

Abstract

This thesis is an educational ethnography, focusing upon the study life of nursing students and the formative processes that these students undergo. It concerns the processes involved in becoming educated and formed as a nurse, as well as late-modern versions of the classic conflict arising between the scholastic and practical aspects inherent within this kind of vocational education. The thesis is based on fieldwork within a nursing education programme in Aarhus, which took place between 2011 and 2013.

The thesis reveals how nursing students - through strategies of opting out and of separation - try to handle an educational programme dominated by many tasks and expectations of 'high speed', *both* in the clinic *and* in the classroom. These frequent contextual shifts amplify the students' experiences of pressure, and the analysis reveals how their study strategies offer a response to the 'bustle of tasks'. This response involves separating, deselecting and solving tasks one-by-one, by following a logic of necessity. The thesis subsequently reveals how personal relations become crucial for the individual's course of study. Scholastically, this primarily involves relations with fellow students, while in the clinical context it is the 'meeting with the patient.' By analytically maintaining a perception of the course of study as a formative educational journey, the thesis shows how, in particular, the meeting with the patient is central to 'decisive moments of learning' and the process of transformation. On the students' entry into the profession, the analysis shows that it is primarily taking responsibility for their *own* patients that challenges and overwhelms the newly graduated nurses. Their study strategies do not stretch to the demands of professional practice and are periodically transformed into survival techniques, to cope with the transfer of responsibility involved in this transition. The last milestone of this formative educational journey is characterized by the newly graduated nurses fluctuating between a budding professional identity, and strategies capable of helping them to cope with conditions, the bustle of tasks and doubt - now concerning the adequacy of their competence in practice.