

HOME AND SCHOOL CO-OPERATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF AN ELEMENTARY TEACHER

Marjatta Siniharju

National Board of Education, PL 380, 00531 Helsinki, Finland

The aim of this study was to characterize the opinions of elementary school teachers about home-school co-operation and the ways in which the co-operation was put into practice and also, to derive different models of orientation from the attitudes of the teachers.

The target group of the study consisted of all first and second class elementary school teachers in Helsinki. The structured questionnaire including also open-ended questions was sent to a total of 364 teachers from 62 different schools, 325 of whom returned the inquiry (89%). The data were analysed with statistical methods, which included tests for validity and reliability.

Most commonly used forms of home-school co-operation were phone calls, letters, traditional ceremonies and parent teacher meetings of the whole school. Personal communication was regarded as the most important form. Parents' attitude towards home-school co-operation was considered to be positive, even though it was felt that initiative was seldom taken by parents. The teachers thought that knowledge concerning co-operation was acquired mostly through experience, and that rather little was learned during teacher training.

Factor analysis was used to derive different models of orientation from the attitudes of the teachers towards co-operation. The first model described an active and modern attitude in contrast to a conventional way of orientation. Another model revealed socially oriented, matter-of-fact-like and educational attitudes. Home-school co-operation was carried out at school, class or personal levels. Regression analysis was used to study how these models of orientation influenced the ways in which co-operation was put into practice. The three levels of co-operation were differentially explained by these models. As a whole, matter-of-fact-like and modern and active attitudes were best predictors of the ways in which co-operation was carried out. Surprisingly, social and educational attitudes had little or even negative effect on co-operation.

Further analysis concerning factors related to the valuation and practical forms of co-operation is in progress. Both individual and contextual variables will be used, with a special interest in the role of the school community.

NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hakaniemenkaru 2
00530 Helsinki
Tel + 358 0 774775
Fax: +358 0 77477335