Introduction

This KAM focuses on critical issues in organizing and planning early childhood programs. Students will gain an increased understanding of differing theoretical perspectives, developmentally appropriate practices, and environmental and advocacy issues that need to be addressed when studying early childhood organizational contexts. The literature review will familiarize the student with a wide range of philosophies and practices that impact early childhood organizational configurations and considerations.

Early childhood organizational contexts are as diverse are their purpose, size, participant population, and focus. The grand purpose of the diverse learning institutions, however, should always be to provide effective learning opportunities for all students while serving the legitimate purposes of the broader society. Educational policies have been on a constant interplay among proponents of three deeply held values: equality, efficiency, and liberty.

Overall Objectives for This KAM

This Knowledge Area Module (KAM) is designed to give you a broad understanding of (a) critical issues in the organization and planning of early childhood organizational contexts, (b) the vast research literature pertaining to these critical issues, (c) principles of effective practice in early childhood organizations, (d) technical issues in planning and implementing early childhood programs, and (e) the professional qualities that help educational leaders serve young children in their families.

When you have completed this KAM, you will be able to:
1. Analyze and explain the theories that inform current practices in early childhood organizations.

2. Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate how early childhood programs are conceptualized, actualized, and evaluated, and critically evaluate appropriate practices and policies used in the programs.

3. Propose and/or critically assess a practical program or curriculum that is intended to bring about positive social change.

Plan to accomplish objective #1 in the Breadth component, objective #2 in the Depth component, and objective #3 in the Application component of your KAM.

Challenges and Opportunities in This KAM

In creating this KAM it is imperative that you investigate the subject until you have accomplished a comprehensive exploration of the principles and concepts associated with KAM 6 and how these apply to your profession. Usually, this will entail reading more books than you read for previous KAMs. You do not only read about a subject but also around it. For example, you might review *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs* (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) for major points about early childhood program organization, and then compare and contrast the editors’ ideas with those of Dickinson (2002). Rebuttal of Dickinson’s points by Lambert (2003) provides further exploration of research relating to contextual factors in early childhood education. What has the research shown? What other perspectives and points of view exist? Where are your perspectives on these manuscripts? Please make sure to read educated opinions and research results rather than popular and political points of view. Almost every educator in the United States has an opinion of the *No Child Left Behind Act* but not all of these opinions are worthy your discussion. And make sure to
read the original paper/document carefully. Even though every educator has an opinion of the No
Child Left Behind Act, not everybody has read the actual legislation.

Your dissertation should effect positive social change. This KAM requires you to
specifically learn how social change can be effected in educational institutions and hence, giving
you a good idea of what your dissertation is required to accomplish.

Breadth Component

EDUC 8613 Organization of Early Childhood Education Programs (5 cr.)

The purpose of the Breadth component of this KAM is to help the student develop an
understanding of the different theoretical perspectives that form the basis for the organization of
early childhood programs. S/he will explore the historical development, philosophical
underpinnings, and present organizational configurations in order to be able to compare and
contrast differing viewpoints and scholarly contributions to the field of early childhood
education.

Listed below are some topics that you might want to explore in the Breadth
component of this KAM. They are intended to be suggestive only, but will give you an
idea of the kind of topics your paper should address. You are encouraged to include other
topics that you feel are critical to your broad understanding of how learning
institutions are organized.

1. Acquire an understanding of the historical and contemporary developments,
   philosophical and ethical foundations, and theoretical bases underlying different early
   childhood organizational contexts.

2. Examine the assumptions and broad implications of various approaches to early
   childhood education.
3. Be able to critically evaluate the philosophical foundations of different early childhood programs as they apply to developmentally appropriate practices, assessment, curricular implementation, and environmental and advocacy issues.

**Demonstration of Competence**

Using the learning resources chosen, write a scholarly paper that demonstrates your understanding of the principles and logic behind the organization and structure of learning institutions. The emphasis of the paper is not on summarizing the content of various theories but on a critical assessment of them including comparisons, contrasts, evaluations, and a synthesis of different theories, assumptions, concepts, ideas, and elements encountered during the theoretical literature search and review. The expected length of the paper for the Breadth component is approximately 30 double-spaced pages, plus references.

**Learning Resources**

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.
Depth Component

EDUC 8623 Critical Issues in Early Childhood Education Programs (5 cr.)

The purpose of the Depth component of this KAM is to help you analyze, synthesize, and evaluate how an educational leader can effect a necessary change in goals, missions, objectives, and purposes of early childhood program organization by examining current research. American education is extremely sensitive to societal influence, such as economic, political, social, and international circumstances, and this sensitivity impacts the role of care and educational services for the youngest children.

