

The Creative Arts in Early Childhood Teacher Education as a Site of Resistance to Neoliberalism

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

This chapter will examine the claim that early childhood pedagogy is structured by neoliberal political and social normativity, where the processes of creative exploration are secondary to an ultimately arbitrary and pre-determined “outcome”. An “outcomes-focussed” approach to early childhood arts pedagogy is incompatible with the engagement necessary for early childhood teachers to meaningfully co-create with children. However, despite neoliberalism’s hegemony— which today is being contested by often alarming reactionary tendencies—we can find instances of play-based and process-focussed approaches that inform our early childhood education courses. Neoliberalism as a theoretical framework is inimical to transformative teaching approaches, and a tension emerges between early childhood arts pedagogy and teacher preparation within the neoliberal university. Early childhood arts pedagogy, therefore, can potentially produce sites of resistance to neoliberal social and political structures. The challenges of teaching processual creativity to preservice teachers within a university setting that is itself structured by neoliberal norms will be considered, in conjunction with a discussion of the epistemic possibilities that emerge when neoliberalism’s “economization of heretofore non-economic domains” (Brown, *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism’s stealth revolution*, Zone Books, 2015, p. 31) can be undone. Ultimately, we will argue that early childhood arts pedagogies can open spaces and places that are sites of resistance to neoliberal norms, despite early childhood education’s imbrication with institutions structured by neoliberalism. © The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2024.