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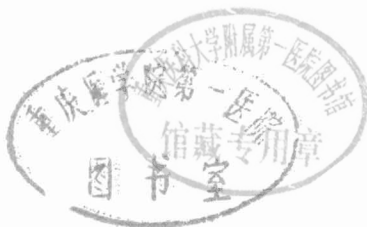
Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education

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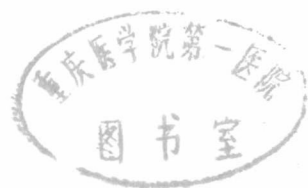
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*Fundamentals
of Early Childhood
Education*



1984年12月17日

to
RUTH *and* JOHN

Preface

This book is written as a guide to the education of young children in pre-schools, nursery schools, childcare centers, and other early childhood education facilities. While it can help the experienced teacher, the text is principally focused on the new, future, or relatively inexperienced educator.

Our primary aim is to provide a clear, coherent picture of an area that is much more complex than one might at first assume. This complexity begins with the fact that the teacher does not merely work with children, although the children are obviously of primary concern. The teacher must also learn to interact effectively with parents, other teachers, and administrators. In addition, she or he must become familiar with the various theoretical approaches within this field, and should be able to relate these considerations to those of the program and of curriculum development and implementation.

We have tried to introduce the reader to early childhood education on a number of interrelated levels. Specifically, we have addressed historical, theoretical, and practical issues and have tried to bridge the gaps that generally exist among them. Our special intent has been to try to “make sense of” theoretical issues by drawing them into, and relating them to, everyday practical problems within the educational setting. We have tried to present major theoretical positions, including learning theory and Piaget’s work, in such a way that their relevance to “real,” practical, applied problems can be seen clearly.

It is important to be able to apply these various theoretical approaches in the actual teaching situation. We do this by using hypothetical examples and by drawing upon anecdotes and personal teaching experiences. This text contains many practical suggestions, as well. It contains suggestions for determining program goals and ways of reaching those goals. In addition, references for further study and exploration are provided.

The main thrust of this text is developmental: that is, we feel that everyone involved—the children, teachers, parents, and administrators—

are all growing, learning, and changing. In short, they are all developing. Programs change and develop, too: this is a dynamic area, not a static, unchanging one.

Each early childhood educator is a unique individual with her or his own style and character. Accordingly, particular theories and certain practical hints will be more helpful to some readers than to others. No one theory has all the answers for everyone. Practical suggestions will be helpful to some but not to others. We recommend an eclectic approach in which the reader understands and considers all alternatives, and then chooses the ones that will "work" for her or him.

In short, this book is written to provide the reader with an introductory view of this complex, growing area. We have attempted to be helpful, relevant, and realistic. We have tried to bridge the gap between theory and practice in a clear and simple manner.

Finally, to be consistent with the nonsexist attitude advised in the text, we have tried to use feminine and masculine gender words with about equal frequency. Assuming that a predominance of feminine examples might come as a refreshing change, we have, if anything, leaned toward the use of feminine gender examples and pronouns.

Los Angeles, 1979

**MAM
JPH**

Acknowledgments

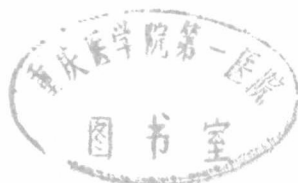
We wish to thank the many schools and individuals that aided us in our efforts to write this book. Specifically, we appreciate the cooperation shown by Montessori School, Long Beach, California; Crestwood Preschool and Kindergarten, Van Nuys, California; Isabel Patterson Child Development Center, Long Beach, California; Country Gardens School, Sherman Oaks, California; and Hill and Dale Preschool, Van Nuys, California. Our photographs were produced by Terry McCarthy, Melodie McCarthy, and Dean Hopgood. Special thanks go to Dorothy Miller of the Bandon Day Care Center, Bandon, Oregon, for her support and helpful criticism.

