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Family Influences on Creativity of School Children

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ABSTRACT

The book under review is an outcome of the author's successful completion of post-graduate studies, hence the title, "Family Influences on Creativity of School Children" is perfect choice as shared by both the thesis and this book. Written against a backdrop of empirical research conducted in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya, the book provides authoritative and incisive analysis of factors ingrained in the family that influence the development of creative talents in children. The first set of factors consists of those that parents and/or those significant others in the family can readily execute toward the child. The second set comprises factors that are naturally predetermined. Factors in the first set include parental love; parent-child interaction; socio-economic status of parents; quantity and quality of time spent with child; home-based activities; and language. The second consists of gender and a child's position of birth in the family in relation to other siblings. These factors are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Save for a few misgivings such as substituting painting and drawing for arts and craft and vice versa, this book qualifies to make profound academic mileage among scholars especially those inclined towards early childhood education and development. Also, it can make a good educative piece among the general public.

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Strong Points of the Book

A common thread that resonates between the lines in the book under review is the fact that like adults, children are capable of exhibiting those unique creative talents that are inherently resident in them save for failure of identification and subsequent nurture of these abilities right from family level. Backed by research findings, it is pointed out that in the long term, talent can turn out to be a life-long career and/or a vocation for young people. But first and foremost, these talents must be identified before they are harnessed and gradually nurtured not only for the benefit of the individual child but for entire communities. In this respect, the book chides parents for being in the backseat and not taking the onus to identify and support emerging creative abilities of children. This is because parents are naturally expected to be in close proximity to their children especially in their nascent years of development. Concerning family influence upon children's creative abilities, the author seemed to have made exclusive consideration of ideal families where both parents are present at the expense of other family types that are conspicuously evident in the contemporary society. Perhaps, for purposes of producing a well balanced and water-tight treatise, there could have been an inclusion and elaborate discussion of these 'delicate' family types such as single parent, parentless (no live parents) or even those headed by foster parents. This is because children who are bred in families in the preceding are equally capable of hosting tremendous creative abilities just like their counterparts in ideal families. Inclusion of the latter family types could provide more informative and comparative reading.

Relevance of the Book to Academia

The book under review is basically a product of empirical research which was undertaken towards attainment

of a Masters degree hence like any other serious academic venture, Syallow's masterpiece revolves around proven child development theories propounded by Erick Erickson, and Piaget. These theories are discussed very briefly with focus on specific child development stages namely '*industry versus inferiority*' on one hand, and '*concrete stage*' on the other, as propounded by Erick Erickson and Piaget respectively. It is after digesting this literature that is more or less characterized by abstraction that the reader involuntarily squirms due to insatiable expectation coupled with obvious suspense, all the while yearning to go the full stretch to savor content on the entire structures of stages of child development as stipulated by the two theorists mentioned in the preceding line. Indeed, while full coverage of stages of child development could have been more informative and educative to the reader on one hand, on the other, the author's choice to focus on children aged between 6 and 12 years in the study could have also been brought into proper perspective. None the less, it is worth noting that the available information on theories of child development is relevant to a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the field of education, but more specifically teacher trainers, and by extension teachers who deal specifically with young learners between 6-12 years. Acquisition of such knowledge would help teachers to devise appropriate pedagogical approaches and strategies through which to identify creative talents among young learners thus corroborate efforts of parents in the same task.

A gradual read through the discussions on factors that influence creative abilities of children reveals some elements of ambiguity in the literature. There are also those factors that are merely glossed over hence denying the reader a thorough grasp of their influence upon creative ability of the child.

An example of such a factor is *language*, whose usage could be doubly interpreted by the reader to mean, first, that it (language) is a medium of communication which as used poses difficulty of grasp (based on context of the book) as used in the family so that the child cannot decipher what is communicated. Second, language here could also imply the degree of modesty or vulgarity of language as used by parent to communicate to child. The author therefore fell short of contextualizing language as a factor that influences creativity among children.

As a point of departure, a notable feature in the book under review is the wealth of knowledge infused in the treatise as evidence by the prevalence of authentic citations ranging from relevant text references, magazines and even local dailies. While literature from these sources has provided a powerful blend of opinions and ideas in Syallow's book, it suffices to point out that such knowledge could be more reliable if obtained from more recent dates no more than two decades backwards from the time of book publication. Otherwise, citations from local dailies in particular that characterize the book from cover to cover seem to unleash

certain freshness into the book with more recent content aged barely a decade ago.

Recommendation and Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the book under review is small, consisting of seventy-seven pages and is awash with research-based literature. For those scholars who may wish to replicate Syallow's study in the same geographical location or elsewhere, the book will be an invaluable reference point. Finally, this treatise definitely stands a chance to find its place among those serious scholars and readers because currently, creativity among children is an aspect of early childhood education that is drawing unceasing attention of academics in institutions of higher learning not only for purposes of research, but as well among other stakeholders with keen interest in finding information about child matters. Such people include teachers, care givers, counselors and sponsors among the rest.

Reference

C.M.Syallow, *Family Influences on Creativity of School Children*. Eldoret: Utafiti Foundation 2015.