Review article

Parents', teachers', and students' roles in parent-teacher conferences; a systematic review and meta-synthesis

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A R T I C L E I N F O	**A B S T R A C T**

The primary objectives of this review are (1) to provide an overview of what characterizes the research on Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTCs), and (2) to contribute to the understanding of the roles of parents, teachers, and students during PTCs. A systematic literature search was conducted in five databases, yielding 33 studies that met the inclusion criteria, representing 13 countries. Analyses of the data resulted in the identification of seven roles for teachers, nine roles for parents, and three roles for students. Across contexts, topics discussed during PTCs were found to be similar. These results have implications for the development of teachers' communicative competence, home-school collaboration, and the emphasis on PTCs in teacher education. Limitations of the study and areas for future research are discussed.

1. Introduction

Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTCs) offer an opportunity to promote collaboration between home and school and to support children's learning and development (Maclure & Walker, 2000; Pillet-Shore, 2015, 2016). Despite the development of policies that both enforce and enhance PTCs and other forms of home-school collaboration, and research that supports their importance (e.g., Daniels, Wang, & Berthelsen, 2016; Jeynes, 2003, 2005), initial teacher education (ITE) programs and in-service support are still considered inadequate for promoting home-school collaboration (Epstein, 2013; Hirsto, 2010).

The lack of studies investigating the communication between parents and teachers has been highlighted by researchers (Bilton, Jackson, & Hymer, 2017; Caronia & Vandini, 2019; Hymer, 2017; Tveit, 2009). Communicating with parents is a vital aspect of a teacher's work (Gartmeier, Gebhardt, & Dotger, 2016), and understanding the nature of communication during PTCs can provide valuable insights for the teaching profession and school leaders. The main objective of this systematic review is to synthesize evidence on the communication that occurs in naturally occurring PTC situations and to identify the roles that are enacted during communication. To achieve this objective, we will conduct a systematic review of research that includes transcripts or descriptions of communication in PTCs, and we will address the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1. What characterizes research on communication in PTCs (countries represented, methods used, topics discussed)?

RQ2. What roles do teachers, parents, and students enact during PTC-communication?

In the following sections, we will present the study's research rationale, followed by the methods used to identify relevant research, code, and synthesize the results. Our research follows established guidelines for systematic reviewing (e.g., Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017). In the concluding section, we will discuss implications and future research directions.

1.1. Research rationale and theoretical perspective

Evaluations of teacher education programs from, for instance, Australia (Saltmarsh, Barr, & Chapman, 2015), Belgium (EVALO, 2012), and Denmark (Ministry of Education and Research, Denmark, 2019), indicate that the communication skills required for constructive and collaborative communication in PTCs are among the least developed skills during Initial Teacher Education (ITE). While recognizing the significance of equipping teachers to effectively engage with diverse groups of parents, Epstein (2013) found that only a limited number of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in the USA place emphasis on this aspect of growth, too. This situation is worrisome, as research

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consistently underscores the value of fostering collaboration between home and school. For example, Wilder (2014) synthesized the results of nine meta-analyses on the effects of school-home collaboration on academic achievement. This synthesis included studies by Jeynes (2003, 2005, 2007, 2012), Fan and Chen (2001), Erion (2006), Senechal and Young (2008), Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008), and Hill and Tyson (2009), and concluded that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement is positive. Furthermore, Wilder (2014) found that the relationship between parental involvement and achievement is strongest when parental involvement is defined as parental expectations for their children's academic achievement. Most studies on this topic emphasize the need for positive relations and engagement between schools and families.

Parents matter for their child's academic and social learning in school, and reviews have shown that some ways of collaborating might be more effective than others (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Patall et al., 2008). Relationships are at the core of effective collaboration, and teachers' communication skills are vital for developing positive relationships and partnerships (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). If teachers are not well-prepared for this crucial aspect of their work, their capacity to establish partnerships will likely depend more on their individual abilities rather than the foundational knowledge of their profession. A study by Gartmeier et al. (2016) illustrates the variability in competence. They investigated teachers' perceived communication competence in a sample of 677 German mathematics teachers. Results from their analyses indicate four profiles of teachers: 24% showed high communication competence, 36% showed medium, 16% showed lower levels of communication competence, and the fourth profile (24%) showed a strong focus on pragmatic problem-solving in communication with parents.

