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Prepare teachers with the competencies needed for home-school cooperation – a literature review

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Previous research reveals the importance of teachers’ attitudes and initiatives in the work of home school collaboration (Erikson, 2009). It is also argued that there are barriers to home-school cooperation due to shortcomings in teachers’ invitations to families and strategies for involving parents in education (Hasey, 2005). These indicate a correlation between teachers’ competencies and the outcomes of home-school cooperation. This paper aims to provide a literature review on teachers’ competencies demanded for implementing and improving home-school cooperation, to identify the knowledge gaps in this field, and to discuss the policy and practical implications for teacher preparation. The research questions are: a) What teachers’ competences are regarded as crucial for home-school cooperation? B) Have teachers the competencies needed for home-school cooperation? C) How can teacher education prepare teachers with the competences needed for home-school cooperation? 23 educational research articles published during last 10 years (2007-2017) are selected through a systematical search of scholarly peer-reviewed full texts (Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wensström, 2013) on two online databases “Academic Search Elite” and “Education Resources Information Center” (Eric), as well as a thematically higher relevant research journal International Journal about Parents in Education. The articles are analyzed by using qualitative data analysis computer software Nvivo. The analysis of data is based on the conceptual model of “overlapping spheres” of influence of family, school and community by Epstein (2010), and teachers’ collective and individual competencies necessary for parental involvement identified by Westergård (2013). The preliminary results support the assumption of teacher competences that imply a wider and systemic view of teacher professionalism on multiple levels – the individual, the school, the local community, and professional networks (OECD, 2009). Within the framework of relational, communication and context competence (Westergård, 2013), teachers’ competencies such as teacher leadership, capacity to change, positive and trust relationships with parents, interpersonal capacity, digital competence, reflectiveness and culturally sensitiveness are highlighted. The results also show a general picture of deficiencies in teachers’ competencies related to cooperation with parents. These results indicate the need of improving teacher education with more attention to the topic and the manner in which this topic is being addressed in the program. Moreover, home-school cooperation should not be isolated subject in teacher training but should be embedded in general conceptions about teaching and learning and teacher identity throughout teacher training program. This literature review is expected to deal with the knowledge gaps within the research field in the Nordic context.