Chapter 15
Issues and Trends in Early Childhood Education: Four Themes

Introduction

- Remarkable changes have taken place in the last 50 years
- In 1960s Head Start was stared in order to provide education for poor families
- In 1970s Vietnam War, rising divorce rates, feminist movement.
- 1980s more budget cuts in education
- Changes in education are linked to societal reform
- New level of professionalism and training for teachers and providers

4 Themes in ECE

Themes affecting major issues today

1. Ethic of social reform: the quality child care and national education reform.

2. Importance of childhood: children's health and changes in family life.

3. Transmitting values: challenges presented by the media culture, violence, disaster, and diversity.

4. Professionalism: standards for children's programs, teacher preparations, ethics, and advocacy in the early childhood field.

Ethic of Social Reform

- Social reform refers to the expectations that education has the potential for social change and improvement.

- Need for child care and a call for excellence in our schools

Child Care

- Increase in the number of working mothers has created a need for child care and preschool
- Quality and cost
  - Inadequate child care reported in 1995 Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study
  - Poor to mediocre care threatens children's emotional and intellectual development
  - High-quality care—staff has more education and higher wages
  - Quality—a function of group size, low teacher-child ratios, and communication with parents
  - Need for state and federal support for cost of child care

Child Care (cont.)

- A national crisis
  - Cost of quality related to the needs of families served by specific programs
  - Added costs of child care create a tremendous burden for some parents
  - Difficulties in training and recruiting qualified staff since salaries are very low

Child Care (cont.)

- Quality 2000: Advancing Early Child Care and Education
    - Promoting cultural sensitivity and pluralism
    - Increasing the number of accredited programs
    - Linking programs to community resources
    - Creating separate licensure standards
    - Focusing staff training on children and families

Education Reform

- Trend for a national agenda in education that includes parent involvement and participation
- All children entering school should be ready to learn
- "Ready to learn" included the provision that all children would have equal access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school

No Child Left Behind

- The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
- Purpose is to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers

No Child Left Behind

- Adequate annual progress (assessed in reading and math)
- Highly qualified teachers (by 2005-06 all academic teachers must have B.A. degree)
- Reading/literacy
- Math

Criticisms of NCLB

- Narrow focus on reading and literacy and math will create an unbalanced curriculum, losing focus on whole child

- Teachers may be forced to "teach to the test"

- Sanctions for not meeting NCLB standards seem harsh

- Schools must face punishment without adequate funding and resources

Race to the Top

- In 2009 the Obama administration created a new competitive federal grant program
- challenged to create and adopt common academic standards from k-12
- Created to encourage academic reform by recognizing innovative approaches
- Nine states received funding

Common Core State Standards

- Common standards for English language arts and mathematics

- Nearly all 50 states have adopted standards

- Developed to help students learn the knowledge & kills needed in college

- Clearly defined so the students know what is expected of them

School Readiness

- Children need to start school ready to learn

- Children need to be physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively ready to enter kindergarten

- Achievement gap between African-American and Hispanic children with white children

Universal Preschool

- Discrepancy between the need and demand for quality child care and the government's willingness to fund it
- Three-quarters of states now have initiatives for publicly funded, high-quality preschool education for all

Charter Schools

- Public schools that have a specific mandate and that are governed by a group or organization
- Ex: parents
- Focus on
  - Curriculum areas
  - Low income families or
  - Educational philosophy: inclusion

Reform Strategies

- Link education and child care
- Establish continuity between early childhood programs and kindergarten
- Create closer relationship with early elementary grades
- Address children's nonacademic needs
- Promote developmental learning
- Initiate programs and policies that strengthen families
- Develop partnerships with the community and businesses

The Importance of Childhood

- Endangered childhood
  - Emphasis on survival rather than care; expose children to reality and adult experiences
  - Childhood stress and changing roles in parent-child relationships
    - Adults exert pressure on children to hurry and grow, to achieve and perform, to please
    - Focus on infant academics and physical superiority
    - Changing family structures; impact of divorce and single parenthood
    - Apathetic parents

The Seven Irreducible Needs

1. The need for ongoing nurturing relationships
2. The need for physical protection, safety, and regulation
3. The need for experiences tailored to individual differences
4. The need for developmentally appropriate experiences
5. The need for limit setting, structure, and expectations
6. The need for stable, supportive communities and cultural continuity
7. Protecting the future (on behalf of the world's children)

Helping Children Cope with Stress

Look at page 475

- Alarm

- Appraisal

- Search

- Implementation

Child Abuse and Neglect
The Crisis and Potential Solutions

- Everyday more than 2,000 children experience child abuse and neglect

- National call to action forced individuals to look at the crisis and suggest solutions

- NAEYC adopted "Position Statement on the Prevention of Child Abuse in Early Childhood Programs and the Responsibilities of Early Childhood Professionals to Prevent Child Abuse." Encourages centers and homes adopt guidelines:
  - employing adequate staff and adequate supervision of staff;
  - environments that reduce possibility of hidden places;
  - orientation and training on child abuse detection, prevention, and reporting;
  - defined and articulated policies for a safe environment;
  - avoidance of creating "no-touch" policies by the caregivers and staff

Child Abuse and Neglect

- The Adult Responsibilities
  - Reporting suspected cases of abuse
  - The person filing is immune from civil liability

Child Abuse and Neglect (cont.)