Communicating with parents can be challenging, and some of the research on PSTs provides insights into what can be difficult. For instance, Cil and Dotger (2017), who explored PST actions during a clinically simulated parent-teacher interaction as well as their reflections on the situation, find that the PSTs "wrestled with the concept of professionalism, held reservations toward the actual and probable reactions of the standardized parents, and constrained both their language and actions" (p.237). The PSTs struggled with what they could or should say, and where the boundaries for their professional responsibilities were versus what was the parents' responsibility.

We were, however, unable to identify reviews that have investigated the communication that goes on in PTCs. The reviews are more concerned with the wider goal of home-school collaboration rather than the specifics and more micro-situational aspects of the PTCs.

Since this is the first review of research on communication in PTCs, we will first provide an overview of the primary studies identified to describe the research field. Following this, we will analyze what kinds of roles teachers, parents, and students enact in PTCs. Role theory can provide a lens to understand communication during PTCs. A role theoretic approach emphasizes the nature of people as social actors who learn behaviors appropriate to the positions they occupy in society (Turner, 2001). In interactional role theory (Goffman, 1961), roles are cultural resources that are continuously constructed and reconstructed as the participants engage in both role-making and role-taking. Roles are generated by normative expectations and are related to social positions (Biddle, 1986). Role theory argues that individuals' behavior is based on "how their roles evolve and are defined" (Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015, p. 1692). However, when duties and role requirements are not defined enough to guide the role-holder's behavior, they may slump into a state termed "role ambiguity" (Biddle, 1986). Role theory suggests that role ambiguity will increase an individual's dissatisfaction with their role, hesitation over decisions, anxiety, and confusion, resulting in ineffective performance (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

The roles that teachers and parents are expected to fulfill have been described as "diffuse and limitless" for parents and "specific and limited"

for teachers (Getzels, 1974 in Katz, 1984). While the specificity and limitations of teachers' role functions may vary across countries and education systems, contemporary research highlights the overwhelming demands that teachers face and the lack of clarity in their role expectations (Arvidson et al., 2019). One factor that contributes to these demands is the expectations and demands of parents. A consequence can be elevated workload and diminished self-efficacy for teachers. Arvidson et al. (2019) highlight that stressors can also contribute to emotional demands, which teachers are expected to manage with restraint in their role as teachers.

The research presented above suggests that teacher education programs do not place enough emphasis on communication skills. Furthermore, the roles that teachers take on during communication with parents may be influenced more by their individual experiences and skills than by professional knowledge, ethics, and standards.

2. Method

A systematic review identifies and synthesizes relevant research to help us know what we know about a topic, and what is not yet known (Gough et al., 2017). This meta-synthesis uses an interpretive, rather than an aggregating method and aims to integrate the findings from qualitative studies that examined the same or a closely related topic (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018; Gough et al., 2017; Walsh & Downe, 2005). It was necessary for us to identify literature that provided extracts from conversations taking place during PTCs as well as descriptions of the communication.

The systematic literature searches of English language articles were conducted in March 2020 in the following databases: ERIC, PsycINFO, Academic Search Premier, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search string included four categories. First, words covering family or parent: (parent* OR mother* or father* OR famil*). Second, words covering the context: ("challenging conversations" OR conference). Third, we included the term "teacher", and fourth, our searches were restricted to journal articles, book chapters, and reviews. There was no time limit, but a limitation was language and publication type. We have only included peer-reviewed research published in English.

2.1. Study identification and data extraction

The electronic search produced 1751 articles. The titles and abstracts of these studies were uploaded to the EPPI-Reviewer (http://eppi.ioe.ac. uk/cms/). After removing 326 duplicates, 1425 articles remained for independent screening by the two authors of this paper. 1285 articles were excluded due to violation of at least one of the inclusion criteria. The remaining 140 studies were uploaded in full text to EPPI Reviewer and thoroughly read by both authors. Finally, this resulted in the inclusion of thirty-three studies for this review (marked with * in the reference list). See Fig. 1

Inclusion criteria were set a priori: The study should report on data about PTCs, and be concerned with the dialogue, conversation, relations, or interactions that go on in PTCs. The study must be empirical (i.e., include data and data analyses) and the PTCs should be from elementary or secondary schools. We did not include any design limitations. Exclusion criteria were thus related to a lack of empirical data (evidence), a different age group (e.g., pre-school) (target group), and studies that were about home-school collaboration in general without a focus on PTCs (topic). Discrepancies concerning the inclusion of studies were resolved through discussion between the first and second authors.

