

Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada. Larry Prochner and Nina Howe (Eds.). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2000, ISBN 0-7748-0771-7, 323 pages.

Reviewed by: *Anna Kirova*
University of Alberta

Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada is a collection of essays that reflects the international trend of reexamining early childhood services in fresh ways by studying historical developments in child care (CC) and early education and the range of early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs currently available in Canada. The multidisciplinary nature of the collection shows the variations in ECCE. It examines the key issues in the field as determined by the authors: the origins of the programs currently available to parents, the policies that guide these programs, the preparation of the adults who work in these programs, the nature of the adults' work with children in these programs, and the research that reflects the work in these programs. The authors, who come from a variety of scholarly disciplines including psychology, sociology, history, teacher education, social policy analysis, education, and research bring together these points of view by describing the development of ECCE in Canada.

The first five chapters constitute Part 1 of the collection and provide a comprehensive overview of the historical contexts of the care and education of young children in Canada. In Chapter 1 Prochner presents a national picture from the infant schools of the early 19th century to the renewal of interest in ECCE as a social reform issue in the mid-1960s. The history is divided into three parts: a review of the European programs that served as the inspiration and model for those in Canada; the story of early education in Canada; and CC programs for wage-earning parents.

The European tradition is represented by a brief description of the first infant schools in France and Britain and the kindergarten movement of the early 20th century in Italy and Britain. The authors point out the preventive nature of both the early infant schools and kindergartens as they aimed at reducing crime, ignorance, disease, and political instability through early intervention, as well as protecting children from a disorderly, adult-controlled world.

The review of the history of the infant school in Canada starts with the first to open in Montreal in 1828, followed by similar schools in Charlottetown, Halifax, Quebec City, and Toronto. These were seen as "nurseries of knowledge" and were considered important as schools for the poor and young children "who are not yet formed." Prochner points out that the historiography of ECCE in Quebec is different from that in English-speaking Canada as Quebec had no comparable child study movement. Infant schools developed

Anna Kirova is an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary Education. Before taking up her present appointment, she taught early childhood education courses at Oakland University, Michigan. One research interest is how children experience feelings of loneliness.

for different reasons across Canada, including overcrowding in the common schools, serving the non-English-speaking population, and the idea developed by the 1870s that all young children could benefit from formal early education. The latter idea led to the development of free kindergartens with a social reform or mission orientation. Public kindergarten was a basic element of the New Education movement, which emphasized learning through doing rather than through lecturing or books. The growth of kindergartens in public schools was stagnant across Canada until the 1940s.

The development of day nurseries in Canada is reviewed in the third part of the chapter. It is described as delayed compared with the development of day nurseries in the United States. The lack of a "correct combination of population and number of poor wage-earning mothers that did not provide the basis for a nursery" (p. 41) in most cities in Canada at the end of the 19th century is given as the main reason for this delay. The stagnant growth in the number of day nurseries in Canada in the 1930s was dramatically changed by the outbreak of World War II. For the first time, group CC was promoted as a normal support for families. In the 1950s the service became oriented toward children's rather than adults' needs. "The gradual restructuring of CC as a social service, which began in the 1950s, was given a considerable boost by the introduction of federal funding in the form of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966" (p. 61). Kindergarten education was rejuvenated in the 1960s as attention was directed toward the role of schools as a force in reducing social inequities. At present kindergarten is available to most children in Canada as part of the public school system.

In Chapter 2 Donna Varga reviews the history of early childhood teacher education. Her focus is primarily on education, English Canada, Protestant schooling, and nondenominational caregiving. She points out that "teacher education for the early childhood years has historically followed two paths; one path has prepared teachers for the school system; the other has educated caregivers for day care programs" (p. 66). Choosing a particular path of education determined, and still determines, whether a teacher can work in the school system, in nursery schools, and/or in day care centers.

