

## **Book Review**

### **INSIGHTS AND OUTLOUDS: CHILDHOOD RESEARCH IN THE NORTH** **Eeva-Liisa Kronqvist & Pirkko Hyvönen, Editors**

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The collection of fourteen studies from four different perspectives (cultural context, parents in interaction, collaboration, and research) gathered by the Finnish Network on Childhood Studies and its counterpart, concentrate on issues relating to the contexts of Finland and Norway. Though defined within a limited geographical context, the issues remain universal. Summarizing contemporary research in the e-book format allows for flexibility to revise, add and provide a rich platform for healthy academic discussion. Indeed, maintaining currency in issues remains a challenge but this book provides ample stimulus for follow-up and extended studies.

Each of the studies follows the standard research reporting template of an executive summary, background, definitions, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusions and an extensive bibliography. A common approach in the discussions is to reflect or react to government/public initiatives, with the unspoken assumption of inherent authority.

The studies of children in cultural context places emphasis on cross-gender observations in motivation, play and cultural competence, tend to focus on (1) present deficiencies, (2) practical applications and (3) the development of some type of philosophical/theoretical basis for future discussion. The thorough discussion on issues makes for heavy reading but again, this book is written for academicians and researchers interested in extending the frontiers of knowledge.

The studies in parent-child interaction takes into consideration observed behaviors of children, parents and the interaction process. In discussing the social interaction in terms of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, the authors share some useful research tools and suggestions on how to deal with the situations as well. The researchers, in

trying to apply theoretical frameworks bring the studies out of the cloud into solid down-to-earth situations.

The studies on children in collaboration place emphases on how children work together in mathematics, play environments and learning processes. The focus on non-formal modalities provides a fresh perspective to learning, and provides suggestions for fresh approaches in instruction. The observations provide a rich source of information on how children find their own solutions to situations creatively regardless of their previous experience (making the novices or experts).

The studies of children in Research address the home-based methodologies and ethics issues. Using children reports as a source of information, the approach reveals the children's unique perspectives, and how much these viewpoints can be depended upon. Addressing the importance of sensitivities when dealing with children as subjects, whose well-being should transcend the goals and desires of the researchers, the authors call for a re-examination of early childhood research methodologies.

**Critique:** This book is a mixture of theory and practice. While addressing the existing literature on theory, public initiatives, and standard methodologies, it is refreshingly practical and realistic in terms of the world of early childhood educators, with more of an operational bent. The selected studies tend to solutions-oriented, while trying to contribute to theoretical frameworks. The result is appeal to a wide reading audience, who can use this platform for further exploration. Each twelve-page report addresses the issues but are uneven in the depth of theoretical thinking-making for variety in its use.