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**Parental and teacher perceptions of appropriate
social and cognitive guidance of high school students,
embedded in their cultural background**

Master Thesis Population Studies

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to explore the perceptions of both teachers and parents from different cultural backgrounds on the guidance of a student during his or her social and cognitive development, in the context of a Dutch Highschool. This study draws on previous research in the field of education, educational achievement and cultural differences in involvement and expectations. To be able to understand contradictions between teachers and parents a theoretical framework was used in which both cultural backgrounds and human values have been applied, namely D'Andrade's theory of Cultural Shema's and Schwartz' theory of Basic Human Values. To gain insight in the perspective of participants a qualitative research method is applied. Five parents and five teachers participated in in-depth-interviews. From the data six themes could be identified: 1) Expectations, 2) Communication, 3) Cultural differences, 4) Social development, 5) Cognitive development, and 6) Triangular relationship. Altogether the data revealed that the perceptions of parents and teachers correspond concerning the importance of social as well as cognitive development and the importance of communication among parents and teachers. Contradictions in perceptions occur concerning the focus on academic results and the expectations parents and teachers have of the student and one another. Themes on which parents and teachers have contradictory perceptions could find their origin in cultural backgrounds. When parents and teachers share their perception it cannot be concluded that these are embedded in their cultural background.

Keywords

Education, expectations, social development, cognitive development, cultural differences, communication, qualitative study

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Over the past decades cultural diversity in the Netherlands has increased. Since the beginning of the century, the percentage of Dutch inhabitants with a migration background increased from 17.5% to 23.1% in 2018 (CBS, 2018). Reasons why immigrants with diverse cultural backgrounds move and settle in the Netherlands vary. They might expect an increase of income, political freedom or reinforce social or family ties (Helms & Leblang, 2019). This change of demographical composition in the country has its effects on different segments of society. Immigrants may come from different societies, speak a different language, follow different cultural practices or may be visibly different (Castles, 2000). People who chose, or are forced, to migrate might do so individually, or they bring along their partner or family. In case of family migration, the move does not only concern the parent(s) who initiate(s) the move, but it concerns the whole family, including children. Considering these children need education in the receiving country, they bring cultural differences to class. In the context of high schools the differences migrants have are brought together in their groups of students. Particularly, Dutch classrooms filled with students having the same cultural backgrounds become rare (CBS, 2019). Teachers not only have to cope with cultural differences students bring to class, but also with the different cultural backgrounds of parents. This is especially accurate for teachers who also fulfil the role of mentor. This means that they are the first person at school for students and parents to contact. Each high school class has their own mentor. In the Netherlands children start high school around the age of 12. Depending on the level of education they attend, they will remain in high school for four, five or six years. During these years, students may start in classes containing a mixture of students on different levels, but after two or three years all groups are homogeneous based on educational level.

In high school students go through social and a cognitive development. In academic literature there is an unambiguous definition of social development. Research on social development focuses on the relationships among students and the relationships between students and teachers (Jong et. al., 2003). The development of a students' cognition or intelligence consists of the capabilities through which a student can gain, process and remember new knowledge and skills (Wal & Wilde, 2011).

Building on the fact that teachers guide students through their social and cognitive development in high school, particularly Dutch teachers recognise the positive effect of parental involvement on educational achievement (Van den Berg & Reekum, 2011). In this way, an interaction exists between teachers and parents. Although, there is no guarantee parents recognise these positive effects as well. Especially when both teachers and parents have a different frame of reference based on their cultural background and cultural framework. Neither can be assumed that parents and teachers have the same view on how

to achieve certain positive effects in the development of students. This might be caused by a different frame of reference based on their cultural background and cultural framework.

1.2 Objective and research questions

The objective of this research is to explore the perceptions both teachers and parents from different cultural backgrounds face, while guiding a student during his or her social and cognitive development, in the context of a Dutch Highschool. Do parents and teachers have the same point of view on how the student should be guided and who should be responsible? By providing insight in the expectation teachers and parents have concerning social and cognitive development, and by exploring the origin of these expectations, this research contributes to the existing literature. Furthermore, this research holds a more practical value. In particular, it contributes to the wellbeing of students, during their social and cognitive development in the context of Dutch high schools, as well as the professionalism of teachers in their interaction with parents.

Given the results of previous research and the objective of the present research, the following research questions are formulated:

Main question: How is the perception of appropriate social and cognitive guidance of high school students embedded in the cultural background of parents and teachers?

Sub-questions: 1. How do parents and teachers perceive appropriate social and cognitive guidance of high school students to be performed?

 2. How are parents' and teachers' values affected by their cultural background?

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Theory

2.1.1 Theory of cultural schemas

People communicate with one another constantly. The information people share originates from their personal frame of reference. This could differ from person to person and could be different between cultures. The one receiving the information processes and interprets it according to his or her personal frame of reference. This could be referred to as one's interpretive system (D'Andrade, 1992). In some cases it is helpful to be aware of one another's interpretive system. Especially in the case of people with a different cultural background as this enables both persons to be on the same page about the shared information. The interpretive system people have is also known as someone's schemas (D'Andrade, 1992). Schemas are a conceptual structure of gathered information. The different elements work together to process information we receive. Schemas are constructed by both learned and congenital structures that organise our knowledge. Sometimes, schemas fill in the blanks of information left unsaid. One assumes that the other person shares their schema and therefore fills in the missing's according to one's own schema (Strauss, C. & Quin, N., 1998). There are ways to unstick these assumptions. The concept of connectionism is good way to do so. It argues that schemas are "mental states but are shaped by the learner's specific life experiences and are sensitive to activity in a particular context" (Strauss, C. & Quin, N., 1998, p. 50). Therefore, in the present research the Cultural Schemas are viewed from this concept of connectionism.

The theory of cultural schemas organises the schemas in a hierarchical way: lower-level, middle-level and higher-level schemas. Due to this hierarchical organisation the theory assumes that the schemas could have a motivational force (de Haas, 2017; D'Andrade, 1992). The higher-level schemas provide a general interpretation of what is going on. In the context of the present study the higher-level schemas provide general interpretations on culturally based norms, values and experiences parents and teachers have. The middle-level schemas are based on constructs. In the context of the present study middle-level schemas are based on previous experiences of both parents and teachers, and on childhood experiences of parents specific. Lower-level schemas are based on daily activities and experiences. In the present study the lower-level schemas are determined by the current family's situation parents face, and the day-to-day experiences and events teachers face.

The outcome of these three different levels determine the expectations parents and teachers have with regard to high school student development. The three different levels are affected by the basic human values, which will be explained in the next paragraph.

2.1.2 Theory of basic human values

Human values are “desirable trans situational goals, varying in importance that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity” (Vauclair et. al., 2011). Not only do values characterize different groups, societies or individuals, but values are also used as an explanatory tool for attitudes and behaviours (Schwartz, 2012). Ten values can be distinguished which are recognized in all cultures; self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. Figure 1 visualises the relationships and contradictions of the ten values. Even though these values are usually universal within cultural groups, they can differ on an individual level. The present study focusses on the social and cognitive development of students. In the context of student guidance by parents and teachers three of the mentioned values are most relevant, namely: self-direction, achievement, and tradition. The other values are therefore not used in this study.