In the Depth component you should consider the impact of the goals, missions, objectives, and purposes of educational institutions that you examined in the Breadth. This Depth component should provide an opportunity for thorough understanding of how change can be effected to achieve the best possible foundation for all young children, while acknowledging the realities that challenge educational leaders.

The specific requirements for your Depth component of this KAM are:

1. Acquire an in-depth understanding of how theoretical understandings are translated into practice in the form of standards, policies, and daily practices (analyses of socially constructed reality), including the ramifications of resource allocation, political orientations, and changing demographics.

2. Become knowledgeable about the research associated with an issue listed below. This list is offered only as suggestions. Other relevant issues may be added and researched.

Critical Issues

1. Brain research exploring the development of brain regions that underlie particular cognitive skills. The impact of changes in these areas throughout early childhood.
2. Parental practices and early school achievement, with particular focus on cultural diversity. This might include evaluating the preschool experiences of children in various at-risk populations in designing early parenting and preschool programs and policies.

3. Developmentally appropriate practices for language acquisition and developing mathematical skills.

4. Early childhood education research on accreditation and quality.

5. Career development and training systems, including early childhood teacher standards and state child care licensing requirements.


7. Role of public schools, social service agencies, and the private sector in early childhood education.

*Demonstration of Competence*

1. Compile an annotated bibliography that includes a minimum of 15 recent refereed or peer-reviewed research journal articles or dissertations (published within the past 5 years or older articles if they are a particularly good fit) related to early childhood programs. For each source included on your list, prepare a critical analysis of 1 to 1½ pages in length. This annotated bibliography must be arranged in alphabetical order.

2. Write a 25-30 page double-spaced typed scholarly paper describing, analyzing and explaining how the organization, purpose, goals, and missions of early childhood programs can be changed and relating it to developments in your profession.

In this paper, be sure to include evidence of higher order thinking (comparison
and contrast, analysis, and evaluation).

Learning Resources

Learning resources for the Depth component of this KAM relate primarily to the relationship between social change and the goals, missions, and objectives of early childhood programs and curriculum development. You are encouraged to review a wide range of sources for this assignment but focus particularly on recent dissertations and journal articles.

Application Component

EDUC 8633 ECE Programs: A Comprehensive Approach (4 cr)

In the Application component of this KAM, your focus should turn to your own Early childhood professional context and how social change can be created and implemented. In order for the Application component to be the most productive learning experience possible, it is useful to draw on learning from the Breadth and Depth components of this KAM. You are encouraged to review the annotated bibliography compiled as part of the Depth component. The Application project should be designed to examine and take measures to ameliorate clearly identified organization and/or professional problems in ECE.

Design a project that effectively applies theory explored in the Breadth and Depth component of your KAM in an authentic context.

Some suggestions of Application projects you might consider:

1. Prepare a report that reflects your understanding of how your early childhood program, or another of interest to you, has supported positive social change. You would need to closely examine the organization, purpose, goals, and missions of your selected institutions and engage in a number of personal interviews with educational leaders as a means of developing a
complete understanding of the social change endeavor.

2. Propose a model for an early childhood program including a theoretical framework, design, implementation, and evaluation plan.

3. Develop a product that demonstrates the ability to address one of the issues examined in the Depth section. Examples might include, but are not limited to, an audio or videotape of a curricular unit designed and implemented in an early childhood setting, an in-service manual, a grant application, or a program development prospectus. Attach a comprehensive critique of the product that evaluates the application of knowledge drawn from the Breadth and Depth components of this KAM. The product and critique should be 30 or more pages in length; well organized and documented; free of grammatical, structural and punctuation errors; thorough; and reflecting critical analysis.

4. Prepare a staff development or training manual or design a workshop focusing on specific strategies for social change that you deducted from your Breadth and Depth component of this KAM.

5. Submit a miniproposal to implement a research project that would initiate or study educational change. Include a statement of the problem to be studied and purpose of the research, review of relevant literature, research design and method of data analysis, significance of the study, and instrumentation to be used.

Demonstration of Competence

The Application component of this KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining the organization, purpose, goals, and missions of early childhood programs into practice. Think in terms of developing a project that addresses change in your setting. Your final demonstration should include both the project and
reflective commentary on it, where you show how it is informed by the theories and research studied in the Breadth and Depth components of this KAM. The Application component is considered equivalent to 4-quarter credit hours of graduate work.

*Learning Resources*

The resources you will use in this component are very specific to your particular project. If a theory or research papers is the foundation of the project, be sure to reference it.