Information about each study was extracted and entered into the software program EPPI Reviewer by both authors to identify characteristics of the studies, intervention details, and results, and to synthesize the common themes across included articles (see below for more detail). Both authors checked all the data extracted.
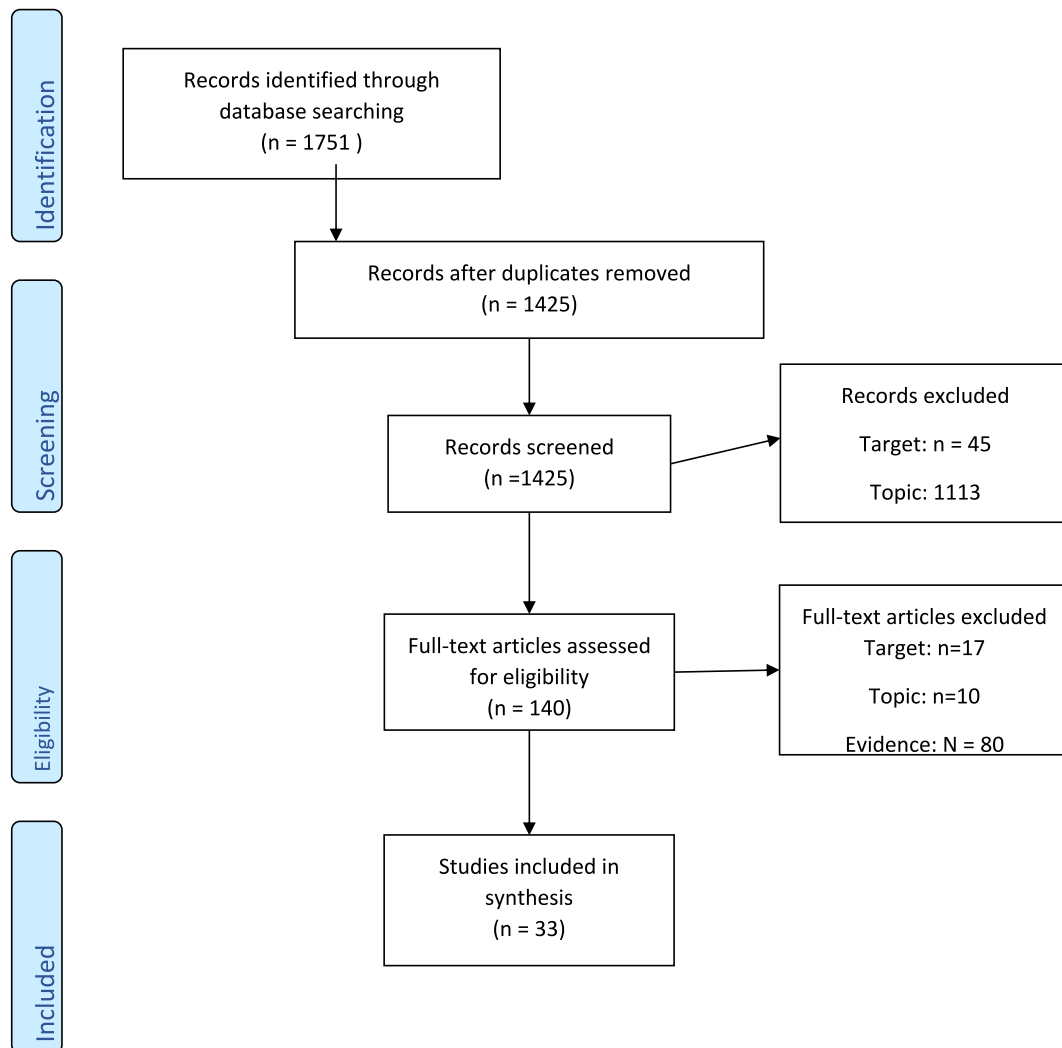
Fig. 1. PRISMA Flow chart of search results, screening, and inclusion-exclusion process.

