

Becoming Caring Professionals in Daycare Practice

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Poster presentation

Contemporary research on care in pedagogical practice has primarily focused on how care professionals and students conceptualize the notion of professional care. However, little is known about how students in the Danish bachelor's programme in social education perceive and enact care within daycare settings. Moreover, Reflective Practice-based Learning (RPL) emphasizes that "understanding" alone is insufficient, as knowledge development necessarily involves experience, reflection, and action (Horn et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study asks: How do social education students conceptualize and enact care in daycare practice, and how are their perspectives shaped by experiential learning and educational policy?

Using discourse analysis, the study frames care as a professional practice-in-the-making, highlighting how aspiring pedagogues engage with care through experience, reflection, and action in everyday daycare settings.

The project draws on Wahlgren et al.'s (2002) conceptualization of experience as a dimension of meaning in the learning process, while situating the individual within a broader social and institutional context. Methodologically, the study applies a qualitative design that combines experiential learning theory with discursive policy analysis. In particular, Bacchi's (2009) What's the Problem Represented to Be? (WPR) approach is employed to analyse how policies represent and regulate professional care, thereby shaping pedagogical practice and the educational framework.

The empirical material consists of narratives generated from eight bachelor's students in social education. All participants were selected

based on their practical experience, having completed two six-month daycare placements, and are due to graduate within five months. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The analysis draws on the WPR approach in combination with Højgaard & Søndergaard's (2015) concept of subjectivation. From the narratives, three central themes were identified: the good professional pedagogue, care as implicit, and the valued/appreciated pedagogue.

Preliminary findings suggest that discursive constructions and subjectification processes shape how students perceive and perform care in daycare practice. These findings are discussed in relation to RPL, emphasizing the role of policy in guiding students' actions and learning processes. Furthermore, the students' narratives provide a concrete written framework for connecting experience, reflection, and action. Finally, the cases illustrate how appropriate disruptions may serve as a foundation for further exploration in future educational contexts.

Keywords

Care, education, policy, WPR approach, daycare students' perspective, RPL

References

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