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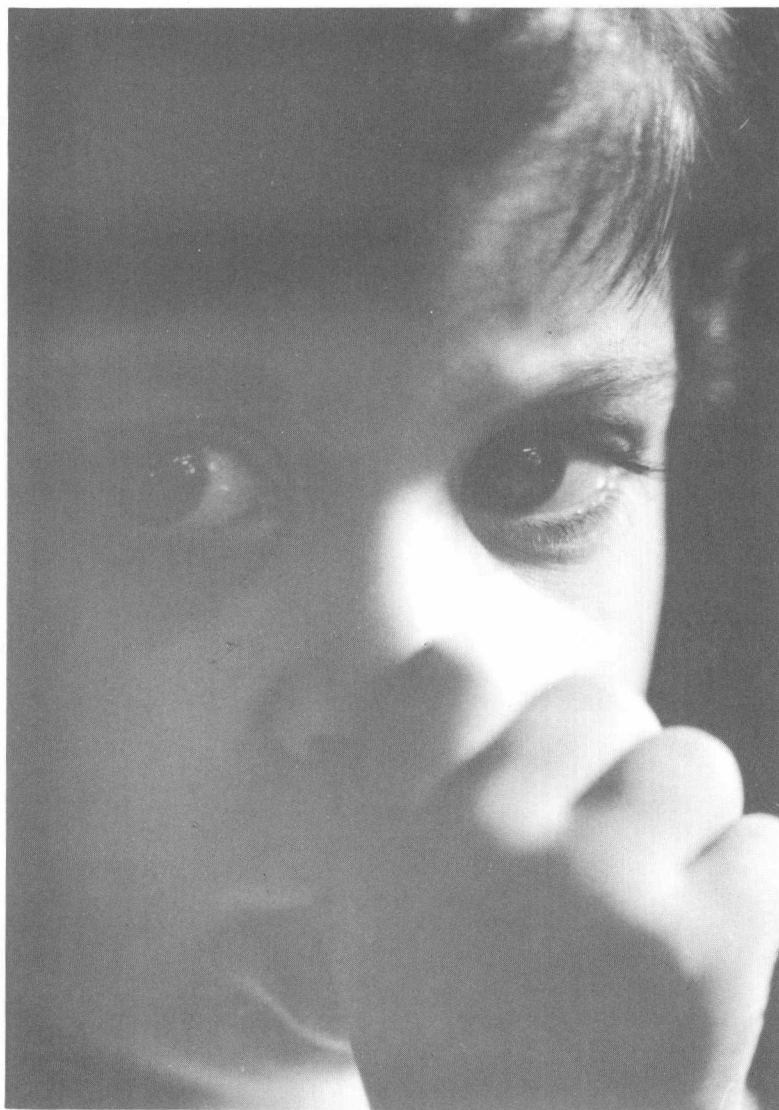


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1



The History of Early Childhood Education

Education has an extensive history. There are many good accounts of the slow, sometimes almost agonizing, growth of general educational efforts before the 1800s (see Ariés, 1962; Braun and Edwards, 1972; Durant, 1954). The long development of educational theory and practice stretches from the Greek philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, through the Roman Empire, into the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and on to more recent centuries. Many profound changes in educational thinking and practice took place in early times, some of which affect the way we live even today.

However, surprisingly enough, it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the education of very young children, or *early* childhood education as distinct from primary and secondary educational levels, began to be thought of as a distinct form of education. Since it is impossible to provide a full history of educational thought in a single chapter, and because our primary concern is with *early* childhood education, we begin our historical review at that point in time when the concept of a distinct field of early childhood education first began to appear. Readers interested in the long, slow, fascinating progress of general education prior to the 1800s are encouraged to look into the sources cited above.

By looking back into history we can identify the roots of many of the ideas, controversies, and practices that are with us today. We see how actions seem to have lagged behind thought, so that many advanced, progressive ideas expressed during very early periods have yet to be translated into practical use. We are still struggling with many of the ideas and concepts which intrigued early thinkers.

Europe: 1800–1900

Prior to 1800 education typically occupied but a few years of the child's life. Most of this would be at what we would now call the primary or secondary level. Only a small proportion of the population received any advanced education, and these fortunate individuals were usually males from upper class families. Early childhood education, as a distinct form of education, was essentially nonexistent prior to the 1800s. In fact, it was only during the 1800s that people began to think of children as

anything more than “small adults,” and to recognize that they need and thrive upon special attention and consideration.

Johann Pestalozzi (1746–1827)

The concept of early childhood education was brought into focus as the nineteenth century began, by a man possessed of a unique combination of talent, courage, and devotion. Johann Pestalozzi’s work with young children in Switzerland spanned a thirty-year period and through his theorizing, writing, and teaching he became one of the most famous and influential champions of early childhood education in Europe.

In addition to an overall feeling of love, acceptance, and trust, Pestalozzi’s approach was marked by five aspects. First, his concern for the care and education of the poor never ended. Most of his students were poor. He felt that education was the key to improving their lives. Second, he believed that children would learn most effectively by *interacting directly with the environment and with each other*. He consistently maintained that a firm knowledge of the physical environment and of personal interactions, based upon close, direct contact with the environment and others, was essential for further progress. For example, he taught geography by having children hike through the countryside with him. He would show them the physical features of the area, noting the hills, valleys, rivers, and so on. Then he would encourage them to construct clay models of what they had seen. Then, and only then, did he show them a map of the area. He believed their capacity to grasp the meaning of the map was enhanced by the physical experience with the environment. One could adopt similar procedures in schools today.

