

Beginning to untangle the strange coupling of power within a neoliberal early education context ^[1]

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Abstract

Policy-makers across the globe continue to promote access to early education pro-grammes as a means to improve children 's readiness for school. Many of their reforms are rooted in a neoliberal conception of governance that frames policy solutions through economic rather than democratic terms. Such policies foster an image of the successful learner as one who becomes an earner and consumer rather than an active member of the larger democratic society. This shift in the conception of publicly supported early education affects teachers of young children in multiple ways. This article examines how a sample of early educators in the USA responded to a set of neoliberal reforms in their pre-kindergarten teaching context. Examining their responses, which ultimately mimicked their policy-makers ' neoliberal reforms, reveals the subtlety of these policies in overtaking their attempts to resist them. It also illuminates the challenges they and other early educators face as policy-makers ' neoliberal policies continue to alter the purpose and direction of early childhood. Finally, it ends by considering the ways in which early educators working in similar contexts might respond to and navigate such reforms.

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