Digital channels in teacher-parent communication: The case of Estonia

# Details

## Year

2015

## Issued

2015

## Language

English

## Volume

11

## Issue

3

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Palts K.;Kalmus V.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology

## Topics

Social mediation

## Sample

The empirical basis is 12 focus group interviews conducted in 2012 in six Estonian schools with teachers (n=44) and parents (n=39).

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Educators About

Professional development

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the attitudes of Estonian primary school teachers and parents regarding the role of teacher-parent digital communication in socialising the child and in the child’s academic progress, their communication channel preferences, and related experiences and opinions. The main starting points are Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems’ theory and Epstein’s (2011) theory of overlapping spheres of influence. The empirical basis is 12 focus group interviews conducted in 2012 in six Estonian schools with teachers (n=44) and parents (n=39). The focus groups indicated the consensus among teachers and parents regarding the necessity of overlapping interests and spheres of influence of home and school for the development of the child. The research highlights differences in channel preferences by types of school and between teachers and parents of the same school, indicating the need to find ways to harmonise communication conventions. In addition to the opportunities and benefits of written digital interaction, digital channels incur problems and communication failures (e.g. misunderstandings, digital footprint, and insufficient digital competence).

# Outcome

"The focus group interviews revealed that all teachers and parents who took part in the study considered communication, including digital communication, between school and home to be important, and assessed its possible impact on a child’s socialisation and academic progress to be positive." (Palts Kalmus, 2015, p. 75). "The analysis of communication channel preferences revealed that teachers and parents of different types of school had somewhat different channel preferences." (Palts Kalmus, 2015, p. 76). "Parents and teachers appreciate the opportunity of interaction, which does not require the parent’s physical presence at school; our focus group discussions, however, revealed that many parents preferred to meet with teachers face-to-face to solve problematic issues quickly without mediated communication." (Palts Kalmus, 2015, p. 76). "As a general conclusion we stress that despite the extensive opportunities and advantages of written digital communication, enthusiastically shared by many teachers and parents in our study, significant problems and communication barriers involved in using digital channels exist, some of which are related to uneven digital competence and some to prejudiced attitudes and fears." (Palts Kalmus, 2015, p. 77).