Third, while the children were occupied with their physical exploration of the environment or occupied with other tasks, Pestalozzi felt he had to help develop their spoken language. He was convinced that improved spoken language would aid his later efforts to teach them to read and write. Fourth, his groups were usually age mixed. He believed that the older and/or more advanced children could assist him in his efforts to teach the younger ones. Both young and old would benefit from this process. This is an idea that is receiving a great deal of attention in early childhood education today, and one which we shall discuss in later chapters.

The fifth aspect of Pestalozzi’s system that bears mentioning is his emphasis on practical skills. For example, in Pestalozzi’s world farming was an extremely valuable skill. He felt that, beginning at a very early age, children could be taught the essentials of farming by actually letting them *do* the necessary tasks, rather than by being told about them. In Pestalozzi’s rural village setting, the concept of teaching farming through action to very young children was quite impressive. This aspect of his program emphasized his belief in the value of *practical*,

applied education. (Later, Froebel would anticipate the growth of cities and begin to train small motor coordination in an effort to prepare his pupils for work in factories.)

After the village of Stanz was ravaged by Napoleon's forces, Pestalozzi established an orphanage there for young war victims. With the help of a single servant, he cared for, loved, and taught up to eighty children aged 2 to 6 at one time! Most of the orphans were poor, uneducated, underfed, diseased, vermin-infested, and lacked love and affection. For one incredible year he was all things to all these children. He fed, clothed, doctored, loved, taught, and worked with them. He helped them to help themselves and each other. Even his most skeptical critics were forced to acknowledge his success. Unfortunately, the facilities were needed for a hospital; and after only one year of care, the children had to be dispersed.

But Pestalozzi continued his work. He wrote several books and established two large schools (at Burgdorf and at Yverdon) during the next twenty-five years. His efforts became well known. Teachers, rulers, philosophers, skeptics, and followers all came to see his schools and observe his methods. Though immensely successful in his work with children, he was criticized for his lack of administrative skills, particularly as his schools grew in size. Dissension among his teachers caused him unhappiness in his later years, and he eventually gave up his last school. He died shortly thereafter.

Pestalozzi was also criticized because he could not formalize his approach. He could not outline a set of rules for others to follow. Others could not seem to duplicate his success. He himself suffered from his seeming inability to communicate the "secret" of his achievements. But the attributes that made Pestalozzi successful with children may *not* be the kind that can be translated into a pat set of simple rules for others to follow. The man himself, rather than his system, may have been the key to his success. To recreate his efforts one would have to be devoted to the unfortunate of the world, totally unselfish, able to instill trust and love, to teach by doing, and be wholly dedicated to children and childhood. Now that is asking a lot. Pestalozzi himself probably did not realize what an extraordinary person he was. As Ulich (1968) states, "Pestalozzi's example of 'Let the little children come unto me' probably had a greater effect on modern education than all the philosophers ever said or wrote about the task or character of education." His belief in children can be compared in our own day with that of Neill at Summerhill (see Neill, 1960).

It is our hope that the interested student will read some of Pestalozzi's own writings, particularly his description of his work at the Stanz orphanage. The intangible qualities of the man himself, rather than some lists of cut-and-dried procedures, account for his greatness; and some sense of his greatness may be obtained through a reading of his work.

Nevertheless, we can perhaps draw three lessons from Pestalozzi's methods of early childhood education:

1. The fact that someone is a good teacher doesn't necessarily mean that he or she can *explain* that success to others. It may be like expecting an artist to explain why his painting is great.
2. The fact that someone is a good teacher doesn't necessarily mean that others trying to emulate his or her style will be successful. Again, the analogy with the artist fits.
3. The fact that someone is a good teacher doesn't necessarily mean that that teacher will be a good administrator.

Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782–1852)

By opening the first kindergarten, in 1837, Froebel, a German, created a profound change within the emerging field of early childhood education. Like Pestalozzi and so many others before him, Froebel was deeply concerned about children. He rejected the idea that they are merely small adults to be treated as adults are treated, believing that they needed care and protection, in addition to instruction. He was very concerned with their moral development. He saw reformed education as the way to social reform, and he believed social reform was much needed after the destruction and suffering of the Napoleonic wars. Froebel believed that more than anyone else, children suffered from these wars.

