

New Frontiers of Educational Research

Liyan HUO

Susan B. NEUMAN

Atsushi NANAOKIDA *Editors*

Early Childhood Education in Three Cultures

China, Japan and the United States

 Springer

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About the Editors



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Dr. NAKAKIDA was a visiting researcher at the Children’s issues Centre, Otago University, New Zealand in 2003. While serving as a director of Research Institute of Early Childhood Education (RIECE), Hiroshima University since 2005, he lectured not only on education for young children but also the support system for child rearing; he has been engaged in child abuse, case study research, and project research. He is currently an editorial board member of the Journal of Japan Society of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education. He acts as the representative committee of Japan Society of Research on Early Childhood Care and Education,

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Contributors

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Introduction

How Does a Volume Such as This Come Together?

Early childhood education and care is essential to the lives of every family with young children, and in turn, build up our prosperity to the benefit of the world community and the global economy. An international team of experienced researchers investigate the unique and dynamic approaches to key issues of policy transformation, curriculum reforms, and teacher training in three cultures, China, Japan, and the United States in a globalized world. By examining all of these policy choices and evidence-based practices, the authors show how best to provide for young children based on their countries' strategies.

Three countries, including China, Japan, and the United States, are considered to address the new challenges in a global village through policy choices, curriculum reforms, and teacher training programs. The book will tackle some of the recurring questions of early childhood education and care, focusing on

- How does a country cope with diverse childcare needs of families in terms of policy choices?
- How to define quality early childhood education and care with quality curriculum?
- What practices are promising in professional development for early childhood educators?
- How can we best integrate effective policy choices, curriculum, reforms and teacher training to provide a strong start for every child?

Overview of the Book

The editors and authors provide up-to-date information in diverse cultures where rapid developments are underway and further changes are being concerned.

Part I focuses on curriculum issues in three cultures. In Chap. 1, you will find detailed information about early childhood education reform in China over the past century and forward, which has highlighted how John Dewey's philosophy, former Soviet Union's model, Montessori methods and Jean Piaget's and Lev Vygotsky's psychology, Multiple intelligences and Reggio Emilia Approach have changed the landscapes of early childhood curriculum.

Chapter 2 discusses how Japanese culture is unique and how early childhood education and care curriculum has changed since the Meiji Period. However, how to integrate the kindergarten and nursery systems is still under construction in terms of "maximal interests for all children".

Play has played an important and tremendous role in early childhood education in the United States. In Chap. 3, these authors share their wealth of knowledge about creating meaningful learning environments with children, families, and communities in order to embrace purposeful and powerful plays everyday.

Part II illustrates how childcare policies have transformed within the changing contexts. As a former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Susan NEUMAN provides a critical and reflective overview of challenges in establishing a better safety net for our children at risk in Chap. 4.

Considering Japan has just initiated new policy for kindergarten education, Chap. 5, written by Akiko Kimata, describes in-depth reflections on the kindergarten education system with explicit data.

China has also experienced some big transformations since 1949. The evolution and innovation of China's preschool education financial system is discussed in Chap. 6 by two Professors, Yingqi Cai and Xiaoxia Feng.

Part III pays close attention to early childhood teacher professional development. In Chap. 7, Martha Adler reveals how to deal with the higher and higher percentage of color and poor population in terms of an equal and better start for every child, which has called for a high-quality teacher workforce in the United States.

Chapter 8 written by Kyoko Iwatate from Tokyo Gakugei University concentrates on four topics in Japan: (1) establishment of childcare facilities and the teacher education system, (2) contemporary changes in child development environments, (3) new issues arising from the unification of Kindergarten and Day-care centers, and (4) major changes in teacher education.

In Chap. 9, these authors examine how governments and local programs could work together to provide qualified and high-quality kindergarten teachers, to address the challenges for universal kindergarten education in China by 2020.

Conclusion

As you, the reader, can see, this volume covers three key issues on curriculum reform, policies, and professional development in three cultures in early childhood education today. It is our hope that each chapter will help you understand that each culture is unique and has its own historical trajectory. To some extent, each country is unusual, one of a kind. However, we could try to respect, understand, and learn from each other. This volume is a wonderful addition for this knowledge and how to reach every child's potential as a productive citizen in a global village.

Part I
Being, Belonging and Becoming: Child
Image and Curriculum Reforms