

SECOND EDITION

Bringing
the
High/Scope
Approach to your
Early Years
Practice

A **David Fulton** Book

NICKY HOLT
SERIES EDITED BY SANDY GREEN

Bringing the High/Scope Approach to your Early Years Practice

This easy-to-read series provides an introduction to some of the most important early years philosophies and shows how they can be incorporated into your setting. Each book provides:

- An outline of the background to the approach
- Clear explanations of the relevance to contemporary thinking
- Suggestions to help you to plan a successful learning environment
- Examples of what the individual approach can look like in practice.

These convenient guides are essential to early years practitioners, students and parents who wish to fully understand what each approach means to their setting and children.

Have you ever wondered what High/Scope is, where it came from and how it can be used with young children in your setting?

Bringing the High/Scope Approach to your Early Years Practice provides an introduction to the High/Scope philosophy and its use in early years. This new edition has been fully updated to show how the High/Scope approach links with the Early Years Foundation Stage and contains new material on working with the under twos.

Features include:

- Details about the High/Scope wheel of learning
- An explanation of active learning, including materials, manipulation, choice, language and support
- Plan-do-review activities
- Planning and assessment methods.

This convenient guide will help early years practitioners, students and parents to really understand what the High/Scope approach can offer their setting and children.

Nicky Holt has been using the High/Scope approach for the past 14 years, both as a practitioner and as a trainer.

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Nicky Holt
Series edited by Sandy Green

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

This second edition published 2010
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2010.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Holt, Nicky.

Bringing the high/scope approach to your early years practice / Nicky Holt.
— 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Early childhood education—Great Britain. 2. Active learning—Great Britain. I. Title.

LB1139.3.G7H65 2010

372.210941—dc22

2009046328

ISBN 0-203-85179-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-56499-9 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-415-56500-6 (pbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-85179-X (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-56499-1 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-56500-4 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-85179-1 (ebk)



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Acknowledgements

To my parents who supported and encouraged me to follow my desire to train and work with young children many years ago, especially Mum who continued to work to pay for me to travel to college and buy all the books I needed to complete my training.

To Stevie, who introduced me formally to High/Scope and set me on my own active learning journey.

To all the children I have worked with over the past 29 years who have inspired, challenged and amazed me all at the same time and continue to do so.

To Sandy who respected and believed in my knowledge and ability to write books that others would want to read – thank you.

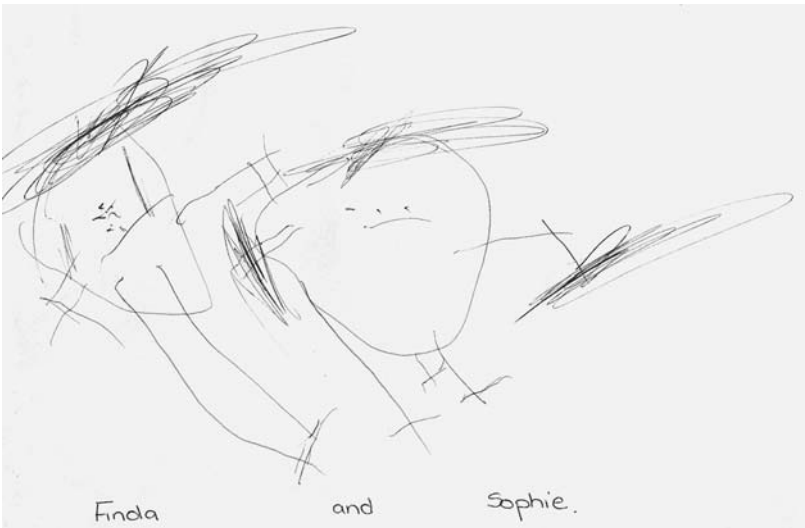
To my work colleagues who constantly gave support in their own way – here we are finally published!

Finally (but by no means least) to my wonderful daughters Finola and Sophie for being who you are; for being my rocks and inspiration through some tough times and again allowing me to use your childhood artwork throughout this book.

To my wonderful daughters Finola and Sophie – you have taught me so much over the years and I love you both.

1

Introduction and background



Educating young children means providing them with ongoing opportunities for active learning. Young children in action develop initiative, curiosity, resourcefulness and self confidence – dispositions that serve them well throughout their lives.

(Hohmann and Weikart 2002: 2)

Have you ever seen the words ‘High/Scope’ and wondered what it meant or was all about? Well I hope this book will answer your questions and more.

So what does High/Scope mean?

High = the individual level of achievement we wish for all children in our care to be able to achieve.

Scope = the range (scope) of experiences we can offer to children to support them to achieve their personal ‘high’.