Figure 1 Model of relations among the ten motivational types of value (Schwartz, 2012)

Self-direction’s goal is to be able to have independent thought and action choosing. This value determines one’s willingness to change, self-expansion and growth (Schwartz, 2012). It provides the freedom to improve coping skills (Bandura, 1977). In the context of the present study this is a relevant value since people with a foreign background have to find ways to get used to the Dutch education system, or even have to adjust to it. Teachers constantly have to cope with changes and different students whom they have to work with.

Achievement values the emphasis of demonstrating competence according to cultural standards. It is part of one’s personal focus, rather than social focus, and is a determinant of how one expresses personal interests and characteristics (Schwartz, 2012). This value is constructed from four different components: attainment or importance, intrinsic value, utility or usefulness of the task, and cost (Wigfield & Eccles,

2000). According to Wigfield & Eccles (2000) the first component, attainment or importance, could be defined as the importance of doing well. The second component, intrinsic value, determines the enjoyment a person feels from executing a certain task. Utility implies how a task would fit in a person's individual plan for the future. Finally do costs entail how performing an activity could limit other activities or how much effort is needed to accomplish a certain activity. In the context of the present study the value of achievement plays an important role because the development of students, both the social and the cognitive development, is influenced by an interaction between the student and his/her parent(s) and between the student and the teachers. The four different components explained above, all influence choices the student, the parent(s) and the teachers make concerning the development of the student.

Tradition determines one's receptivity to expectations. This value is part of one's social focus, rather than one's personal focus (Schwartz, 2012). The practices, symbols, ideas and beliefs groups of people share embody their shared experiences. These values contribute to a group's solidarity and survival. A goal of tradition is to hold down oneself to the socially imposed expectations (Schwartz, 2012). This value is of importance in the present study since choices people make and ideas people have could be influenced by their tradition. Expectations parent(s) and/or teachers have with regard to high school student development might be affected by the traditions they had during their own upbringing.

2.2 Conceptual model

Based on the explanation of the two theory's used in the previous paragraphs, does figure 2 visualise the conceptual model used in the present study.

In the context of Dutch high schools are the expectations with regard to high school student development based one's cultural schemas. These schemas are influenced by the three basic human values most relevant for the present study; self-direction, achievement and tradition.

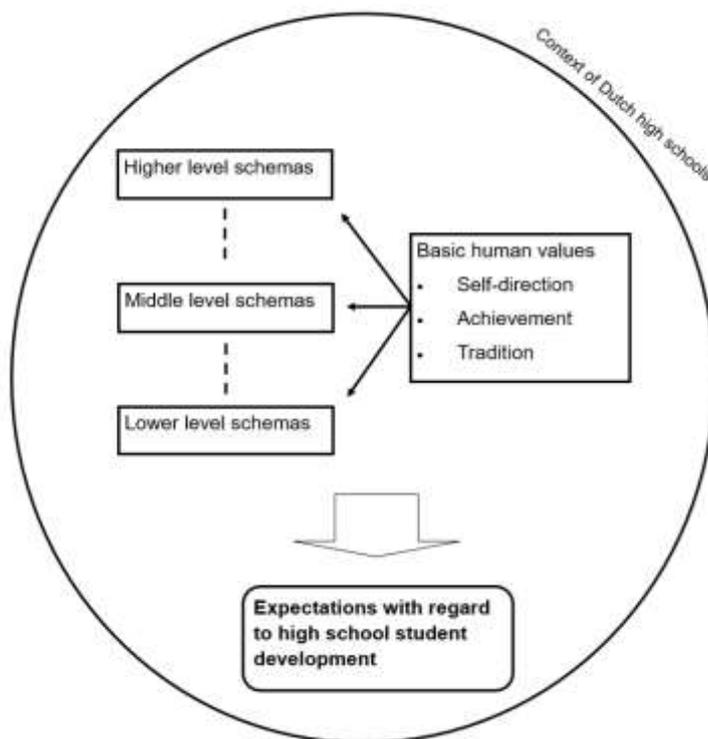


Figure 2 Conceptual model (Source: Author)

2.3 Literature review

The present study is embedded in the context of Dutch high schools. Previous research has been conducted about high school student development, parental involvement, parental and teacher expectations, and parental and teacher communication. This paragraph provides an overview of the existing literature in which the present study will be embedded.

Dutch teachers recognise the positive effect of parental involvement on educational achievement in their teaching (Van den Berg & Reekum, 2011). Previous research argues that both parents and teachers

recognise the positive impact of parental involvement on the students' education and development. In addition, parental involvement has an effect on the expectations the teacher has of the student and the instructional practices of the teacher (LaRoque et. Al., 2011). Teachers could, for example, use the cultural background and experiences of the student as the basis of its further development.

Empirically supported models argue that parental involvement is mainly based on how the parents interpret their role in their child's education. Culture shapes the beliefs, behaviours, values and attitudes parents have (LaRoque et. Al., 2011; Calzada et al., 2015).

The expectations parents have, with regard to student development, are not the same in all countries, or within all continents even. Previous studies show that parents tend to have higher expectations in Asia, compared to parents in Western countries. These differences in expectations can be explained by different socialization strategies. Western parents encourage creativity by allowing their children more independence and freedom. This is in contradiction with the Chinese socialization strategies. According to Li (2003) Chinese parents regard learning "primarily as a process of developing personal virtues and cultivating oneself socially and morally through mastering academic subjects". Additionally, the parent's belief system shows to be different. Where Asian parents have a great belief in effort, Western parents believe more in the ability of students (Li, 2003, p. 258).

Studies show that parents are more responsive to specific requests from teachers. If teachers express the parental expectations they have and request specific forms of involvement, parents will become more involved. Teachers should bear in mind the various ways in which parents can become involved, also taking cultural differences into account (LaRoque et. Al., 2011).

Culturally adapted behaviour is often based on stereotypic knowledge, without taking individual or familiar differences into account. When parents and teachers are not aware of one another's' beliefs that underlie their conflicting expectations, their communication could get even more complicated (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Being more culturally competent as a teacher, does not mean that he or she has to influence the parental behaviour. It means that a teacher is able to understand and communicate with people from different cultures in an appropriate and effective manner (Bustamante et al., 2009). It is important for the teacher to understand the role culture plays in the student's development. When a teacher is aware of the cultural differences there are opportunities to discuss an approach in which they could work around the differences, or even take advantage of the differences (LaRoque et Al., 2011).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research design

This research sought to gain insight in the perceptions teachers and parents have. Since there is a desire for understanding the perceptions of the study population this study can be classified as an exploratory study. An exploratory approach is most suitable when a new subject is examined or limited research is conducted on the topic (Babbie, 2010). Considering limited research has been done on the topic in the past decades, an exploratory approach is most appropriate for the present study.

