

Preface

There has been a growing need for information on quality preschools and childcare programs in an age of growing numbers of preschool programs around the world, especially during the last two decades. International reports such as those issued by the World Health Organization and UNESCO (see Chap.2) documented the relationship between quality early childhood programs on children's health and success in school. Even as early childhood educators are seeking tools to improve program quality, emerging countries are establishing preschool programs for the first time. They are seeking guidance on how to develop quality early childhood programs in individual regions or within an entire country.

The interest in information on quality programs led to two actions to address the issue. First, an international symposium was sponsored by two international organizations: The World Organization for Early Childhood Programs (OMEP) and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI). The symposium of early childhood experts from more than 30 countries held outside Zurich, Switzerland resulted in the development of basic global guidelines that described indicators of quality in various aspects of preschool programs. Second, ACEI developed an assessment based on the Global Guidelines titled the ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment (GGA). With these accomplishments, the stage was set for two types of efforts using the GGA.

One effort that is ongoing is the validation of the GGA for existing programs to use to self-assess their progress and plan for improvement. The second effort has been to use the Global Guidelines to help locations that are beginning programs for the first time to learn what quality characteristics are desired in preschool programs. Many of the chapters in this book include data on the process of administering the GGA that can be used for analysis in the validation process. Other chapters focus on the initiation of programs and how they are unique to the culture and educational practices of a country (see Chap.1). The chapter authors either are American authors who work internationally, immigrants from another country who have immigrated to the United States and have continued their ties to their birth country, or citizens of another country who participate in the work with other authors. The chapters give us insight into how the early childhood programs in a country are affected by the

language, culture, government, and history. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the book and prepares the readers for the many stories woven into the chapters.

Beyond Chap. 1, the book is divided into six parts. **Part I: Background**, contains Chap. 2 that explains the work completed toward establishing reliability and validity of the GGA.

The following five parts of the book generally follow the topics covered in the GGA. **Part II: School Environments**, includes chapters that focus on unique environment characteristics that are affected by program approaches in individual countries. **Part III: Curriculum Content and Pedagogy**, focuses on unique characteristics in the curriculum of preschool programs in individual countries, while **Part IV: Children with Special Needs**, addresses how countries serve children with atypical development. **Part V: The Early Childhood Educator**, describes commonalities and differences in educator roles between countries. **Part VI: Family, School, and Community Partnerships**, discusses efforts of very different countries to establish relationships between parents, community elements, and the school that will benefit the children. Chapter 1 extends the information and makeup of this book with more information on the six parts and individual chapters in each section.

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