

II. RECENZJE I NOTY

SALLY NEAUM, *Child Development for Early Years Students and Practitioners*, 4th edition, SAGE Publications, London 2019, pp. 240

Children's development and learning is a crucial topic for every teacher, parent or student in the field of early childhood education. This fourth edition of Sally Neaum's publication concentrates on the developmental patterns and sequences in children's development and their learning impacts on children's progress. What is more important about this newest edition is that readers will find a new baseline assessment announced based on the government's pilot studies in 2019-2020. The role of this book is also to prepare educator to the national rollout in 2020, whose intention is to assess children's development on entry to reception. This particular data will be used to assess a child's progress at the end of Key Stage 2.

Being aware of child development may help us to identify children who seek help or additional support to keep progress and learn. Among the students of education and teachers, there is a need for guidebooks which are written by practitioners and scientists with experience in early years pedagogical practice. Sally Neaum is a lecturer in Early Childhood Education and conducts Initial Teacher Training at Teesside University in the United Kingdom. This book is not the first one of hers, as she has published several texts dedicated to child development and literacy in the early years. What is important to add is that *Child Development for Early Years Students and Practitioners* is based on her long term experience and educational observations around the world. The book starts with an introduction which mentions the motives and reasons for writing this particular piece, the structure and its summary. The author identifies four key sections with eleven elaborate chapters in total.

In the first section entitled „Early Childhood context and policy” the reader will find two chapters. Both of them present children and childhood from the current and historical perspective. The main idea is to present in a very detailed way changes in how children and childhood were understood through the years. By that, the author wants to paint the picture of the moral, political and ethical choices that changed within the society. She even invites the careful reader to

rethink the current conceptualisation of what it means to be a child now. The chapter outlines important policies, practice frameworks and universal early years thinkers and their theories. This part is vital in the understanding of the whole publication.

Section two with its main idea of the „Children’s development” was widely described in chapters 3-6. In the third chapter, the author illustrates her views on holistic development. She presents her definition of the word ‘holistic’ and shares the opinion on the holistic nature of young children’s learning. The next chapter is fully dedicated to the developmental sequences and progress across all aspects of young children’s learning. It leads to the principles of development and characteristic of the expected developmental parameters [linguistic, emotional and social] in the period between 0-7 years old. In line with previous chapters, the fifth one presents the development in the Early Years Foundation Stage from 2014. This statutory framework is a guideline for all funded years providers who must work within it. With this in mind, the author outlines the role and expectations of practitioners in providing young children with opportunities to develop and learn. The last chapter in this section is entitled ‘Factors affecting children’s learning and development’. The author puts great emphasis on the factors that are known to affect children’s learning and development. What is more, she calls a question about why some children or groups of them, consistently fall outside expected developmental parameters. It is also a fundamental part of the book, in which the writer highlights the importance of providing learning and development opportunities for all children. The second section can be described as powerful and inspirational for everyone interested and involved in early childhood education and care.

The following section, devoted to the application of child development in practice, is quite short and consists of two chapters only. In one of them, Neaum explains learning theories that support young children with acknowledging language and social rules. She outlines the importance of the home environment and parents’ initiative towards children. The eighth chapter critically presents to the reader, why we observe and assess children’s learning and what are the methods for that. The author’s approach is to conduct an observation-based assessment and know the difference between the formative and summative kind. Despite the length of the section, the technique proposed by the author can be inspirational and useful to practitioners.

The closing section with its three chapters was dedicated to the issue of enhancing practice and understanding. The key guideline based on the ninth chapter is to be a reflective practitioner, which is truly an important professional skill. The reader will as well understand the importance of the reflective process in developing teachers’ own effective teaching strategies. Next chapter entitled ‘Starting from the child: matching provision to children’s development and learning needs’ can be seen as a comprehensive insight into the complexity of children’s development. Sally Neaum puts a great emphasis on difficult and challenging learning needs in special education. The final part is without any doubts my favourite, as it presents the critical approach to the early years. Provocatively, the writer encour-

rages the reader to use a thoughtful, analytical and evaluative approach to one's teaching practice. She highlights the need to acquire professional knowledge and skills that might be useful and helpful for early years practitioners. The main aim of this chapter is to develop not only a strong theoretical background but also practical knowledge and skills.

With this in mind, in this review, I presented how important understanding of child development is currently. This book, written and updated by a lecturer and practitioner represents a valuable and innovative approach, which might be useful for everyone at the beginning of their teaching path. *Child Development for Early Years Students and Practitioners* is an important publication, written pleasantly. I strongly recommend it to those who wish to know more about child development and want to learn it interestingly and critically. To illuminate this uncharted area, it is good to have this path-breaking guidebook written by an expert. Especially, if you wish to understand better upcoming changes which will be introduced into the Foundation Stage in 2020.

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