

Paradoxical Health Education': Learning about Health in Kenyan Teacher Training Colleges

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Abstract

This paper suggests the term 'paradoxical' to understand how health education (HE) is carried out and experienced as contradictory and inconsistent by student-teachers who learn about health in Kenyan teacher training colleges (TTC). The claim is that students, apart from formal HE lessons, also learn about health in non-curricular HE, which influences their actions in tangible ways. Bourdieu, medical anthropology and critical educational theory were used to understand processes of cultural negotiation, the production of HE discourses and how learning appears to be a mix of moralities and action competence. This long-term fieldwork used ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews and focus-group discussions conducted in three TTCs in Central and Eastern Kenya. The study concludes that regardless of institutional HE norms, student-teachers develop critical awareness and action competencies, learning to deal with health in more active, concrete and practical ways than those conveyed in HE lessons.

Keywords: health education; teacher education; 'paradoxical health education'; Kenya

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