

(Un)recognised Emotional Labour and the Early Childhood Education and Care Worker in England

Eva Mikuska

Abstract:

The current English government favours evidence-based knowledge and technocratic accountability to work with 0 to 5 years old children. The emotional aspect of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) work, and emotional labor has been taken for granted as part of the nursery workers role. As a result emotional labour have become increasingly complex and sometimes unrecognised. In this presentation I intend to highlight the importance of recognising a more relational, connected, and embodied ways to work with young children. To address this, I engage with qualitative data gathered from twenty-four experienced nursery workers. Employing poststructuralist theory, data was analysed thematically, highlighting the relationship between government policies and dominant discourses with a particular focus on how policies impact, and shape the nursery work. It is argued that emotional labour is in the centre of the nursery work as it is connected and embedded in everyday practice with children and their families. The analysis allows us to reconsider evidence-based knowledge and practices in ECEC field, which challenge existing Cartesian dualistic thinking that separates “care” and “education.”