As the aim of this research is to gain insight in people's expectations and experiences, and trying to understand these expectations and lived experiences, this research is conducted from an emic perspective. This emic perspective is a distinctive feature of the interpretive paradigm, which was used as the scientific approach for this research. By using this approach, it is recognized that people's expectations and experiences should be placed within a wider context and they cannot be studied without taking this context in consideration (Hennink et. al., 2011).

To gain information on perceptions of the study population, a qualitative research method is applied to answer the research question. The qualitative research method allows to gain insight in the perspective of the participants (Hennink et. al., 2011). This research sought to place the perceptions of the study population within the wider cultural context and background. Therefore, a qualitative research method is most suitable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This qualitative research method allows for gathering empirical data through in-depth interviews (Hennink et. al., 2011).

3.2 Study population and inclusion criteria

This study is conducted in the context of Dutch high schools. Since this research aims to gain insight in the experiences and expectations of both teachers and parents is the study population twofold. The first group are teachers of Dutch High Schools. They are born and raised in the Netherlands and teach students in the age of 12-18 years old. At least some of the students they teach have parents whom are born and raised outside the Netherlands. The second group are parents of high school students. At least one of the parents, in the case of a couple, is born and raised outside the Netherlands. Their child(ren) currently or recently attend(ed) a Dutch High School. When a student is raised by one parent, this parent has to be born and raised outside the Netherlands.

The research population contains parents and teachers. A couple of criteria determined whether a parent or a teacher was eligible to participate in this research. Tables 1 and 2 provides an overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used. All inclusion criteria had to be met in order for a parent of teacher to be eligible to participate. Concerning the exclusion criteria, if only one of the exclusion criteria was met, the parent or teacher was not eligible to participate.

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria parents

Inclusion criteria: Parent...	Exclusion criteria: Parent ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... is born outside the Netherlands - ... has received his/her education in another country than the Netherlands - ... has at least one child who is enrolled in a Dutch high school, or has graduated from a Dutch high school within the past three years - Possible partner or spouse does not have to comply with the above criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... is born in the Netherlands - ... has received his/her education in the Netherlands - ... his/her child(ren) is enrolled in an international school in the Netherlands

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria teachers

Inclusion criteria: Teacher...	Exclusion criteria: Teacher...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... has the Dutch nationality - ... is born and raised in the Netherlands - ... has received his/her teaching education in a Dutch college - ... teaches at a Dutch high school - ... is, or has been in the past three years, mentor of high school students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ... is born and raised in another country than the Netherlands - ... has received his/her teaching education in another country than the Netherlands - ... teaches at an international school (in or outside the Netherlands) - ... has never been mentor of high school students - ... it has been more than three years ago that he/she has been mentor of high school students

3.3 Participant recruitment

Participants have been recruited through different ways. Since the researcher of this present study is a teacher herself, the teacher participants are all from her own network. This does not endanger the research since the participating teachers all have different ages, genders, years of experience and they all work at different schools throughout the whole Netherlands. These sample characteristics also ensure a great diversity within the teacher sample. All potential teacher participants received a personal message with the request to participate in an interview. This message ensured that they were not required to answer, nor were they required to participate. The social connection between the researcher and the potential participant should not have made the participant feel obligated to participate.

The researcher also had some potential parent participants in her own network. This does raise several ethical issues, which will be discussed in paragraph 3.6. In line with the teachers, they received a personal message, ensuring they were not required to answer, nor to participate in an interview. Other potential parent participants were found by the high school at which the researcher used to work and the high school at which a family member of the researcher still works. With permission of the school supervisors these parents received an email providing information about the research. They were requested to reply this email if willing to participate. Only then further contact to arrange an interview was undertaken. Potential participants who did not reply the initial email were not further approached. This ensured that the participants all participated voluntarily.

3.4 Data collection

Data has been collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. This allowed the researcher to gain insight in the interviewee's perceptions as they were able to motivate their shared perspectives (Hennink et al., 2011). Interviews were conducted in English or Dutch, depending on the preference of the participant. The interviews were divided a few topics (see appendix B and C for complete interview guides). Parents: 1) Own background and current expectations of your child, 2) Social and cognitive development of the child and 3) Communication with, and expectations of the mentor and school of the child. Teachers: 1) Perceived role in the development of a student, 2) Social and cognitive development of a student and 3) Communication with, and expectations of the student's parents. These topics were raised from the conceptual model and literature review.

There has not been an official pilot interview. The first conducted interview with a teacher and the first conducted interview with a parent were used to evaluate the interview guide. No changes have been made after these two interviews as they were sufficient to collect the required data and gave space to the participant to elaborate and explain. To collect enough data this research started with five teachers and

five parents participating the interviews. As a result of this total of 10 interviews information started to repeat itself and saturation was reached (Hennink et. Al., 2011).

The interviews were held at a location chosen by the participant, for example their home or at school. Most interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes, with a few exceptions that lasted around an hour. Each interview started with a short introduction by the interviewer. She introduced herself and briefly explained the purpose of the research. In addition, this was the moment when informed consent was asked for, which the participants gave orally before starting the recording (see appendices B and C). The interviewer thought it was important that the interviewees felt at ease. For that reason she gave the participants time to think and explain their answers and repeated or explained questions if necessary.

3.5 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed ad verbatim. This allowed the data to be a reflection of participant's own words and provided valuable detail during the analysis of the data (Hennink et. al., 2011). Translation of the full transcripts was not necessary. Analysis was possible in both languages after which the results were documented in English. To maintain ethical principles, to be further discussed in the part on 'Ethical considerations', all transcripts were anonymized (Hennink et. al., 2011).

3.6 Ethical considerations

This present research kept in mind three core principles for ethical conduct of research from the 1979 Belmont Report, respect of persons, beneficence and justice, while conducting this research (Hennink et. al., 2011). This led to a few important considerations. Participants who were willing to participate were informed about anonymity before starting the interview. Names, locations or other indicators told by the participant during the recording of the interview were anonymized in the transcripts to ensure that it would not be possible to trace back to the participant. Before starting the recording of the interview participants were told that they are not obligated to answer all questions and they may stop the recording or the interview at all times without providing a reason.

The researcher recruited participants from her own network. Being a high school teacher herself she was able to get in touch with parents having another cultural background. The personal message these parents received ensured the parents that the researcher conducted this research in the role of master student, and not in the role of their child's teacher. The message the parents received can be found in appendix A.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents an overview of the research results. First, an overview of the research participants' characteristics is provided, followed by a paragraph explaining how the data was analysed. Subsequently, this chapter includes an analysis of the data collected.

4.1 Participant overview

For the present study a total of ten interviews took place, five teacher interviews and five interviews with parents. In agreement with the inclusion criteria (tables 1 and 2) all five teachers have a Dutch nationality and they did receive their educational degree from a Dutch college. All five teachers are currently teaching in Dutch high schools, some of them were also performing the role of mentor during the time the interview took place. The participating parents have different countries of origin: Iran, Brazil, Belgium, Italy, Morocco and Turkey. They all have children whom are currently enrolled in a Dutch high school or whom graduated within the past three years.