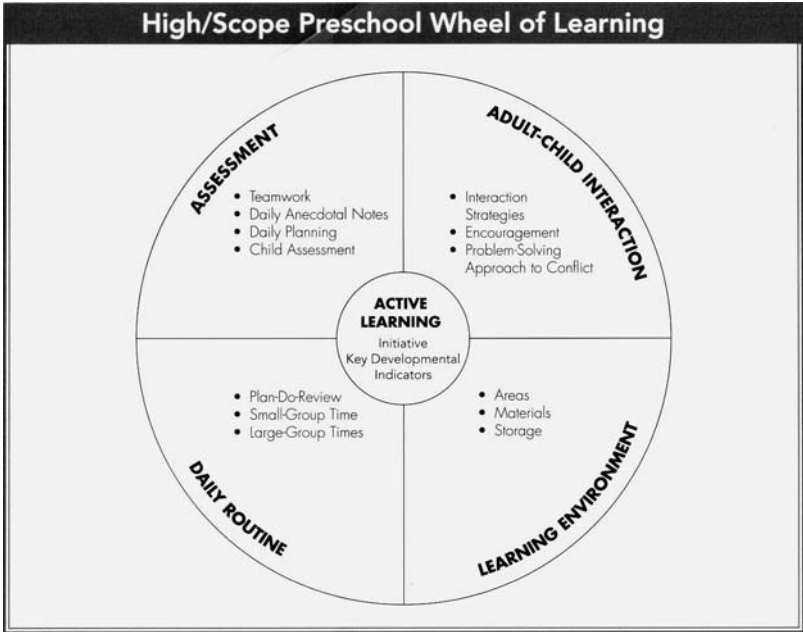
This book takes you through the main points of the approach from its creation over 40 years ago, through its development and up to the recently published 40-year research study. The theory is linked to practice from personal experience of using High/Scope over the past 13 years in a variety of preschool settings and schools.

The High/Scope approach follows five basic principles that underpin the practice; this is illustrated in the wheel of learning that supports practitioners when using the approach with children. In the UK the addition of the tyre acknowledges the key role of the family and the evidence-based research available. High/Scope also has a wheel specifically for children with special educational needs and one for infants and toddlers. Examples of these can be found in the appendix.

An overview of each of the segments of the High/Scope wheel

Active learning

This is the way children learn – actively! They find out for themselves what something is like by using their senses and this is seen from birth through childhood and on into adult life. Children use their initiative to explore and seek out answers to their questions. They are supported to



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solve their own problems and use their growing knowledge to understand and learn from the world around them.

This was graphically illustrated in the following example: When working with a group of young children aged 2–3 years in early spring, talking about rabbits and enjoying the story of Peter Rabbit together. During a small-group time the children were asked to draw some pictures of a rabbit to add to the setting's spring display. The resulting drawings were fine although mainly circular scribbles with no clear definition, typical of children of this age group. The next day two pet rabbits, Toffee and Treacle, were brought into the nursery. The rabbits were introduced to the children at circle time and a discussion began about their food, what they liked doing, where they lived etc. The children were allowed to handle the rabbits as much as they liked. (Fortunately the rabbits were two extremely laid-back pets that were very used to being handled!)

Later in the day at small-group time the children began to draw pictures of Toffee and Treacle, the resulting pictures were really amazing. These 2–3-year-olds were drawing oval bodies with legs, pointy ears, whiskers and fluffy tails! This was an awakening moment for staff to the power of active learning and the High/Scope approach for young children.

‘Key developmental indicators’, in the centre of the wheel, illustrate what children of all ages and abilities can do and how they learn from and make sense of the world around them. These indicators are what High/Scope practitioners use to record their observations of children at work and are grouped into five categories: Approaches to learning, Language, Literacy and communication, Social and emotional development, Physical development, Health and well-being and Arts and science. Arts and science is subdivided into mathematics, science and technology, social studies and the arts.

The indicators are seen as the building blocks of thinking and reasoning at each stage of development.

Adult/child interaction

The adults working with children provide the safe environment essential for active learning to take place. In a High/Scope setting, using a process of shared control, adults and children work together in mutual respect, focusing on the children’s strengths with a balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. Adults are seen as supporters of children’s learning and fully engage with children in ‘their’ world. Practitioners have spent many times in the ‘home’ area, for example being the ‘baby’ or going to the ‘hairdressers’ and having their hair washed, dried, brushed and then done with ribbons and clips. For practitioners with very short hair that’s no mean feat for the creative children we work with!

Practitioners in the High/Scope setting use encouragement rather than praise with the young children they work with. They believe comments specific to the child’s actions, for example ‘you used the red bricks to build your wall’ rather than ‘well done you’ve made a good job of that’ allows a child to feel good about their achievements. Studies show that

praise ... invites comparison and competition and increases the child's dependence on adults. Encouragement however, puts children in control and makes them evaluators of their own work.

(Tomkins 1991, in Hohmann and Weikart 2002: 242)

In a High/Scope setting conflict is seen as another learning opportunity. Adults and children use a problem-solving approach to support their understanding of the issues; it also helps adults to see children as problem solvers not problems to be solved. High/Scope practitioners follow the 'six steps to conflict resolution' in their work with children which are laid out below.

1. Approach the situation calmly

Watch what is going on and try to be positive. Keep the voice at normal conversational level and use facial expression to show displeasure. Sit or kneel at the children's level and reach out to the upset child allowing them to come to you.

2. Recognise the children's feelings

'You look sad, Joe, and you sound angry, Sam.'

3. Gather information and restate the problem

Listen to both children and ask questions to help everyone understand the issue. 'So you had the ball, Joe, and Sam, you would like to play with it too?'

4. Ask for ideas/solutions

'What can we do about this?' Support and encourage the children to talk to each other. 'We could find another ball.'

5. Retell any suggested solutions

Accept the children's suggested solution. 'So you're going to find another ball.'

6. Support children to act on their decision

Give encouragement to the children as they manage their problem and stay close to clarify the decisions made if necessary.