

Power and resistance in early childhood education: From dominant discourse to democratic experimentalism ^[1]

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Abstract

The field of early childhood education is increasingly dominated by a strongly positivistic and regulatory discourse, the story of quality and high returns, which has spread from its local origins in the favourable environment provided by a global regime of neoliberalism. But though dominant, this is not the only discourse in early childhood education, there are alternatives that are varied, vibrant and vocal; not silenced but readily heard by those who listen and forming a resistance movement. The article argues that this movement needs to confront a number of questions. Do its members want to influence and shape policy and practice? If so, what might a transformed and commensurate policy and practice look like? What are the possibilities that such transformation might be achieved, especially given the apparent unassailability of the current dominant discourse, and the force of the power relations that have enabled this discourse, local in origin and parochial in outlook, to aspire to global hegemony? And if such transformation were to occur, is it possible to avoid simply replacing one dominant discourse with another? Some partial and provisional answers are offered to these questions.

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