- Role of the teacher
  - Make notes of child's appearance
  - Inform director or supervisor of suspicions
  - Discuss ways to support the staff members who report
  - Call the locally designated agency for abuse; complete a written report
  - Support the parent by being available and offering help with the investigation and agencies
  - Follow through with assistance of child protective services
  - When child informs you, support the child and follow the same procedure

Families Under Stress: Divorce

- Dealing with effects of divorce on children
- Supporting recovery process and resumption of family
- Children face stress with divorce but can be resilient with support
  - Teacher must know the children's needs
  - Talk about feelings
  - Use bibliotherapy
  - Keep aware of family diversity
  - Include open communication with parents

Families Under Stress: Working Parents

- Work, economics, and public policy
    - Women can have double roles and chronic fatigue
    - Parents are less available for children and teachers
    - ABC Bill 1990 gave federal dollars for centers improving quality and services to parents
        - Family Medical Leave Act
    - Policies must change to make it possible for parents to stay home longer with their children

Families Under Stress: Poverty

- Children who live in poverty are at the greatest risk of academic failure

- More and more poor children live in hardworking families with wages that are too low for them to earn their way out of poverty

- The face of poverty is diverse—poor children come in all colors and live in every family type and geographic area of America

Transmitting Values

- The media culture and television
  - Replaced adult supervision
  - Television violence can lead to aggression and desensitization
  - Promote sexist and racist practices
  - Promote materialism and consumerism
- Encourage parents to:
  - Set limits on viewing shows
  - Plan and participate with their children
  - Resist commercials
  - Express their views about programs

Transmitting Values (cont.)

- Violence and disaster
  - Children exposed to increased violence in the media and at home
  - When a catastrophe occurs, children need help making sense of the calamity and support in recovery
  - Shock, confusion, fear, anxiety, grief, anger, guilt, and helplessness are all common emotional responses to trauma

Transmitting Values (cont.)

- Violence
  - Children's needs
    - Constancy and predictability
    - Encourage communication
    - Reassurance to know they will be safe
    - Find peaceful resolution to conflicts
  - What to do
    - Develop guidelines
    - Talk with parents about toys and the role of the media
    - Investigate peace education

Transmitting Values (cont.)

- Should we or should we not allow war and violent play?
- Sociopolitical view that children learn basic social and political behavior
- Whatever your viewpoint, remember that early learning is powerful
- How much children are traumatized by catastrophes varies
- How children see their parents and teachers react affects how deep the scars will be

Social Diversity

- Facing reality
  - A sad and unfavorable history of racial prejudice
  - Attitudes do not yet parallel reality
  - High school dropout rates have not changed
  - Standardized test rates for the "at-risk" have not gone up
  - A sense of attitude crystallization

Social Diversity (cont.)

- Multicultural education
  - A comprehensive approach to all ethnic and racial groups is necessary
  - Separatist versus pluralist points of view
- Bilingual education
  - Unresolved issue as to determining the needs and ways to provide services
  - Suppress language of culture or teach both
  - English immersion programs

Social Diversity (cont.)

- Bilingual education
  - The school-age child who has difficulty learning to read and write in the dominant language must have instruction in both languages
  - The young child is immersed in English and soon loses some of the first language and has difficulty communicating with parents

Social Diversity (cont.)

- Immigrant issues
  - Need to teach basic skills to succeed in the "new" country
  - Eroding financial and social supports
  - Language barrier

Social Diversity (cont.)

- Equal play and gender issues
  - Gender segregation
  - Sexist treatment in the classroom
  - Gender bias-free environment
  - Eliminate stereotypes
- Sexuality
  - Controversial issues
  - Avoid rejection of family or children
  - No child should be ashamed of his or her family

Professionalism

- Standards for Children's Programs
  - Preparing children and teachers to live and work within an increasingly diverse population
  - A multifaceted approach is necessary to address diversity
- Guidelines
  - Teachers need to learn to recognize developmentally equivalent patterns of behavior
  - It is essential not to value some ways of achieving developmental milestones more highly than others
  - Teachers need to begin instruction with interactive styles and content that is familiar to the children
  - School learning is most likely to occur when family values reinforce school expectations
  - When differences exist between the cultural patterns of the home and community and those of the school, the teacher must deal with those discrepancies directly

Professionalism (cont.)

- Integrity, honesty, individuality, self-confidence, and responsibility
- Implications for educators
  - Education must promote minority involvement in school reform
  - Need an adult understanding of development
  - Need for more training and education on diversity
  - Need to examine own attitudes and policies
- In the classroom, staff and families must work together to provide each child with something familiar and comfortable in the environment

Professionalism (cont.)

- Advocacy
  - Make a personal commitment
  - Keep informed
  - Know the process
  - Express your views
  - Let others know
  - Be visible
  - Show appreciation
  - Watch the implementation
  - Build rapport and trust
  - Educate your legislators