

Health Promotion as Multi-Level Meaning Construction: Professional Negotiations in School Practice

Zofia Hammerin

Department of Educational Science and Art, Mälardalens University, Västerås, Sweden

Abstract:

Health promotion is widely emphasised in educational policy and curriculum frameworks, yet its practical meaning in everyday school work remains less clearly articulated. This study explores how school professionals construct the meaning of health promotion in relation to teaching, learning, and collaborative school practice.

Grounded in symbolic interactionism and pragmatist philosophy, the study conceptualises health promotion as a socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through professional interaction and communicative practice. The study is based on reflexive thematic analysis of qualitative interview data from school professionals, including teachers, school nurses, and school leaders.

The analysis generated five themes illustrating how health promotion is constructed across different levels of school practice: (1) *The obscurity of the term health promotion as a site of meaning-making*, (2) *Health promotion as relational practice*, (3) *Health promotion as the production of safety*, (4) *Health promotion as isolated practical measures*, and (5) *Health promotion as collective professional responsibility*.

The findings demonstrate that health promotion is negotiated across interactional, environmental, and organisational dimensions of school practice. At the interactional level, health promotion is associated with pedagogical relationships characterised by warmth, presence, and professional boundary awareness. At the organisational level, it is framed as a shared professional responsibility requiring collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. However, the concept itself is often perceived as ambiguous, functioning as a flexible signifier that is continuously interpreted within professional discourse.

The study contributes to collaborative curriculum and teaching research by highlighting how health promotion is constructed as a pedagogical and organisational practice embedded in everyday school life. The findings have implications for teacher education and interdisciplinary school practice.