

Reviews

A Practical Guide for Practitioners in Inclusive Early Childhood Classrooms

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Gruenberg, A. M., & Miller, R. *A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Inclusion: Effective Reflection*. Boston: Pearson, 2011, ISBN 978-0-13-240279-8.

Since “inclusion” was proposed in the *Salamanca Statement* in 1994, over two decades have passed. Today, inclusive education has become prevalent in many countries. At the World Education Forum held in Korea in 2015, a renewed education agenda, the *Education 2030 Incheon Declaration*, was adopted, in which equity and inclusion were reaffirmed as major goals (UNESCO et al., 2015). With the advocacy of inclusion, great efforts have been made to ensure its implementation.

Inclusion indeed brings about great opportunities to realize educational equity for children with SEN; however, it also poses challenges. Teachers in inclusive classrooms are confronted with difficulties of meeting diverse educational needs of all students. They have to address issues regarding exceptional development that they might rarely encounter.

This book, *A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Inclusion: Effective Reflection* by Ann M. Gruenberg and Regina Miller, which is focused on inclusive education in preschool settings, aims to help practitioners cope with issues they face during the implementation of preschool inclusion. It places great emphasis on supporting practitioners to adapt curriculum for effective inclusion of children with SEN and to use reflective practices; it can be used in the entire continuum of placement options. As stated by the

authors, it “provides a working model that enhances the process of problem solving to address each child and family’s unique needs” (Gruenberg & Miller, 2011, p. 2).

Based on its aim, rather than being focused on conceptual frameworks and theories about inclusive education, this book is structured to be a practical guide for reflection. There are overall ten chapters, which can be mainly categorized into four major parts. Chapter one is the first part, which has briefly introduced the goal, content, and structure of the book and has also covered the historical evolution of the provision of special education services. The second part (chapter two to chapter four) elaborates on some critical elements in inclusive education context, including developmentally and individually appropriate practices, trans-disciplinary teamwork, and assessment. The third part (chapter five to chapter nine) is focused on curricular adaptation. In this part, topics of curricular adaptations have been addressed according to developmental areas. Chapter six is on play and social development, chapter seven on language and literacy, chapter eight on the arts, music and movement, and chapter nine on math, science and problem solving in everyday life. The fourth part (Chapter 10) elaborates on lifelong learning and professional development of teachers in the continuously changing world. Within each chapter, the content has been closely related to practices of preschool teachers. The authors try to provide user-friendly guide for preschool education practitioners.

Throughout the whole book, there is a core concept – **reflection**. What is reflection? According to the authors, reflection is a consideration of multiple factors that might impact the outcomes of children, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors; reflection is also “the process that team members engage in to determine the effect of what is being done in the classroom” (Gruenberg & Miller, 2011, p. 46). Therefore, it is not only an individual but also a team practice. It is not a one-off event, but an ongoing problem-solving process. It plays a vital role throughout the inclusive practice, from assessment, decision making, the development of IEPs, collaboration of team members, curriculum adaptation, and even to teachers’ professional development.

Reflection does not grow out of the void, but is based on practitioners’ knowledge and abilities, as well as evidence. It requires practitioners to carefully consider every influencing factor, be open to feedback and be flexible in adaptation. For instance, in order to conduct effective reflection on the interventional strategies, the teacher should have a well-established repertoire of possible strategies and responses to situations, and the ability to determine the appropriate interventional options. Reflection is also evidence-based. For example, the reflection on the effectiveness of intervention is based on evidence collected through methods such as observation. In addition, reflection also needs support from others. As stated by the authors, reflection can be very effective and useful “when practitioners have both an internal ability to consider various options and an external support system” (Gruenberg & Miller, 2011, p. 123). The authors have made the reflection process very clear by demonstrating it in each step and aspect of the inclusive practice.

Overall, this book is particularly useful for preschool teachers to cope with the problems that they face during their teaching in inclusive classrooms, and to meet the diverse needs of each individual child. First, it provides a comprehensive description of elements and a thorough discussion of important aspects that should be considered in inclusive education. It offers working models for practitioners to match the characteristics of children with supports supplied. Second, important areas of development such as social development, arts, language, and problem solving have been addressed respectively. In-depth discussion and detailed examples are provided to support practitioners to develop curriculum adaptation strategies. Furthermore, the reflective process, which has been elaboratively explained throughout the book, has offered an effective and practical approach for practitioners to monitor what they are doing, to reflect on the decisions made, and to adjust their strategies in order to meet the individual needs of children. Besides, extended resources are recommended at the end of each chapter, so readers can easily explore some interested topics through those links.

However, there are also issues worth mentioning in this book. The sub-structures of some chapters are a little confusing. Certain topics are repeatedly discussed under different subtitles, and some paragraphs do not quite match with the subtitles. Therefore, efforts were made to figure out the inner logic and structure of some sub-sections.

On the whole, this book is a very practical guide for practitioners in preschool inclusive education settings. Teachers and students who are interested in preschool inclusion or are teaching in inclusive classrooms can benefit from it. I would definitely recommend this book.

References

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