wide audience some of the key events, research, trends, and approaches to practice in the field of early education. And they can help readers think deeply about what kind of early educator they are becoming and help kindergarten teachers structure the connections between philosophy and practice in their research. In addition, accountability and standards are increasingly becoming major aspects of early education practice. Best practices and standards of professional conduct are presented. Provide guidance for good decision-making in practice by regularly revising position statements. The use of evidence-based decision-making and quality assessment systems in practice is conducive to promoting the quality of early education.

4. Conclusion

Overall, this book is a reference book that covers the classical theories and practices of early childhood education, helping educators to have a broad grasp of the educational concepts involved in child development and to engage in concrete and effective practices. This book refers to a variety of classical Western educational theories and models recognized worldwide: e.g., constructivism, e.g., the Montessori model and the Waldorf model, etc. However, the above content is collected mainly from the European child education context as a reference, and as the world becomes more diverse and integrated, the subject areas of early

childhood education will also include Asian educational models and cases, as well as the education of children with immigrant backgrounds in an integrated future society, the professional development of kindergarten teachers with immigrant backgrounds, etc.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Follari, L. (2015) Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education: History, Theories, and Approaches to Learning. Pearson, Hoboken, NJ.