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Discourses of work by Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care practitioners

This article analyses the discourses Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) professionals produce concerning their work. Over the past few decades, the terms and conditions of Finnish ECEC work have changed significantly. However, the number of work-related studies on ECEC is relatively small. The data of this study were collected via the focus-group discussions of ECEC professionals, and they are analysed discursively. The results of the study show that gender-based values and assumptions have a significant role in the professionals' talk. Furthermore, organizational productivity and efficiency appears to be the prevailing discourse. Moreover, pedagogically oriented discourse seems to be located within individual working communities. The features of productivity and pedagogy in the discourse create a tension that is expressed as feelings of inadequacy and haste in work. The findings imply the need for further discussions on actualizing pedagogical work and pedagogical aims in Finnish ECEC services.