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Title/Título: Parents associations: What and whom are they for?

Las Asociaciones de Padres: Qué son y para quién?

Topic: Policies and actions to ensure effective and democratic co-operation and dialogue among social actors to promote home-school-community links

Políticas Educativas y Sociales que promueven una efectiva y democrática cooperación y diálogo entre los actores sociales para estimular las Relaciones entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

Presentation time/Día de presentación: Session in English. Friday 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Room 5, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes 16, 10:15-11:45 a.m. Sala 5, Tercer Piso

Abstract

In the 90's, I conducted an ethnographic study in three public elementary schools about school-family interaction (Silva, 2003). During those two years, the fieldwork led me to realize that *parents associations* (PAs) can be an important *social actor*, along with, for instance, teachers, students and parents themselves. As members of an organization, PA leaders tend to act on behalf of its particular interests. They become what Göran Ahrne (1994) terms *organizational centaurs*, i.e., they are part human, part organization. In other words, no matter what they do, they put in action a whole set of strategies that always keeps in sight the reproduction of their own organization. On the other hand, PAs are often faced as an important device for defending parents, i.e., they tend to be seen as if they automatically represent parents. Yet, the label "parents association" only tells us that it is composed of parents. In fact, it does not add any further information. Thus we confront a bias. My ethnographic research shows that different PAs develop, implicitly or explicitly, multiple purposes which may not take into account parents expectations and interests. Only having this in mind can we ensure effective and democratic co-operation and dialogue among social actors to promote home-school-community links.