This review begins with a brief description of teacher education as it was commonly conducted before the middle of the 19th century, where school-teachers were prepared by having them attend common schools and watch their own teachers at work. Around 1850, however, interest was expressed in having the government regulate teaching, including standardization of public schooling and normalization of individual teaching styles and behaviors. Standardized teacher education was seen as the means for learning pedagogy and for forming a collective identity as teacher. Normal schools were established across Canada at different times, beginning with the Toronto Normal School in 1847, and with vast differences in program length and content. By the second half of the 20th century, the various levels of teacher education were incorporated into university faculties or departments of education.

Special attention is paid to the examination of Froebelian kindergarten teacher education in Canada as a means for understanding the basis of contemporary practice. Varga uses the term *early childhood caregiving* to refer to the

provision of center-based day care programs. She points out that education programs designed to train caregivers to work with young children are relatively recent. A general pattern she identifies is that once specialized education opportunities were available for caregivers, government regulations requiring formal education were passed. However, the existence of the educational programs has not necessarily led to the introduction of regulations governing caregiver certification. Varga provides a list of selected regulations and programs for early childhood caregivers in all provinces in Canada. She also includes a brief description of the theories of Bruner, Hunt, Bloom, and Piaget and their influence on both elementary schooling and day care, and the birth of the concept of early childhood education. In the conclusion she draws attention to a critical examination of "the (comfortable) belief that educational programs for teachers and caregivers have reached the pinnacle of achievement" (p. 92).

The role of Toronto's Institute of Child Study and the teachings of Blatz in the development of the so-called Child Study movement in North America is examined by Mary Wright in Chapter 3. She provides a detailed description of academic child study, and more specifically Blatz's security theory and views of discipline on the history of early childhood. Although viewed by many as radical for his time, his teaching against punishment of all kinds, criticism of the use of extrinsic rewards, warnings against the danger of using competition, the role of fathers in raising children, and the role of play in learning at both preschool and the primary grade levels are shared today by most early childhood educators. His work with the Dionne quintuplets brought Blatz international fame. The impact of his ideas on the thinking of early childhood educators in the United Kingdom and Canada is believed to be substantial.

In Chapter 4 Kathleen Brophy provides a comprehensive history of laboratory schools in Canada. She points out that the history of university laboratory schools reflects the discipline basis from which they developed. Three such traditions that inform early education are identified: the home economics, the education, and the psychology traditions. A hybrid program that combines the needs of working parents with those of training students is also presented. Brophy reviews seven laboratory programs currently operating in conjunction with university programs in five provinces in Canada: Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Six of these are still in existence and continue to fulfill their commitment to research and teacher training.

Brophy points out that in addition to meeting the training and research needs of the students and faculty of the departments with which they are connected, these programs are leading the way in designing quality programs to serve families and children. However, "programs that are currently solely research-based are struggling amid funding cutbacks. In addition, the question is being raised whether research conducted in laboratory school programs truly reflects the real experiences of children, families and staff in the broader community" (p. 131). For programs with a training focus, there is a move to develop partnerships with boards of education and community CC services. These trends will shape the future direction laboratory schools will take.

In Chapter 5 Alan Pence and Allison Benner present an analysis of CC research over the past three decades. They identify the key issues and themes

during each period that resulted from the changing public perception of the need for CC services, the government response to those needs and perceptions, and the gradual construction of a research base. By CC research the authors refer to “research that focuses specifically on non-parental care of children primarily for employment-based purposes” (p. 137). In reviewing the status of CC research in Canadian literature, Pence and Benner point to a weakness: that it represents a small percentage of all references collected and is significantly outnumbered by government works. However, in reviewing the literature decade by decade, they conclude that “the volume of CC research has steadily increased over the past thirty years, with the number of references more than doubling each decade” (p. 138). By grouping the references into 18 major theme areas, Pence and Benner are able to document how the focus of CC research has expanded and changed from primarily government-conducted studies and needs assessments in the 1960s toward more academically and professionally based research in the mid-1990s. At the end of the chapter the authors point out the many opportunities for Canadian CC advocates, policymakers, and researchers to work together in building on the knowledge base that currently exists in Canada. They identify “the great challenge of the fourth decade of CC research will be to remain open to unforeseen possibilities in the New—and in the Known” (p. 152).

