

Summary

Tzuo et al. (2015)'s *Teachers' versus parents' perceptions of professionalism of early childhood teachers: A mixed methods study* investigates the differences in how teachers and parents view the various characteristics of professionalism of early childhood teachers (PECT). As such differences form obstacles for teacher-parent relationships, the study seeks to identify the gaps in these perceptions through a mixed-method research methodology and subsequently recommend how to reach coherent views on PECT and foster a stronger school-home partnership.

Both a quantitative five-point scale questionnaire and qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted. Of 219 parents and early childhood teachers from multiple preschool settings, 8 parents and 5 teachers participated in the interviews while 100 parents and 106 teachers completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire required participants to rate the frequency of using a particular characteristic out of 11 given characteristics to perceive PECT. The characteristics that conceptualise PECT in this study are years of teaching, professional development, knowledge of child development, knowledge of diversity among families, knowledge of assessing children, skills of interacting with children, skills of involving parents, capacity to develop curriculum, valuing of ethics, advocacy for children and understanding a child's needs. An analysis of the interviews was also used to validate the findings through topic, thematic and analytic coding.

Results revealed a major difference in how teachers' and parents' perceived PECT respectively. Teachers saw PECT as two levels of capacities, 'fundamental pedagogical capacities' and 'accumulates classroom child studies'. Parents, however, viewed PECT in a single dimension which reflects a limited understanding of PECT. Both parties were also found to have varied perceptions on the importance of several PECT characteristics. In comparison to teachers, parents deemed the following four factors as less important: understanding a child's needs, being able to create good relations with children, professional development and valuing of ethics.

The researchers first proposed differentiating between the two dimensions of PECT, by providing greater recognition independently to the two levels of capacities. This can be achieved through the support of early childhood teachers in pursuing professional development and instilling 'child study' in professional development programmes. Another suggestion put forward was the promotion of parents' recognition of the four characteristics of PECT that have been identified earlier as less important by parents. These factors can be introduced to parents as child centred, vital in supporting the children's wellbeing and education, and can be shared during teacher-parent conferences.

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