

A Collaborative, Arts-Informed Action Research Investigation of Child-Led Assessment

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Abstract : Assessment is a burning topic in education policy and practice due to measurement-driven neoliberal agendas of quality and standardisation of assessment practice through high stakes standardised testing systems that are now influencing early childhood education. This paper presents a collaborative, arts-informed action research project which places children at the centre of their learning, with assessment as an integral part of play-based learning processes. It aims to challenge traditional approaches to assessment that are often teacher-led and decontextualised from the processes of learning through exploring approaches where children's voices are central, and their creative arts expressions are used to assess learning and development. The theoretical framework draws on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Freire's critical pedagogy, which indicate the importance of socially constructed reality where knowledge is the result of collaboration between children and adults. This reality perceives children as competent agents of their own learning processes. An interpretive-constructivist and critical-transformative paradigm underpin collaborative action research in a three to five-year-old setting, where creative methods like storytelling, play, drama, drawing are used to assess children's learning. As data collection and analysis are still in process, this paper will present the methodology and some data vignettes, with the aim of stimulating discussion about innovation in assessment and contribution of the collaborative enquiry in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care.

Keywords : assessment for learning, creative methodologies, collaborative action research, early childhood education and care

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