Part 2 opens with Chapter 6, which provides a set of current contexts in ECCE. Here Ellen Jacobs provides a national picture of CC options. She defines her purpose as describing the various types of CC arrangements currently available to Canadian families living in rural and urban areas across the country. Descriptions of the five most prevalent forms of CC and their variations are presented: (a) non-relative sitter care; (b) relative care; (c) family day care home; (d) center care; and (e) school-age care. The advantages and disadvantages of each type are discussed in the light of relevant research findings. The chapter also provides a description of provincial and territorial legislation that covers various aspects of CC programs such as licensing, monitoring, and the enforcement of regulations.

Jacobs defines *quality of care* as the “extent to which the care environment supports and promotes age-appropriate social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development and at the same time provides the family with a sense of security regarding the child’s out-of-home care” (p. 164). The quality in a CC environment is a composite of many factors, including structural features (i.e., group size, center size, caregiver training, and caregiver-to-child ratio); global measures (i.e., equipment, activities, atmosphere, routines, provisions for adult needs, and health and safety practices and policies); and human factors (i.e., caregivers’ interactions with children and the center’s support for the staff). A special section of the chapter is dedicated to parental selection of CC and levels of satisfaction. The studies cited in this section indicate that finding good day care is an arduous, time-consuming, and frustrating process. Among the issues for further consideration Jacobs includes: (a) insufficient care options; (b) weak regulations, specifically with regard to caregiver training requirements; (c) fragmented and uncoordinated CC services; and (d) inappropriate programs for school-aged children. Her conclusion is that the issue of CC in general

depends on the willingness of politicians to support the concept of day care; the resources of universities and colleges to provide training programs for caregivers; the availability of people motivated to acquire the necessary training to work with children full time for a modest salary; and the parental interest and willingness to become members of CC boards that make the decisions about how the individual centers function.

In Chapter 7 Nina How, Ellen Jacobs, and Lisa Fiorentino summarize the main approaches to the early childhood curriculum. By curriculum they mean

the approach to education that is employed in the classroom, specifically the theoretical orientation and goals of the program, which domains of development are emphasized, the degree of structure in the program, the kinds of materials used, and the roles of the teachers and the learner. (p. 208)

According to them, this chapter is designed to provide an overview of approaches to curriculum in the past 200 years and how they have been adapted to the Canadian context. The influences of Pastalozzi and Froebel on the kindergarten movement in Canada and the major influences of Dewey's ideas about education on Canadian early childhood education are outlined. The authors also describe how US Head Start programs have influenced Canadian approaches to developing early intervention programs for children from low socioeconomic backgrounds and provide specific examples of Canadian versions of Head Start across the country. Under the constructivist approaches to curriculum and their influence on Canadian models, they review the Piagetian understanding of child development and the development of cognitive curriculum; the High/Scope program developed by Weikart; the Vygotskian understanding of cognition as a social phenomenon; and the Reggio Emilia community-based program where parents and others are involved and invest in all aspect of education. Special attention is given to the University of Western Ontario Preschool project as a uniquely Canadian experiment designed by M.J. Wright to assess the impact of compensatory education on low-SES children.

In the conclusion of this chapter the authors point out that there is no single best program or curriculum. However, they believe that the ideas developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the book entitled *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in Early Childhood Education* can be integrated easily into the Canadian milieu. They argue that regardless of the recent criticism of this document for its failure to recognize fully the centrality of cultural diversity and racial equality issues, accepting the basic DAP principles implies that not all programs can or should offer the same curriculum. "While we encourage the teachers to draw upon the strengths of the various curriculum models presented in this chapter, we also encourage them to adapt any program to the specific Canadian milieu" (p. 231). The specific challenges of the Canadian context are related to multiculturalism, the official bilingual status, the recognition that we are a country of recent immigrants, and the unique needs of Aboriginal children.

