


Chapter 7

Supporting Educators With Addiction: Intentional Learning Communities in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformative potential of Intentional Learning Communities (ILCs) in supporting educators facing addiction. By integrating psychometric tools like the Multidimensional Addiction Behaviour Scale (MABS), which evaluates psychological, biological, social and environmental factors, cognitive and behavioral patterns, and motivation and readiness for change, ILCs provide personalized support that enhances mental health and professional growth. The research underscores the urgent need to prioritize educator well-being within the educational ecosystem. ILCs create a structured, empathetic environment that fosters recovery, resilience, and better educational outcomes. The study calls for robust institutional support to ensure the successful integration of ILCs, highlighting their broader positive impact on students, schools, and the overall educational landscape. The findings advocate for holistic approaches to building a healthier, more inclusive educational environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's educational landscape, the role of higher education (HE) professionals has expanded far beyond the confines of the classroom. These individuals are not only tasked with imparting knowledge but also with shaping the futures of upcoming generations. However, while they invest in their students' education, concerns about their own wellbeing remain prevalent. The issue of addiction among higher educators is both widespread and complex (Walters, 1989), yet few studies have thoroughly examined this critical problem.

Substance abuse, in all its forms, can devastate lives and derail careers (Lynch & Eddie, 2022). It significantly impacts both the personal and professional spheres of those struggling to overcome it. Addiction permeates every aspect of a higher educator's life, affecting their mental and physical health, damaging personal relationships, and ultimately diminishing their effectiveness in the classroom (Pohl et al., 2021). Given the gravity of this issue, a comprehensive, long-term approach is necessary—one that extends beyond short-term interventions. 'Intentional Learning Communities' (ILCs) offer a potential solution, providing an innovative framework for addressing addiction. As observed by Xiao et al. (2007), ILCs differ from traditional service models by offering a holistic, goal-oriented environment that fosters healthy living and personal development.

This chapter critically examines the transformative potential of ILCs in addressing addiction among educators. It explores how ILCs can serve as safe, rehabilitative spaces for educators grappling with addiction, offering a path toward recovery and professional renewal.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the Intersection of Addiction and Education

The teaching profession within HE, which emphasizes shaping young minds, is often intertwined with the complex relationship between addiction and professional life. The noble mission of disseminating knowledge is tainted by the hidden struggles educators face as they grapple with addiction.

HE demands flexibility, creativity, and unwavering dedication, placing educators on the front lines, where they constantly battle stress and fatigue (Bosire et al., 2023; Turner & Garvis, 2023). The responsibilities of developing curricula, managing classrooms, assessing student work, and handling administrative tasks—marked by numerous evaluations, mid-semester examinations, and assignments—create fertile ground for emotional turmoil (Nwoko et al., 2023; Gilmour & Sandilos, 2023). Under

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