4.2 Data Analysis

Data was analysed by using codes. These codes were developed in two different ways. While reading the transcripts in detail the coding process started based on the literature and the interview guide. Besides, several codes were raised by participants. These codes were assigned as well. A computer supported software program, ATLAS.ti 8, was used to structure and organize the codes applied to the transcripts. After applying codes to the data, the codes were categorized into code groups to be able to conceptualize the data (Hennink et. al., 2011). From these code groups, six supergroups or themes could be identified. These themes form the basis for the way in which the results are structured in the following paragraphs. The code trees can be found in appendices D and E. Based on the themes, the results were brought back to the conceptual model.

4.3 Research results

In the following paragraphs an overview of the research results will be presented. From the analysis of the data, six themes could be identified: 1) Communication, 2) Triangular relationships, 3) Social development, 4) Cognitive development, 5) Expectations, and 6) Cultural differences. The following subparagraphs explain how these themes were revealed from the data.

4.3.1 Communication

The first theme that emerged from the data is communication. All participants were able to sum several ways in which parents and teachers communicate with one another. In addition, they all argued that it is very important for parents and teachers to communicate.

“It's important to communicate” (P5).

“Contact with parents is my number one condition for a proper functioning of the student” (T1).

“If you have no contact, or poor contact, then a child actually becomes the victim of what happens” (T1).

Building on the importance of communication, one parent stated that she missed translations in the communication with school. All information was provided in Dutch, and (almost) all the information meetings were in Dutch. A second parent supported her argument.

“I feel a bit upset sometimes [...] the information for the parents is offered exclusively in Dutch” (P2).

“[...] for parents who don't speak the language, that they still try to communicate well with those parents” (P3).

Even though this parent felt upset about the communication with this school, two of the teachers explained how they try to communicate as good as possible with all parents, despite the language barrier.

“I also have pictures for parents who cannot speak Dutch or have difficulties speaking Dutch” (T1).

“Often make drawings, try to make it visual” (T3).

Two parents brought up their experiences with the primary school while discussing communication. They both experienced a lack of communication during primary school. This bothered them, especially because the primary school was the first experience they had with Dutch schools. They still had to get

to know the Dutch education system, but they did not feel like the school was offering them the help and support they needed.

“[...] and I am missing something like, how does it go in the class? I don't know, I was missing something” (P5).

“[...] I remember we didn't know it was so important. And also like, the implication that they had on the secondary school and everything, and it was really no effort from the teacher to explain any of that, so we really had to figure out ourselves, panicked, no really we were like worried, you know that because we didn't understand it, we didn't know” (P5).

“They had not taken into account that we come from a very different culture. I think that's a shame” (P1).

4.3.2 Triangular relationship

Along with the concept of communication, both parents and teachers brought up the concept of triangular relationship. Parents and teachers argue the value of triangular relationships.

“We have to do it together. The student is located in the tip of the triangle of corporation, they may also think along” (T3).

“[...] as school you do not only work with the student, but also with the parent. This triangular relationship is simply valuable for the development of the child” (T2).

“[...] together we are responsible for the students' success. We also call that the triangle of parents, school and student” (T5).

“The student cannot do it alone. The school, the student and the parents. It is kind of a triangle, they have to do it together” (P3).

Several interviewees argue that both parents and teachers play an important role in the students' development. They recognise that parental involvement has a positive effect on the educational achievements of the student.

“Contact with parents is the number one condition for a student to function properly” (T1).

“I think it is very important that parents are involved in the school of their children because it is about their children's future” (P3).

4.3.3 Social development

Teachers recognise how Dutch schools take account of social development. In comparison with other countries, Dutch schools might even pay more attention to social development.

“I do think that in the Netherlands more and more is being done with the social aspect” (T1).

“I think we are clearly emphasizing this here in the Netherlands. I do have examples of students who say that at their previous school abroad, if they did something wrong, they would be hit and they did not talk about it” (T2).

Not all teachers want to make a full comparison with other countries. But they do notice how Dutch schools take account of social development and how this continues to evolve.

“I don’t have that much experience with a foreign school system, so I can’t really make a comparison for myself [...]. I know how we do it, and I really like how we do it and how we are working on its development” (T5).

All teachers recognise the importance of a students’ social development. They argue that social development includes the foundation of a students’ development. Therefore, most teachers focus on social development in the beginning of the schoolyear, before they focus on cognitive development and educational results.

“[...] if things are not going well there, it has repercussions on learning, [...].” (T3).

“It is the basis for life” (T3).

“That part is very important at the start of the schoolyear I think, and other teachers from the first year think as well. After, the cognitive bits are added [...].” (T1).

“[...] offer a pleasant environment, and they start to learn from that pleasant environment” (T4).

Parents recognise the importance of social development as well.

“I think if you don’t like the people that you go to school with, your teachers and the atmosphere in general, this is not a good environment for learning as well” (P2).

“The social development, I think it’s very important and I was really reassured when I saw that so much attention is being paid here” (P1).

“Absolutely, I think it is very important that the school also participates” (P3).

There are different ways in which schools try to incorporate social development in their curriculum or extra curriculum activities, to the satisfaction of parents.

“I think they are doing well, it’s a lot of group work. I think this is very important. And they also have some social events” (P2).

“I think there are many things with which you train the social aspect and practice with it. So those are the things that I do try to pay attention to” (T2).

4.3.4 Cognitive development

After social development, the concept of cognitive development emerged from the data. As argued in the previous paragraph both parents and teachers recognised the importance of social development. However, this does not mean cognitive development can be considered as less important.

“[...] social development is equal to educational, is always on the same bar” (P5).

During their educational practices teachers make a distinction between their role as teacher and their role as mentor, especially when it comes to their focus on either social or cognitive development. Teachers do however argue that both are connected in such a way that they cannot be taken separately in any situation.

“As a teacher I am also more concerned with giving cognitive place and looking at how social can be integrated into it” (T4).

“And if we are really involved with the lesson and I want to transfer the learning goals to them then that’s my focus” (T5).

“My role is mainly to help the students as teachers further in the steps of cognitive development, but also to help them make social and emotional steps” (T1).

Teachers see a link between the performance of a student and the attitude of the parents.

“[...] if a child fails, it is a big deal. [...], that sometimes causes a student to come back to school with very little self-confidence” (T2).

Parents argue that cognitive development of their child is not only the responsibility of school. They also feel responsible to help their child with their homework, but also by motivating them to reach their academic potential.

“[...] always trying to get her to achieve the best she can” (P5).

“[...] if I notice they have some problems, in school, the grades or difficulties, I try to help them” (P2).

4.3.5 Expectations

The fifth theme that emerged from the data are the expectations of parents and teachers. We can make a distinction between the expectations parents and teachers have of one another, and the expectations parents have of the student.

