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Discussions on the positions of 'experts by experience' in substance abuse and mental health work

This study focuses on the developing positions of 'experts by experience' in substance abuse and mental health work. The research questions are: 1) What kind of positions for experts by experience as paid employees will develop in mental health work? 2) What are the discussions on the positions like? The theoretical framework is discursive profession research and my perspective concentrates on the construction and questioning of professional qualifications. The research data consists of three focus group discussions. The analysis was content orientated and proceeded from the reduction of observations to classification. First, I observed the meanings given to developing positions of experts by experience. Then, I categorised meanings representing the development of positions and discussions about them. The results are presented in three classes: indecisive, hierarchical, and creative positions. The positions are built by searching and experimenting. This study shows that the positions of experts by experience in substance abuse and mental health work are strengthening.