

## **Attitudes towards Education**

A cross-cultural comparison of parents' attitudes in Finland, Italy and The Netherlands

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In western societies, there is an increasing trend towards child-centered teaching practices, based on a constructivist perspective.

The question we raise in our paper is about different ideas about education.

With respect to what good education is, people's attitudes can vary. Theoretically, a distinction can be made between content-oriented and student-oriented attitudes towards education.

In this study, we will focus on cultural differences between and within countries that can help to explain existing differences in attitudes towards education.

Research on effects of cultural differences on attitudes towards education in The Netherlands has shown social class and level of education to influence these attitudes (Denessen, 1999).

In 2001, attitudes towards education in Finland were assessed (Becks, 2001). Two research questions were addressed in this study: First, the data we have gathered in Finland were used to cross-validate existing culture differences between groups in the Netherlands, by comparing these differences with differences between groups in Finland. Second, the Finnish data were compared to the Dutch data to assess differences between the two countries. Based upon the theory of international culture differences of Hofstede, the hypothesis was tested (and partly confirmed) that culture differences exist between both countries.

In spring, 2003, data on attitudes towards education in Italy will be gathered. We will try to expand our knowledge of cultural differences within and between countries. We will focus on differences between cultural characteristics of societies and the extent to which there is a support for actual constructivism based educational changes.