Parental expectations of the student

Concerning the expectations parents have of students, some parents feel like they have higher expectations than Dutch parents do.

“I feel like we have much higher expectations than people from the Netherlands” (P5).

Also do some parents realise that they grew up in a different environment than their child is here in the Netherlands. They adjusted the expectations they had of their child to the current situation here in the Netherlands.

“I have tried not to let my child experience what I have experienced, high expectations” (P1).

Two parents argue that well-being of their child is most important. Therefore, they expect their child to reach their potential. They believe this is the key to their child’s happiness.

“I want them to be happy and I think if they can reach their full potential, they will be happy with this” (P2).

“I realise now when we are talking that most of my kind of thinking is to get, you know, towards the skills to be successful in life. That's kind of mainly the aim and at the same time to, you know, of course to be happy [...]” (P5).

Expectations parents and teachers have of one another

Teachers gather their knowledge on parental expectations in different ways. Some teachers do not ask about the expectations specifically or not at all, others do so in an organised manner.

“I think I know partially because we had an information evening at the beginning of the year. I said ‘[...] if there are things you expect from me then I would like to hear from you” (T2).

“It are usually student who have just arrived in the Netherlands, therefore they don’t have many expectations yet” (T5).

“At the general introduction evening, [...], we also have a system that the parents get three folding sheets in three colours and on one of those folding sheets is asked for example ‘What do you expect from the teacher? What do you expect from the mentor?’” (T1).

On the other hand, parents argue that they do not always know what to expect from teachers and are therefore not able to ask specific questions.

“[...] they always tell you to ask questions, but in the beginning you don’t know yet that you feel the need to ask questions about expectations” (P1).

4.3.6 Cultural differences

The last theme that emerged from the data is the cultural differences. During the interviews several cultural differences were brought up by the interviewees.

The first difference teachers point out are the differences in attendance. Students with another cultural background tend to stay home for one or more days more often, instead of going to school. Teachers have experienced several reasons for the student's absence.

“Earlier I have experienced that students of a different origin were more often kept at home and were kept at home faster” (T2).

“[...] especially with the foreign children. Because they are often taken by parents to interpret as one of the other children, often younger children have to go to a doctor or have to get a vaccination” (T1).

Furthermore, it is striking to teachers that arriving on time is not always as important for parents and students with another cultural background as we are used to in the Netherlands. Teachers realise that they have to inform parents about the school rules and have to keep repeating them.

“ Students with a different cultural background. We also see that with Dutch parents, but they understand. For example refugees from Syria: ‘what does three minutes matter?’” (T1).

“In the first half of the year we always create a newsletter with the class for the parents. [...] And I always add a part with announcements. For example [...], note, keep thinking about calling school at a quarter to nine in the morning. In that way I try to update the rules with the parents” (T1).

Additionally, teachers experience gender related differences. Two teachers express the idea that there are differences between boys and girls in some cultures. Additionally, one teacher could recall a situation in which a student's father preferred to talk to a male teacher instead of a female teacher.

“[...] in most cultures boys are seen as ‘they have to make it’, girls are always a bit less” (T4).

“[...] in some cultures that really is a difference between boys and girls. Girls are allowed to learn when they are in these countries, but with boys they often say ‘yes, but he is also very good at this or that’, [...]. It feels as if he is pushed forward a bit compared to his sister” (T3).

“Father was angry at first and he found it very difficult because he would have preferred to talk to a man” (T3).

Not only do the teachers recognise culturally based differences, parents recognise these as well. Parents point out differences that are mostly related to academic achievement and the way Dutch schools educate students.

“I was very surprised the first time in group 1, when the children were sitting in a circle and they could express their opinion about something, I found that very special” (P1).

“[...] that is also status. [...]. They are even ashamed when a child is not going to college” (P1).

“Belgium is still very much into achieving good grades and discipline and studying and results and not as much in social and presenting and that was less important, but as a system” (P5).

Teachers recognise the statements made by parents. They see differences in importance of achievement between Dutch parents and students and those with another cultural background.

“They remain very focused on grades and ‘well then he doesn’t learn long enough or hard enough’ or things like that” (T3).

“Parents who say ‘my child should become a doctor or a lawyer’” (P4).

“You see that there are differences, actually in pushing children” (P1).

Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study has explored the perceptions of both teachers and parents from different cultural backgrounds on the guidance of a student during his/her social and cognitive development, in the context of a Dutch Highschool. This was done by interviewing parents and teachers and analyzing the data provided during these interviews. In order to meet the objective of this study the following research question was formulated.

How is the perception of appropriate social and cognitive guidance of high school students embedded in the cultural background of parents and teachers?

5.1 Reflection on research results

To be able to understand what the results mean, how they fit within the existing body of literature and how these results could be placed in the context of Dutch high schools, it is important to critically reflect upon these results. Following the same six themes used in the description of the results, the following paragraphs reflect upon these results.

The first theme that emerged from the data is communication between parents and teachers. The data reveals that both parents and teachers highly value good communication. This means that both parents and teachers have to ensure that effective communication actually takes place. These results built on earlier studies done by Epstein (2010), who argues that communication among teachers and parents is one of the six major types of parent involvement. Additionally, according to Epstein (2010) communication is critical in establishing and maintaining strong relationships between teachers and parents. Even though Dutch teachers recognise the positive effects of parental involvement on educational achievement (Van den Berg & Rekum, 2011), results of the present study show that the communication among parents and teachers is insufficient. Parents express, for example, the lack of translations. On the other hand, the results show that solutions are available, like the use of pictures and visualisations by teachers. These could be used more widely in Dutch high schools.

In addition to the theme of communication, the theme of triangular relationships emerged from the data. The interviewees argue that interaction should not only take place between the teacher and parents, but the student has an important position in this collaboration as well. These findings indicate that all three, teacher, parents and student, play an equally important role in the development of the student. Chung et al. (2005) argue that the relationship between the teacher and the student is mostly explained by the relationship between the teacher and parents. This means that, according to Chung et al. (2005), teacher,

parents and student do not play an equally important role in the development of the student, but that the teacher and the parents play the main role in this development. This is contradictory with the findings of the present research. More research would be needed to investigate this further.

This development of students consists of two parts, social and cognitive development, as explained in the first chapter. Therefore, the third theme emerging from the data was students' social development. The data reveals that both parents and teachers consider social development to be a very important part of a students' development and even argue that it forms the basis of the academic success of students. This means that sufficient attention should be paid to social development within education. These arguments support previous research which shows that specific attention to social development in education results, among other things, in higher levels of academic success and reduced school problems (Catalano et al., 2004). Teacher participants in the present research were able to explain several ways in which they already incorporate students' social development in their educational practices. Further research could show whether this is done adequately nationwide and if not, how this could be further developed.