Froebel's thinking concerning the education of young children was extremely progressive. For example, he believed, as do many modern psychologists, that a child's early experiences have a profound effect upon the development of an adult personality. He believed that childhood has value in itself, and is not just something we all pass through on the way to adulthood. According to Froebel, children deserve the same rights and respect as adults and must be treated as individuals passing through a unique phase of life. He felt that excessive interference in the child's spontaneous discovery of the world about him could be detrimental. Parents and teachers must be patient and understanding. Froebel understood, as did Pestalozzi, that the emotional quality of a child's life is important, and that the child's emotional life is heavily affected by the quality of parental love. He realized that individual differences in interests and capabilities should be considered in devising a curriculum, and that any educational curriculum had to be related to the child's own experience. Finally, he proposed that *play* is a most important activity for the optimum development of a child. All of these are ideas that still permeate early childhood educational thought.

Froebel was a great admirer of Pestalozzi, and visited his school. But he disliked Pestalozzi's apparent inability to express his teaching

methods in clear, reproducible terms. As a result, Froebel developed a much more formal, rigid program within his own kindergartens. He employed specially developed objects, called "gifts," and specific procedures called "occupations" for using that equipment. Although he used many activities that are considered desirable today (e.g., manipulative toys, songs interwoven with activities, fingerplay, crafts) many of them were too difficult or too advanced for most young children. Froebel's expectations seem to have been too high. For example, sewing cards had complex patterns that had to be filled with exact stitching. Fragile, delicate, intricate, and complex activities involving sewing, painting, and weaving must have been frustrating for many youngsters. The procedures were too defined and inflexible. They did not encourage creativity or spontaneity. Little time was provided for "free play."

As a result, it was a simple matter for others to duplicate his methods, particularly his "gifts" and "occupations;" but too often his followers became rigid and inflexible in their application of his procedures. After his death, many became much less experimental and less responsive than Froebel himself probably would have been to new information as it emerged from the growing fields of psychology and education.

As we have seen, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to duplicate another person's way of working with children. The more obvious outward actions may be copied; but the thoughts, feelings, and motivations behind the actions are much more difficult to capture. A superficial duplication of activities can become devoid of meaning or impact: it is a trap which the teacher must avoid. We can learn from others, but there is a limit to how much we can copy successfully.

In spite of these limitations, the reader should realize that Froebel's impact on the field was profound. His progressive thinking still permeates modern conceptions of early childhood education. He stressed moral goals and manipulative exercises. He was a pioneer in attempting to create early childhood programs that were relevant, effective, and enjoyable. His kindergartens spread through Europe and America, and, of course, are still with us today in a form modified by years of research and experience. Many of the toys that are popular today are attributable to Froebel. Indeed, it may well be that he invented more toys for children than existed collectively prior to his time. And as we shall see, the enormously creative task of developing toys was taken up by Montessori.

The United States: 1800–1900

Education during the first half of nineteenth century America left much to be desired. Few schools existed, and those that did were of poor quality. Education for the child of ordinary parents was almost non-

existent. Few children attended schools at all. In the north, many worked in factories. In New England, some two-fifths of the people working in factories by 1833 were between 7 and 16 years of age. In the south, many children worked in the fields. The apprentice system, and its promise of personal advancement, died out. Cities and states rarely tried to educate the "huddled masses."

Common School Reform

However, the second half of the century witnessed a reaction to this poor educational climate. Efforts eventually led to the establishment of publicly supported elementary and secondary schools in many parts of the country. These public schools were made possible through the implementation of a new concept: *property taxes*. By taxing property owners it was possible to develop and expand the number of publicly supported schools.

However, even though the number of educational facilities increased greatly during the second half of the nineteenth century the quality of the educational programs within these facilities left much to be desired (Kneller, 1971). The schools were extremely moralistic and patriotic in character. They emphasized the memorization of specific information. Little attention was given to the capabilities, interests, or happiness of the children. Individual and social development was ignored. Although knowledge of child psychology and information about learning processes were developing, teachers were given no incentive to make use of this information.

Horace Mann (1796–1859) called education the great equalizer of the conditions of men. He and other important reformers believed that education would promote democracy and social harmony by providing equal opportunity for all. But Mann appears to have overestimated the ability of the new educational thrust to solve America's problems and to create equality among men. For example, educational opportunities were not made available equally to all the peoples of the country. In the south few schools were established for the poor, and none for the blacks. The education of blacks in South Carolina and Georgia became *legally* prohibited in 1740. In addition, as a result of Nat Turner's 1831 insurrection, it became illegal in most of the south to teach slaves to read or to write. Discrimination against blacks occurred in the north as well; they were excluded from white schools. Following the *Roberts v. City of Boston* case in 1849, the doctrine of "separate but equal" schools became the model throughout much of the country for over a century. Obviously, this is an issue that still exists today.

Many nationalities suffered from discrimination in the field of education. The treatment of Native Americans has always been a national