Manifestations of Neoliberalism in Child Care Policy in Ontario and its Implications for Children’s Rights

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Abstract

Neoliberalism is a multi-faceted phenomenon that is embedded in Canada, Ontario, our province’s child care system, and child care policy documents on a global scale. Although neoliberalism has been shown to shape child care policy globally, specific research in an Ontarian context is scant. This paper will address this gap in the literature by offering a critical discourse analysis of Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework, and by discussing ways in which the neoliberal discourses identified in this document uphold or infringe on the rights of children as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It will be put forth that the neoliberal underpinnings of this policy document advance a “children as becoming adults discourse,” and an “economic reductionist discourse”, and that these dominant discourses infringe on Article 12 and Article 3 of the convention, respectively.

Keywords: neoliberalism, child care, public policy, children’s rights, Ontario