

Authors/Autores: Denessen, Eddie (E.Denessen@pwo.ru.nl) and Bakker, Joep. Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Title/ Título: Schools' policies on parental involvement in multi-ethnic schools

Políticas escolares sobre la implicación de los padres en centros docentes multi-étnicos

Topic: Cultural, technological and multicultural aspects of school, family and community partnerships

Aspectos culturales, tecnológicos y multiculturales de las relaciones que se establecen entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

Presentation time/Día de presentación: Session in English. Friday 16, 12:15-1:45 p.m. Room 2, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes 16, 12:15-1:45 p.m. Sala 2, Tercer Piso

Abstract

Culture differences within parent communities are challenging for schools which aim at succeeding in their policy regarding parental involvement. Literature suggests that various groups of parents may differ in their attitudes towards education as well as the role they are supposed to play in stimulating their children's development (Denessen, Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2001; Driessen, 2001; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Especially migrant parents seem to possess strong performance oriented attitudes towards education. Also, they appear to expect schools to play the biggest part in their children's development (Lopez et al., 2001). Previous research, however, has also shown migrant parents to participate less in their children's schools (Lopez et al., 2001). In this study, we will explore the relation between schools' policies with respect to parental involvement and the actual involvement of autochthonous and migrant parents in the schools. The aim of this study was to identify indicators and conditions for effective parental involvement school policies. This study has been carried out at five elementary schools in the Netherlands. Interviews have been held with the principal of the school or the person who is responsible for the school's policy on parental involvement. Next to these interviews a selected group of parents have been interviewed about their attitudes on parental involvement and their evaluation of parental involvement activities at their children's school. The results of this study indicate that schools recognize difficulties in getting migrant parents involved in their school. Yet, the scope of schools' policies is quite limited. A lot of schools' activities with respect to parental involvement seem to depend on individual initiatives of enthusiast members of the school staff. Also, a structured approach to parental involvement is lacking. Schools receive very little help and guidance in formulating goals and visions on parental involvement. They mainly depend on their own evaluation of 'what works'. One of the 'good practices' identified at one particular school was a focus on key persons within the migrant communities. Using the community structure around the school as an organization principle for communicating with parents seems to be more fruitful than an individual approach. This particular school seemed to be more effective than the other schools in getting migrant parents involved. Although some differences between schools have been assessed, the parents of the various schools did not seem to differ in their evaluation of parental involvement activities. Some differences between autochthonous and migrant parents were found, which mainly supports previous findings: autochthonous parents seek more contact with the schools and participate more at school. On the other side, migrant parents seem to receive more information from the school and they have more contact with teachers than autochthonous parents have. In line with results of previous studies (Lopez et al., 2001), we also found migrant parents to have higher expectations of the school than autochthonous parents.