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DISCOURSES OF TEACHING IN SELECTED CHILDCARE SETTINGS

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**Lesley Robinson
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Abstract

Teachers who work fulltime in community-based childcare settings are responsible for the care and education of children who range in age from babies to children aged 5 years of age. Teachers working in this capacity commonly care for children for extended periods of time, acting ‘in loco parentis’ as they respond to children throughout the day. Teachers who work in such settings experience their work within a particular working reality. They tend to have shorter holidays, staggered breaks and longer face to face hours with children than others who work with young children in early childhood education. Furthermore, recent moves to professionalize the sector have created increased accountability for all teachers in early childhood education, including those who work in childcare.

The present study interviewed 6 teachers who work in community-based settings. Teachers were asked to talk at length about their work. They were encouraged to communicate what their work was like and how they experienced it. They were asked to describe in detail an actual day in their work and to recount particular stories that epitomized their views and their experiences.

The interview transcripts were then analysed to make explicit how teachers understood and made meaning in their work. In-depth analysis of the interviews revealed eight discourses that were significant in the teachers’ work. These were: a normative mother care discourse, a child-centred discourse, a professional discourse, a team-player discourse, a manager of the day, people and environment discourse, a child-in-context discourse and a forum for care discourse. The particular nature of the discourses that were identified threw light on the work of teachers and the experiences that the teachers consequently had.

The discourses were analysed in relation to the current literature and in relation to the material realities of the teachers’ work. Certain world-views were seen to be opened up to the teachers from their positions within discourses. The positions that teachers took up in the various discourses were explored in regard to the kinds of relationships that

teachers made with children and with parents/whānau and in regard to care of their own self.

The study concludes by advocating for increased awareness of the discourses that constitute the work. It is important that teachers understand how certain subject positions are available to them in particular discourses and how these subject positions offer a particular view of the world. Also, as teachers take up positions, certain ways of being with children and with parents open up, and other ways of being with children and parents/whānau close down.

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