Dutch parents’ and teachers’ positioning in their collaborating practices

Author

Geke Klapwijk

Affiliations

Doctorate student at the Open University, Educational Doctorate Programme, Milton Keynes, UK

Teacher Educator Master Educational Needs at University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (Hogeschool Utrecht), Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Contact email address

geke.klapwijk@hu.nl
Abstract

This paper presents a study that was designed to explore the positions that parents and teachers experience being assigned to and taking up in their collaborating practices, as well as their beliefs and expectations of positions they should be able to take up when working together. Positioning theory is a comprehensive framework for investigating how the relationship between parents and teachers is influenced by positioning practices, and provides a unique perspective on parent-teacher collaborative practices. The main research question is: To what extent are the reflections on positioning of parents and teachers in parent-teacher collaboration in Dutch primary schools compatible? The aim of this research is to identify how parents and teachers perceive their social identities and positions within the relationship they develop, to make sense of the meanings parents and teachers bring to their collaborative practices. To accomplish this, a combination of qualitative methods has been used to provide a complex and detailed understanding of these processes. Parents and teachers from five different Dutch primary schools received a short online questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions. In total, 367 parents and 80 teachers returned the questionnaire. Subsequently, three group interviews with teachers and three group interviews with parents were conducted. The data analysis reveals the importance of moral orders, agency, power and structures in the reflections of parents and teachers on positioning and pre-positioning practices. Parents and teachers report experiencing more or less power to influence the process, but also report acting consciously and having strong normative assumptions with regard to each other’s roles. In addition, the structures that are developed, such as school agreements and the way contact and communication practices are implemented, seem to influence the positions of parents and teachers. Finally, some striking differences between parents’ and teachers’ reports regarding power issues and agency are observed.

Key words

positioning theory – moral order – agency – power – parent-teacher relationship

References