Along with social development the second part of students' development emerged from the data, namely the theme of cognitive development. Arguments provided by participants reveal several differences. Some parents feel like Dutch schools have too little academic expectations of students. In particular, they believe the school environment is too relaxed. Teachers recognise differences between parents. According to their observations and experiences parents with another cultural background do focus more on academic results compared to Dutch parents. This means that parents and teachers do not agree on the academic expectations they have of students. Even though not much research has been done on differences in parental expectations between western countries, these results built on studies arguing that there are differences between continents (Li, 2003). Further research is needed to find out if these different perspectives influence students' cognitive development.

The fifth theme emerging from the data are the expectations parents and teachers have. Both parents and teachers expressed several expectations they have of the student and of one another. Even though they were both able to explain expectations they have, both parents and teachers argued that in many cases these expectations are not shared with each other. These findings indicate that both parents and teachers are not aware of each other's expectations. Previous literature claims that it is important for teachers to specifically ask parents about their expectations. This increases the parental involvement in the students' education (LaRoque et al., 2011). Apparently, the data also shows that solutions are available, like the use of question cards on which parents are asked specific questions for the teacher to gain knowledge on the expectations parents have. These could be used more widely among Dutch high schools.

The last theme emerging from the data is cultural differences. According to the data parents and teachers do recognise several cultural differences concerning the guidance of high school students. For instance,

teachers experienced different attitudes of parents towards schooling of girls compared to their attitudes towards the schooling of boys. These findings indicate that there are different perspectives towards education based on cultural differences. The data does not reveal that these differences are being discussed. LaRoque et al. (2011) argue that it is important for a teacher to understand the role culture plays in the students' development. Only then opportunities will arise in which these differences could be discussed or be used as an advantage. The student could benefit from cultural differences in his or her development, only if these differences are brought to light and are made negotiable.

5.2 Reflection on conceptual model

The present study was conducted based on the conceptual model as presented in chapter two. This model visualises how the expectations with regard to high school student development, in the context of Dutch high schools, are based on one's cultural schemas. These schemas are influenced by the three basic human values most relevant for the present study; self-direction, achievement and tradition.

The data shows that the perceptions and expectations parents and teachers have are the same on several themes, such as: communication, triangular relationships and social development. Since these perceptions are the same, the data does not reveal whether these perceptions origin in specific cultural schemas and if these schemas are influenced by the three basic human values. An interview guide asking questions specifically for peoples reasoning would be needed to gain these insights.

In addition, the data shows that the perceptions and expectations parents and teachers have are contradictory on the three other themes revealed: cognitive development, expectations and cultural differences. Because contradictions have become visible on these themes, these perceptions and expectations could origin in different cultural schemas.

Altogether, this conceptual model could only be used as an explanatory model for part of the data collected. For future research the interview guide has to be partially adjusted to be able to gain more insight in the reasoning of both parents and teachers.

5.3 Conclusion

This study generated insight into the perceptions of parents and teachers with different cultural backgrounds in the context of student development in Dutch high schools. Important themes identified are communication, triangular relationships, social development, cognitive development, expectations and cultural differences.

Perceptions of parents and teachers correspond concerning the importance of social as well as cognitive development. Additionally, their perceptions correspond regarding the importance of communication between parents and teachers, and the importance of triangular relationships between parents, teachers and student. However, the execution of communication leaves much to be desired. As the perceptions of parents and teachers are the same on these themes, this enables the present research to draw the conclusion that these perceptions are grounded in cultural backgrounds as well. Therefore the cultural schemas do not constitute an explanatory model for these findings.

In addition to the agreements mentioned, there are also contradictions in the perceptions of parents and teachers. Parents with another cultural background tend to have a higher focus on academic results, as the Dutch teachers have social development as their priority. In addition, parents and teachers have different expectations of the student and of one another, which are not expressed towards each other. As these perceptions are different among parents and teachers, could these find their origin in the cultural background of parents and teachers. Therefore the cultural schemas could constitute an explanatory model for these findings because the cultural schemas are important for parents and teachers to understand where one another's perceptions origin.

Based on the research findings in the present study it is argued that the perception of appropriate social and cognitive guidance of high school students is partially embedded in the cultural background of parents and teachers. This concerns the themes in which their perceptions are contradictory. It cannot be concluded that the themes on which parents and teachers agree are also embedded in the cultural backgrounds of parents and teachers.

5.4 Validation of conclusion

The results of the present study are based on empirical data. The data is analysed using open coding after which both inductive and deductive reasoning is applied (Hennink et al., 2011). Codes were assigned based on the conceptual model and existing literature. Besides have codes been assigned based on topics raised by the participants.

5.5 Data quality

The data used in the present study is current, the interviews were held for the purpose of this study specifically. This does strengthen the quality of the data. After ten interviews held, saturation was reached. Therefore, the sample size did not have to be enlarged (Hennink et al., 2011).

The sample used was based on the purpose of this research. By using this sample, a start has been made in providing insight in the different perceptions of parents and teachers with different cultural backgrounds. To further explore this topic, future research could focus on a group of parents with one specific cultural background.

5.6 Implications

The results of the present study hold both practical and theoretical implications. By providing insight in the expectations teachers as well as parents have, concerning social and cognitive development, and exploring the origin of these expectations, this research contribute to the existing literature. Furthermore, this research holds a more practical value. By providing insight in the expectations of both teachers and parents does this study contribute to the wellbeing of students. When parents and teachers are better able to understand one another's perception could his prevent a negative outcome of conflicting expectations. Teachers should become more aware of the differences parents with another cultural background face in comparison with their experiences in their country of origin. Therefore, parents and teachers should specifically talk about the expectations they both have concerning the development of students, and what practical implications these expectations have. These conversations should already take place during primary school and should continue throughout high school.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Letter parental recruitment

The following letter has been send to parents of the students whom were, at the time, taught in high school by the researcher of the present study.

Dear Mr. and Ms. ,

I send you this email with permission of [name of high school board member].

Since January 2019 I have been your sons/daughters Geography teacher. Besides teaching am I a master student Population Studies at the University of Groningen. In my final research project (thesis) I research the communication between native Dutch teachers and parents with a non-Dutch background. The objective of this research is to gain insight in the expectations both teachers and parents have, regarding the guidance of the student. Cultural differences could for instance influence expectations teachers or parents have. What do parents and teachers find important when it comes to social and/or cognitive development? Are expectations expressed?

To reach this goal am I looking for parents, with a non-Dutch background, who are willing to participate in an interview. You will remain completely anonymous (I do not need person names, school name, etc.). I do have to record the sound. This is needed to analyse the data. The interview will take place at a time and place to be discussed later, and takes about 45 minutes.

This interview and research are completely separate from my teaching duties at [name high school]. I conduct this research as a student of the University of Groningen.

If you are willing to participate in an interview, could you please replay this email? For further questions you may also email me.

If you are not willing to participate in an interview, consider this email as not being sent.

Kind regards,

Susan Werkhoven

Appendix B. Interview guide parents

Good afternoon, my name is Susan Werkhoven. I am a master student at the faculty of Spatial Science in Groningen. In this present research project I research the communication between native Dutch teachers and parents with a non-Dutch background. The objective of this research is to gain insight in the expectations both teachers and parents have, regarding the guidance of the student.

