**Governance, Accountability and the ‘Datafication’ of Early Years Education in England**

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**Abstract**

In this paper we attempt to respond to Selwyn’s call to ‘make visible the flow and circulation of data’ (2015a, 76) through analysing the ‘datafication’ (Lingard, 2013) of the early years education sector in England (children aged 2-5). The concept of ‘datafication’ is used to understand the processes and impacts of burgeoning data-based governance and accountability regimes. This analysis builds upon early childhood researchers such as Osgood (2010, 2012), Moss (2014) and Urban (2015) influenced by Foucault and others, who have noted the ways in which the surveillance and performative culture of accountability both affirms, legitimates and seduces the early years through discourses of ‘quality’ whilst increasingly regulating and governing the early years. Using data from three research sites (a Children’s Centre, a Primary school and a combined Nursery School and Children’s Centre) as well as an interview with a Local Authority Early Years Advisor, we examine how comparative data-based accountability regimes are increasingly central in technologies of self-governance (Fenwick et al 2014). We argue that the planned tracking of children’s performance from Baseline testing (DfE, 2014) at four years old to eleven years old may further govern and constrain early years professionalism as young children are reconfigured as ‘miniature centres of calculation’ (Williamson, 2014a; 12).

Keywords, Data, early years, accountability, governance.