

Compliance to Compassion: How COVID-19 Changed the Way Educators Used Social Media to Collaborate with Families

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Abstract : The COVID-19 global pandemic challenged our normative conceptualization of teaching across all age levels, requiring the transition to remote instruction, in some instances, literally overnight. Included in the rapidly changing education environment was the delivery of early childhood education. In Victoria, Australia, the capital city, Melbourne, became known as the most locked down city in the world. This presentation examines the ways educators used social media to collaborate with families before the COVID-19 pandemic and during the lockdown phase through the use of a Third Space conceptual framework and case study methodology. As a first step, the paper examines how social media may offer new opportunities for collaborative practice between educators and families. Second, the data is outlined and discussed with respect to collaborative practice and quality. Finally, a postscript then allows for insight into how educators' practice of using social media to collaborate with families has been impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Finally, the implications of the ways in which educators are using social media to collaborate with families are discussed. The use of social media in early-childhood education has the potential to provide a valuable platform for educators to connect with families and students. However, the use of social media by educators uncovered a dialogue of 'quality' and appeared to be dominated by evidence around compliance and attaining quality in a very specific, and perhaps narrow, way. The findings suggest a culture of compliance that is dominated by outcomes, standards and assessments and that this has changed the dynamics by which educators engage with families. Furthermore, findings highlighted the disparity between educators' and families' understanding of the intent of the collaborations themselves. This research was significant as it exposed the ways in which educators are engaging with social media, resulting in a discussion on the intent of collaborations, the questioning of imposed quality, and the notion that quality is measurable and exists in only one form.

Keywords : collaboration, compliance, early childhood, third space, pedagogy of caring, social media

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