INTENTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES OF EDUCATORS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE THOUGHT PROCESSES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITHIN AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES

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Author’s Declaration

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, NOVA, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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INTENTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES OF EDUCATORS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE THOUGHT PROCESSES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITHIN AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES.

Abstract

This thesis presents an in-depth investigation of the intentional teaching strategies of educators as they provided provocations for creative thinking in four-to-six-year-old children. This qualitative research draws from constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz 2006) within context dependant case study analysis as a methodology to analyse and interpret rich data about two phenomena: ‘intentional teaching’ and ‘creative thinking’.

The relationship of intentionally teaching young children and the development of creative thought processes of young children is a new area for investigation; one that requires conversations around what is currently understood. This study embraces the unity of social interactions in which new understandings are formed. This research was developed within a constructivist paradigm emphasising description, analysis and the co-construction of interpretations together with six educators and fifty-seven children from three participating early childhood centres.

This research examines the role of the educator as an intentional teacher within Australian early learning environments and investigates the relationship of this role to children’s developing creativity. Theoretically informed by Vygotsky’s sociocultural constructivist approach (1930, 1978) and neo-Vygotskian theories on creativity (John-Steiner & Moran, 2012), this study explores the creative thought processes of children through play, meaning-making and imagination. Evidence from this research suggests that the role of the educator is pivotal in assisting children in the development of innovative solutions and ideas within social learning contexts.

This thesis presents an opportunity to examine previously unexplored territory in early childhood education. One significant implication of this study is its potential to assist educators in the recognition and implementation of specific identified strategies for intentional teaching as part of their pedagogical practices. This
study concludes by contributing further understandings for the role of the intentional teacher in supporting the development of creative thinking in young children as part of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) within Australian contexts.
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