School as a Protection Factor. an Analysis of Achievements, Obstacles, Collaboration, and Identities in Senior High School Work with Students Who Use Alcohol and Drugs

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ABSTRACT

Ethnography is a research method in which the researcher (1) engages in a social environment for a long period of time, (2) conducts regular observations of how the participants in this environment behave, (3) listens to and participates in the conversation, (4) interviews informants about phenomena that cannot be observed directly and about which the ethnographer is unclear, (5) collects documentary sources related to this group, (6) develops an understanding of the group’s culture and of human behaviour in the context of this culture, and (7) formulates a detailed account of this environment (Bryman 2016). This study is inspired by ethnographic methodology, where researchers reside within the environments, situations, and interactions they want to learn about. By observing what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and collecting documents in the practice, the researcher can come to an understanding of the participants’ experiences. Adolescence is a unique period in which there is a high potential to influence and change both issues at school and drug abuse problems. However, it may require productive collaboration between professional in the social services and treatment centres and school staff. The environment at school can help create stability in a drug-abusing youths’ life, and the combination of education and treatment is a key factor necessary for these students to build independence. Much remains unknown about improving schooling for students with alcohol and drug problems and the factors involved should therefore be investigated. This study aims to identify and analyse (1) factors in practical and organizational work at senior high schools that are obstructive and
promotive to students with alcohol and drug problems; (2) the circumstances teachers and other professional actors in the Swedish school system need to promote the success of students with alcohol and drug problems; (3) implications of school attendance for inclusion, learning, and change in these youths; and (4) implications for the identity construction of these young people related to school situations. By examining the details of the work done by professionals, the results from this study will provide missing knowledge about how to improve schooling for young people with alcohol and drug problems and how this contributes to their inclusion and participation in society. Our hope is that the study will identify conditions and opportunities needed to support young people with alcohol and drug problems in senior high school. Additionally, the information obtained will be used to develop a model for improved collaboration between schools, social services, and various treatment services to improve graduation rates for young people in the target group. In this specific target group, studies are lacking that identify factors that promote or obstruct such cooperation.