A critique of the discursive landscape: Challenging the invisibility of early childhood educators' well-being [1]

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Source: Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood
Format: Article
Publication Date: 1 Jun 2020

AVAILABILITY
Access online [2]

Abstract

Children's well-being has received extensive research attention and has a central role in early childhood policy and curricular guidelines. However, the well-being of early childhood educators has received fragmentary research attention and is unacknowledged in policy and curricular documents. Given the seemingly self-evident links between educators' well-being and positive experiences and outcomes for children, why is educators' well-being invisible within the discursive landscape of early childhood education and care? In this article, the authors offer explanations for this invisibility by identifying and critiquing a number of discourses that have shaped, and continue to shape, early childhood education and educators' positions within it. They use Foucault's idea of dividing practices to demonstrate how these discourses have formed regimes – and, ultimately, a discursive landscape – that make the issue of educators' well-being invisible. The authors then begin the work of challenging this discursive landscape by using theoretical resources from Deleuze and Guattari, and Tronto, to argue for placing care, and a logic of 'and', at the centre of supports for educators' well-being. They offer examples and questions to prompt ongoing critique and action.

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