

Neoliberalism and early childhood^[1]

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ABSTRACT

Over 30 years ago, Freire warned of the dangers of neoliberalism and Chomsky today sees this as the greatest threat to democracy. Education is particularly targeted by the neoliberal state because potentially, as educators, we can teach children to think critically, and as adults, critical thinkers are positioned as problems, not resources. Neoliberalism has a devastating impact on the early childhood sector with its focus on standardisation, push-down curriculum and its positioning of children as investments for future economic productivity. Conversely, the growing push for professionalisation of early childhood creates demands for discretionary decision-making that is in tension with the top-down compliance requirements of neoliberalism. In this paper, I present the ways in which neoliberalism impacts the early childhood sector, and call for early childhood professionals to engage in active resistance. Active resistance can take different forms and I discuss some of these. As educators, we have an obligation to both think and act critically and fight for a world where democracy flourishes and where all children have equal opportunities to participate, to shine and to be happy; thus, I argue we have a responsibility to resist the key impacts of neoliberalism.

Region: Australia and New Zealand^[3]

Tags: early childhood education and care^[4]

professionalization^[5]

neo-liberal^[6]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/17/10/neoliberalism-and-early-childhood> [2]

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<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/professionalization> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/neo-liberal>