Everything you tell me will remain private within the research team and all your answers will remain anonymous.

- Are you voluntarily participating in this interview?

You are not obligated to answer any of the questions if you don't feel comfortable answering them. You may also stop the interview at any time if you want to.

- Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Then I will now start the recording.

Introduction questions

In which country were you born?
Where did you grow up?

Opening questions

Own background

- How would you describe your own parent's involvement in your education?
 - What expectations did your parents have?
 - How did they express their expectations?

Expectations of your child

- How would you describe your involvement in your child's education?
 - What expectations do you have?
 - Expectations in his/her social development
 - Expectations in his/her cognitive development
 - How do you express your expectations towards your child?
- Ziet u overeenkomsten tussen de verwachtingen die uw ouders hadden en de verwachtingen die u nu van uw kind heeft?
- Zijn er dingen die u bewust anders doet of uit in de opvoeding van uw kind, als het gaat over de verwachtingen die u heeft?

Main questions

Social development

- Hoe ziet u uw rol in de sociale ontwikkeling van uw kind?
- Hoe zit u de rol van de mentor in de sociale ontwikkeling van uw kind?

Cognitive development

- Hoe ziet u uw rol in de cognitieve ontwikkeling van uw kind?
- Hoe ziet u de rol van de mentor in de cognitieve ontwikkeling van uw kind?

Communication with mentor and teachers

- Do you have (regular) contact with your child's teachers or mentor?
- Op welke manieren heeft u contact met de mentor en de school?
 - o Oudergesprekken, email, online leeromgeving, etc.?

Expectations of the mentor and teachers

- What kind of information do you want the school to provide about your child?
 - o Only grades? Social behaviour? Cognitive development?
- What do you expect from the school, regarding the guidance of your child?
 - o Focus on social development? (Social interaction/behaviour, polite behaviour/following rules, etc).
 - o Focus on cognitive development?
- Do you express these expectations to the teachers/mentor?
- Do you have the feeling that the Dutch schools have the same expectations that you have? Are you on the same page with your child's teachers/mentor?
 - o If not, why not? In what ways? How do these differences express themselves?

Final questions

Is there anything you would like to add?
Anything you feel like you were not able to say before?

Appendix C. Interview guide teachers

Good afternoon, my name is Susan Werkhoven. I am a master student at the faculty of Spatial Science in Groningen. In this present research project I research the communication between native Dutch teachers and parents with a non-Dutch background. The objective of this research is to gain insight in the expectations both teachers and parents have, regarding the guidance of the student.

Everything you tell me will remain private within the research team and all your answers will remain anonymous.

- Are you voluntarily participating in this interview?

You are not obligated to answer any of the questions if you don't feel comfortable answering them. You may also stop the interview at any time if you want to.

- Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

Then I will now start the recording.

Introduction

You currently work at a high school?
Are you currently mentor?

Opening questions

Role in the development of the student

- What do you consider to be your role in the development of your students?
- Students go through a social and a cognitive development, do you find one or the other more important? Do you focus more on one or the other?

Social development

- What do you consider to be your role in the social development of students?
- What do you consider to be the role of the parents in the social development of students?
- Do you think it is typical Dutch, for a school to pay attention to the social development of students?
 - Is it part of the policy of your school?

Cognitive development

- What do you consider to be your role in the cognitive development of students?
- What do you consider to be the role of the parents in the cognitive development of students?

Main questions

Communication with parents

- In which ways do you communicate with parents?
 - Meetings, email, phone calls, online, etc.?

- Do you recognise differences in communication between Dutch parents and parents with another cultural background?

Expectations of parents

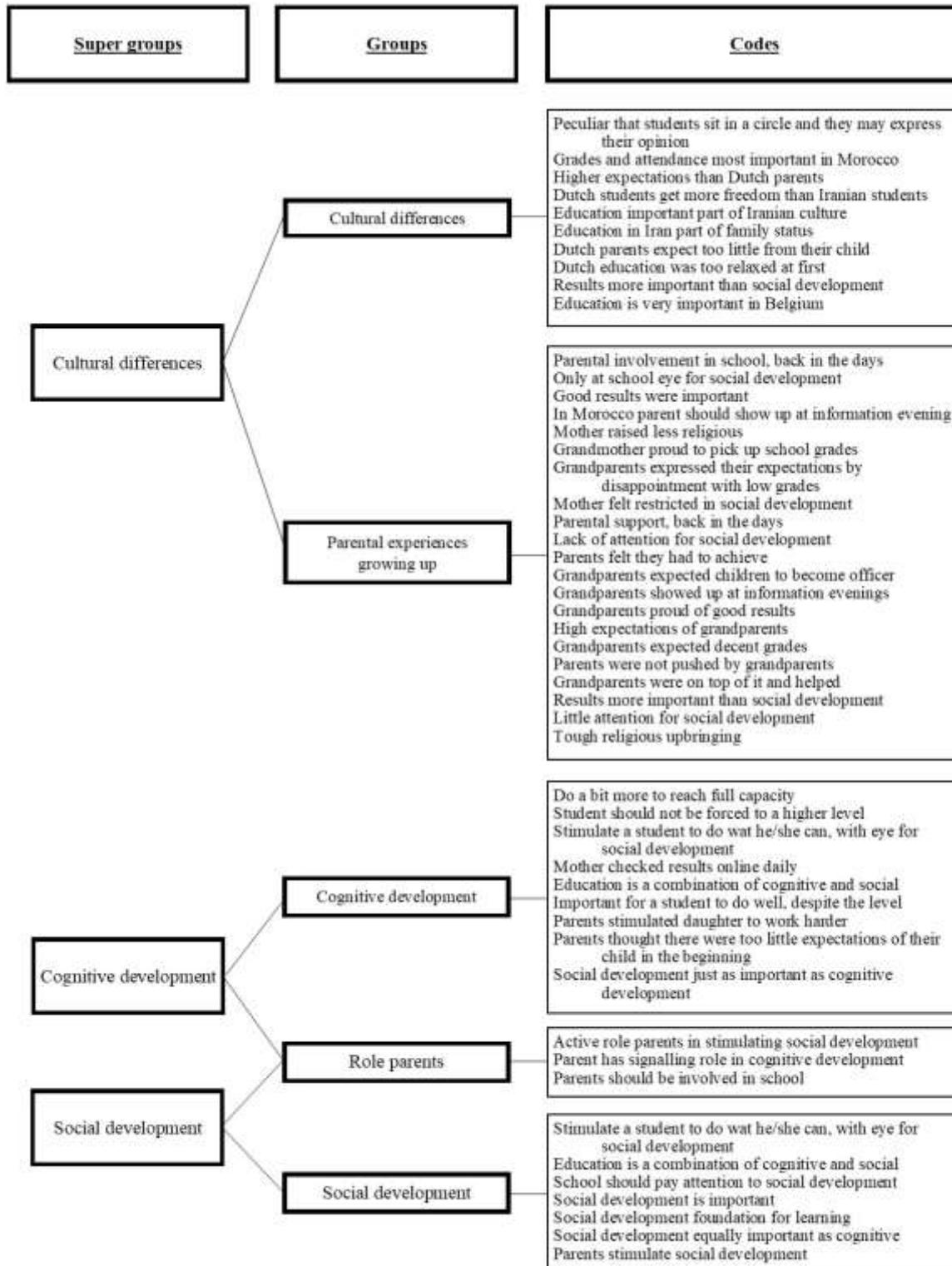
- What do you expect parents to do, in the guidance of their child?
 - o How do you expect them to guide their child?
 - o What extent of involvement do you expect?
- Do you express these expectations to the parents?
 - o Why do you/do you not?
 - o In which ways?
- Are you aware of the expectations parents have of you?
 - o Do you ask?
 - o Why do you/do you not?
- Do you feel as if you are on the same page with parents, with regard to the guidance/support of their child(ren)?
 - o Also with parents with a non-Dutch background?

