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Tizard Learning Disability R

A Review of Making the DEC Recommended Practices "Come to Life"

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Manuscripts

Deris, A. R., & DiCarlo, C. F. (2021). *Making the DEC recommended practices "come to life": Using case method of instruction in early childhood special education.* Charles C. Thomas. Paper (ISBN) 978-0-398-09346-4. Ebook (ISBN) 978-0-398-09347-1

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A Review of Making the DEC Recommended Practices "Come to Life"

Deris and Dicarlo (2021), present a resource for people working with students who have a diagnosis of developmental delay or developmental disability or who may go on to receive one. Their book is centreded around the guidelines on Recommended Practices (RPs) provided by the Division of Early Childhood of the Council of Exceptional Children (Division for Early Childhood, 2014). Its primary aim is to act as a training resource for higher-education students who are training to enter the field of early education, or educators already working in the field who are pursuing continuous professional development.

The authors provide fifty-five case studies that cover seven of the eight domains of RPs that are relevant to practitioners, namely (a) assessment, (b) environment, (c) family, (d) instruction, (e) interaction, (f) teaming and collaboration, and (g) transition. The only domain not covered in the book is leadership, as that domain is not aimed at practitioners but rather educational leaders such as headteachers or local authorities (Division for Early Childhood, 2014).

The authors use a systematic approach to preparing their case studies grounded in Case Method of Instruction (CMI; Atkinson et al., 2000; Snyder & McWilliam, 2003). CMI is an instructional design strategy promoting reflective thinking, problem-solving, and decision-

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making (Snyder and McWilliam, 2003). As a result, the case studies are carefully designed to resemble real-life scenarios. That way, they invite the reader to apply their understanding of the RPs to and to to come to a conclusion about each of them. What is more, the authors provide a mixture of unresolved and resolved case studies. The unresolved case studies provide information on the situation without going into how the situation was resolved. In contrast, the resolved case studies include information on how the situation was dealt with. That way, the reader is expected to not only suggest what would be the best way to deal with the situation following the RPs but also reflect on whether any suggested resolutionswere appropriate or not.

This book is an excellent resource for designing training that brings the students in contact with best-practice recommendations while simulating the clinical environment. It provides the necessary structure to guide the students through each case study by having dedicated questions at the end of each one and it provides opportunities both for independent study as well as group work.

It is also another step towards improving the support being provided to families and children who have or may go on to have a diagnosis of developmental disabilities or delay. Education is moving towards specific standards in terms of the curricula used, the educational

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aims set (Porter *et al.*, 2011), and the support practitioners provide (Nelson and Campbell, 2017). Such a move is necessary if we are to increase the educational process' transparency while improving the fidelity of the support we provide to the families and the outcomes we produce for the children (William McKenna and Parenti, 2017). That move towards increased accountability could be one of the cornerstones of the educational sector's development and it would be applicable to all grade levels and types of schooling (e.g., mainstream- and special education (Campbell *et al.*, 2017; Nelson and Campbell, 2017).

Examining the RPs, it is evident that there are best-practice recommendations that promote a holistic approach to education. The RPs take into account all aspects of the educational experience and provide much-needed guidance to professionals. They go beyond the focus on evidence and integrate considerations around diversity and values. Therefore, these guidelines are in line with recent developments in education and the move from being evidence-based to being evidence-informed, integrating best practice but also tailoring its application to the unique nature of the educational process (Brown and Zhang, 2016). In line with the notion of evidence-informed education, the book offers educators opportunities to practice combining evidence-based strategies with their professional judgment; a process that

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educators will hopefully be expected to engage in more in the future, despite the existing barriers (Brown and Zhang, 2016).

This book can be a great starting point for professionals. It offers them the opportunity to see the breadth of different situations they might find themselves in during their career. It goes beyond the typical case study that summarises a problem with a reasonably evident dilemma and resolution. The information provided in each case study is broad and, in some cases, complex. Therefore, the reader is placed in a position where they need to combine the information given and refer to the RPs to guide their decision-making process. Moreover, the book is set out in a way that expects more from the instructor as well. Specifically, the authors highlight that the instructor should be well-prepared to guide the students through each case study by being familiar with it and well-versed in the relevant RPs (Deris and Dicarlo, 2021). This resource is not only expecting students to engage with the case study,t also sets expectations about the instructor's contribution to the process. In other words, it guides the instructor from being a passive collaborator to actively switching between the role of the teacher and the facilitator.

One limitation of the book is the lack of a suggested resolution to each case study or commentary about the resolved case studies.. Including this additional guidance could be

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particularly helpful on a practical level, especially for trainers who might need an extra layer of support.

Despite this limitation, the book is a great resource and should be integrated into courses related to education, psychology, behaviour analysis, and related disciplines. The RPs provided by the Council of Exceptional Children (Division for Early Childhood, 2014) offer information that should be relevant to various professionals working with young children, and this book would allow those professionals to access them in a way that is both meaningful and accessible. That benefit of accessibility would be particularly relevant for higher-education institutions that offer full-time courses or distance-learning courses, which are not always able to offer hands-on training to their students.

In conclusion, Deris and Dicarlo (2021) have succeeded in preparing an educational tool that should help professionals working in the broader area of early intervention come in contact with real-life scenarios that demonstrate how complex the educational process can be at times.

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We have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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