The Voices of Parents and Community Representatives

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Abstract

Focusing on parents and community representatives as voices of adult authority, this paper highlights that while teachers tend to adhere to the abstract endorsed ideal of equality in schooling, by discussing their experiences of teaching in ethnically heterogeneous schools, parents and community workers tended to voice a more grounded version of everyday social realities.
Parents’ Voices

- Structural discrimination was understood through physical and neighbourhood location;
- Disparities in how minority ethnic parents framed their children’s school success and achievement in school;
- A sense of cultural divide and conflict existing between home and school.
“When the school asks for money, however they should not do this, they make you feel ashamed in front of other parents if you are not able paying” (Roma mother, Romania)
“I just write on the letter ‘too hard, my child cannot do this’. (...) Do you think I can read or write? Do you think I can do miracles? I am only barely starting myself do you know what I mean? I am not confident, I can do it but I am not confident, you need more confidence.”

(England: Traveller mother)
Community Representatives

- Covered a breadth of people working in different roles reflecting each country’s unique way of managing diversity;
- Holistic picture of the factors impinging on students’ (non) participation in education;
- More likely to recognise ethnic inequalities and institutional and individual discriminatory practices than teachers;
- White middle class norms and with it an uncomfortable silence around the subject of ‘ethnicity’.
Bibliography