Final questions

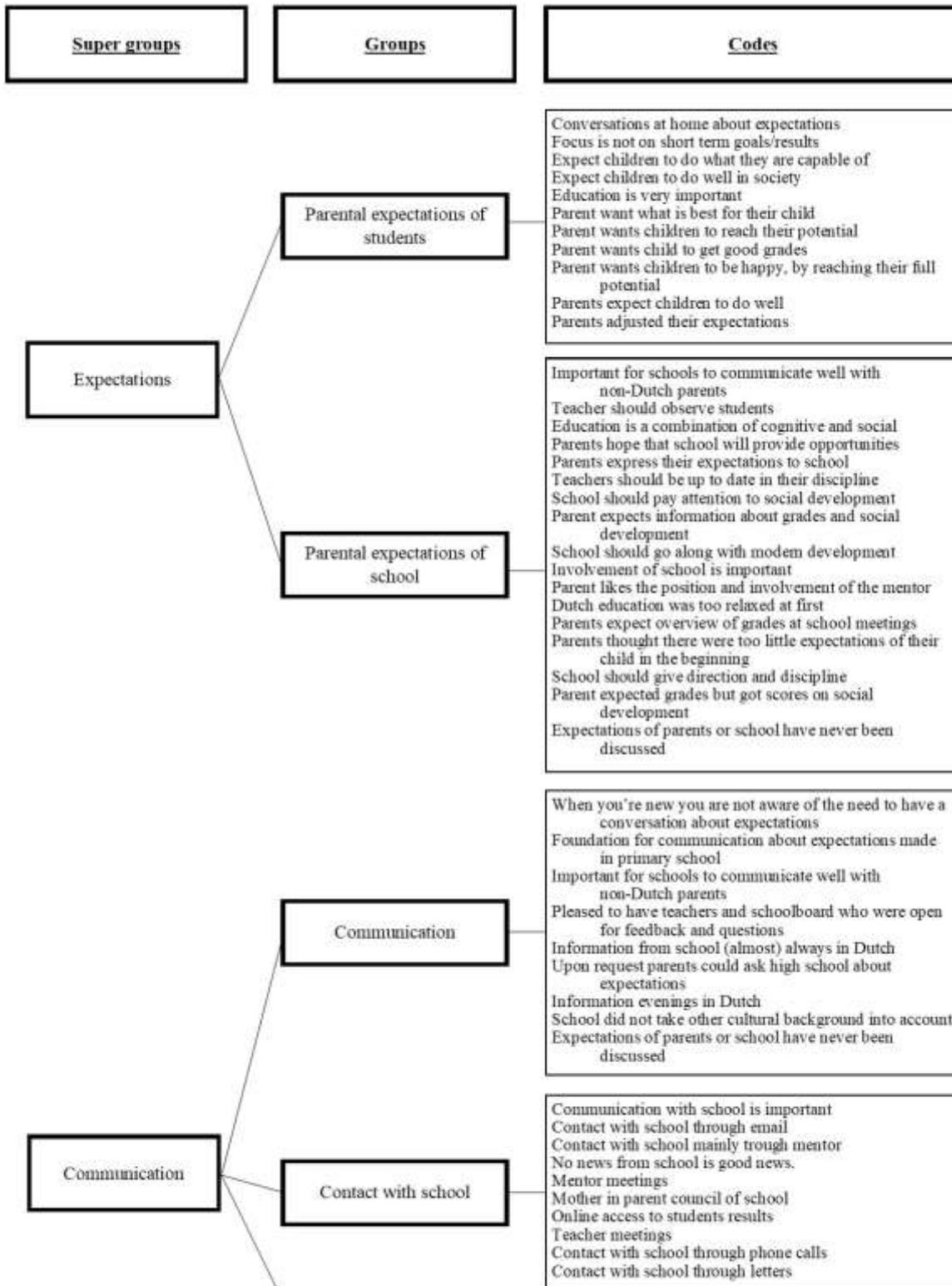
Is there anything you would like to add?

Anything you feel like you were not able to say before?

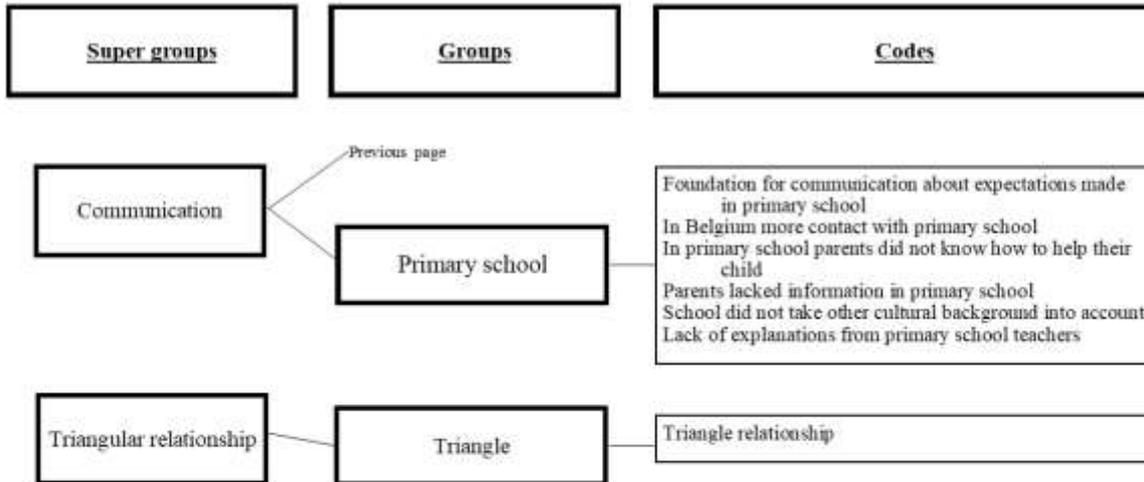
Appendix D. Code tree parents



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Appendix E. Code tree teachers