Chapter 8 examines the provider as the central factor in CC quality. Donna White and Davina Mill identify four objectives for this chapter. The first is to

describe the background literature on CC attendance, quality of CC, and child development. The second is to provide a profile of those who work in CC in terms of their background and personal characteristics, wages and working conditions, and their own perceptions of their work. The third is to examine how caregivers' characteristics, working conditions, and job perceptions are related to the three educator behaviors: turnover, caregiver anger and negative interactions with children, and caregiver warmth in interactions with children in day care centers. The fourth objective is to compare parallel research trends in elementary schools and preschool CC centers as the basis for providing directions for future research in both areas. Caregivers' characteristics, work environment, and job perceptions are discussed as variables that have not received sufficient systematic study in either field. Their suggestion is that "both fields should begin to examine the issue of variables related to teacher warmth and anger. This type of study may well be seen as another way in which school and CC research are parallel and, in fact, may benefit each other" (p. 248).

In Chapter 9 Martha Friendly provides a detailed history of CC as a social policy issue on the national stage. She argues that it is appropriate to treat CC within a social policy framework in contrast to a market approach, because if it is of high quality CC is a "public good," of benefit to the society at large. The benefits of CC arise from two propositions: (a) quality CC promotes the healthy development, safety, and well-being of children regardless of parental work status or socioeconomic group; and (b) access to reliable CC allows parents, especially mothers, to participate in the paid labor force, training, or education. Friendly presents CC within the framework of Canadian social policy and describes the current responsibilities for CC in Canada among the various levels of government and individual families. She suggests that the absence of a national, pan-Canadian policy for ECCE is the single key factor that has shaped how these programs have developed in Canada. She "examines the policy, and describes the disparate, often disjunctive, array of services, programs, and policies (federal, provincial, and local) that have emerged in the vacuum" (p. 268). Friendly argues that developing a coherent social policy is an issue of national importance and that it is in the public interest to provide children and families with quality ECEC.

Chapter 10 is devoted to the examination of the politics of CC auspices and the impact of such politics on quality. Susan Prentice identifies two conflicting forces in CC. On the one hand, many provincial governments are increasingly supporting for-profit human services, including CC, as an avenue for reducing government spending. On the other hand, research into quality of care demonstrates that privatized care is generally inferior to that provided by the non-profit CC system. Prentice argues that "good public policy must desegregate and carefully consider the issues of who is responsible for CC, who should pay for CC, and who should be in the business of CC" (p. 274). The chapter reviews the history of CC services in Canada; examines the relationship of quality of care to auspices; and reviews politics, policy, and free enterprise CC. In the conclusion of the chapter her strong support of the idea that CC is a public good and a public investment is expressed as follows:

Provincial and federal policies that support for-profit cadre are not based on the best interests of children, their parents, or CC staff. Such policies instead are premised on the belief that CC is simply a market good that can be bought and sold like any other commodity. (p. 287)

If a different policy orientation is embraced, she argues, CC would be seen as a right of all Canadians, like health care and education.

Part 3 of this anthology provides future directions for ECCE in Canada. In the concluding Chapter 11 Nina Howe provides an analysis of the historical and current social issues in ECCE by describing the main trends identified in the earlier chapters. Thus the first portion of the chapter is an excellent overview that not only answers the question "Where are we today?" but also prepares us for the question "Where do we go from here?" Howe conveys her strong sense that Canada is at a crossroads with respect to ECCE and outlines a number of directions in which the field will move. These relate to the three current trends identified by Friendly: (a) the recent diminishing role of the federal government in shaping the national policy on child care and the consequent greater reliance on provincial and territorial governments to articulate policies and programs for ECCE; (b) the recent downloading of financial responsibilities for CC by provinces and territories onto local governments; and (c) the shift of final responsibilities onto parents. In addition, Howe predicts that "as the numbers of educated and qualified early childhood educators increase, the push for greater recognition of the value of their work is also likely to increase" (p. 310). She believes that the development of a national, universally accessible, quality ECCE system is possible, but warns that this will not be a short or easy battle. However, "when the future of children and families is in question, the high stakes suggest a concrete campaign is required" (p. 311).

This is an excellent book that investigates the almost two-century history of formal programs for the care and education of young children in Canada and their distinct, complex, and diverse character. It is both thought-provoking and timely as we continue to debate how best to serve the diverse needs of children and families in Canada.