

Book review for NCB

Young Children's Creative Thinking

By Hiroko Fumoto, Sue Robson, Sue Greenfield and David Hargreaves

London: Sage, 2012

ISBN: 978-0-85702-732-0, 166 pp., £22.99 (pbk)

This book draws on material from the Froebel Research Fellowship (FRF) project, *The Voice of the Child: Ownership and Autonomy in Early Learning*, based at Roehampton University in London (2002-2011) and all four authors were involved in the study. There is a strong UK focus, but international policy and research is integrated and application of the book's recommendations is not limited to a UK context. The structure is clear and logical, with three main sections broadly addressing theory, research, and practice. Overall there is a suitable balance between each section and the authors' writing styles are harmonious. Although findings from the FRF project are presented throughout, mostly via small case studies, I had expected to learn more about this research. For example, a web link in the introduction directs readers to further information, but it would have been helpful to summarise the scope and design of the FRF project, perhaps in a table. The authors identify three aims for the book and I will use these to organise the next part of my review.

To explore the meaning of creative thinking and its link with social relationships...

Theories of creativity and creative thinking are clearly explained and the emphasis on social relationships is pertinent to the FRF project's orientation to socio-cultural and developmental systems theories. It is stated that there are four essential 'foundations' to children's creative thinking, these are: social, cognitive, emotional and motivational. This argument, albeit expressed succinctly, demonstrates the complexity of the book's focus and I suggest that readers follow up the references to attain a more developed understanding of some of the numerous theories introduced.

To critically evaluate the ways in which we engage children, parents and practitioners in research...

The research section of the book would be particularly helpful to those seeking guidance on sensitive approaches to research with young children. Although methodologies are rather brushed over, practical research methods are dealt with in some detail. The use of video recordings is carefully examined and ethical considerations are also given a good level of attention. Greenfield's chapter on involving parents in research is a highlight, as this is often a challenge, and considerations in respect to diversity are also usefully discussed.

To contribute to the professional development of early years practitioners, both pre- and in-service, by raising pertinent questions that are useful to those in a position to influence early childhood practice directly...

Many questions are raised about early learning and illuminating evidence is given, in addition to various recommendations for practice. The reflective activities at the end of each chapter would be valuable to practitioners, but are less suitable for students who may not have their own practice upon which to reflect. However, the Analysing Children's Creative Thinking (ACCT) framework, developed during the FRF project, could be used in various ways by practitioners as well as researchers and students. The ACCT framework certainly goes well beyond the current Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile guidance for the assessment of five-year-olds, where creativity is only explicitly noted in relation to children 'having their own ideas' (Standards & Testing Agency, 2012).

On p20, Hargreaves states that 'creativity is high on the agenda in education, and in educational research'. I suggest that the first part of this statement is now highly debatable in the UK context. For example, in addition to the profile guidance mentioned above, there is now a new EYFS Framework (DfE, 2012) and *Development Matters* curriculum guidance (Early Education, 2012) - with

no mention of 'creativity'. Additionally, the Truss Report, *More Great Childcare*, (DfE, 2013) - again, with no mention of 'creativity' - has implications which are likely to impact on the authors' recommendations. The book's introduction states that features of creative thinking will be present in these latest early education policies; they *are*, but I argue that they are heavily obscured. Creativity and creative thinking need to be much more clearly conceptualised and articulated in policy documents. It is also imperative that research continues in these areas in order to inform future policy and practice. In summary, this book is a useful starting point for anyone with an interest in encouraging and/or investigating young children's creative thinking and it is well worth seeking out additional publications about the FRF project.

Note: The FRF project website cited in the book was obsolete when I attempted to access it, but further information can be found at: http://www.froebeltrust.org.uk/frc_fel.php

References

Department for Education (2012b) Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/eyfs%20statutory%20framework%20march%202012.pdf>

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