2.2. Analyses

We extracted information from the studies about research questions, theoretical approaches, country, samples, and results. Extracting this data meant re-reading each study even more carefully. During this process, we became aware that there might be differences in PTCs depending on which context they were carried out in. Some of the studies were concerned with PTCs in special education schools, others where parents represented a different ethnicity or language than the teachers. In other cases, there were no special contexts that the authors wanted to investigate. We identified four different contexts in our material (see Table 1) and decided to include this in our data extraction coding scheme. We hypothesized that the context might matter for the kinds of topics that were discussed or the roles we could identify. We were unable to find substantial distinctions in the evidence, but we retained the context codes as they added to the description of the research field.

Each article was condensed by extracting all dialogue quoted directly plus descriptions of communication. Using these extracts as well as constantly referring to the original study, we identified the topics discussed during PTCs, working both within each of the four main context categories and across them to ensure a common understanding and agreement between the first and second authors of this study.

The analytical process to identify codes involved inductive qualitative analyses (Thomas, 2006) and consisted of several rounds of reading,

highlighting, interpreting, coding, and discussing codes. We created a table with three columns for each study: one column for the teacher, one for the parents, and one for the student. We copied text and utterances from the studies and placed this text in its respective column. We read, interpreted, and coded individually and then discussed the codes we had arrived at. Examples of roles we identified are e.g., "expert", "critic", and "defender". Tables 2 and 3 provide an overview of the roles identified, how we defined each role, and in which papers we found examples of each role. In our presentation of results, we present exact utterances from the studies to illustrate how the roles were understood and operationalized.

3. Results

3.1. What characterizes research on communication in PTCs (countries represented, methods used and topics discussed)?

The 33 included studies were carried out in 13 countries. Most of the studies are from Europe (17 studies) and North America (13 studies). Only two studies were carried out in Asia and one study in South Africa. 18 studies were conducted in elementary schools, six in elementary and junior high schools, and five studies in high schools. Three studies did not specify the school type, and one study comprised both junior high and high school students.

Most of the studies are qualitative (24 studies), two are quantitative,

Table 1

Overview of studies' contexts.

Context	Descriptions	Studies (first author and year)
General PTC context	No reasons for a particular sampling of PTC situations are provided by the authors.	Bilton et al.(2018), Förster (2013), Kim and Chin(2016), Kotthoff (2015), Lemmer (2012), Leung and Yuen(2001), Maclure and Walker (2000), Pillet-Shore (2012), Pillet-Shore (2015), Pillet-Shore (2016), Seghers et al.(2021), Sneyers et al.(2017), Weininger and Lareau (2003).
Parents with another ethnic background and/or language than the teacher	In these studies, the authors wished to study PTCs where parents did not speak the teacher's language/had little command of the school's main language/represented a minority ethnic group in the school	Elbers and de Haan(2014), Greenfield et al.(1998), Greenfield et al. (2000), Howard and Lipinoga(2010), de Haan and Wissink(2013), Matthiessen(2016), Paratore et al.(1999), Sanchez and Orellana (2006)
Individual special needs	In these studies, the authors wished to study PTCs in a special education context (school, class, child with special educational needs) or, as in one case, a child had individual needs based on being assessed as gifted.	Adelswärd and Nilholm(1998), Adelswärd and Nilholm(2000), Caronia (2019), Goldstein et al.(1980), Leenders (2019), Tveit (2009)
Innovation in PTCs	Studies in this category were all concerned with trying new ways of carrying out PTCs.	Bilton et al.(2018), Grundmeyer and Yankey(2016), Inglis (2014), Juniewicz (2003), Lusse et al.(2019), Minke and Anderson(2003)

Table 2

Teacher's and parent's roles in PTC communication.

TEACHER'S Role	Studies (short reference)	PARENT'S Role	Studies (short reference)
The expert (professional knowledge, representing the school, knowing best)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998,2000; Bilton et al., 2018,2018;Caronia 2019; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Elbers and de Haan, 2014; Förster, 2013; Greenfield et al., 1998; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Kim and Chin, 2016; Kotthoff, 2015; Leenders 2019; Maclure and Walker 2000; Matthiessen, 2016; Paratore et al., 1999; Pillet-Shore, 2012; Sanchez and Orellana, 2006; Seghers et al., 2021; Sneyers et al., 2017; Weininger and Lareau, 2003	**The expert** (on the child, child's needs, educational ideas or knowledge, decisions)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998; Maclure and Walker 2000; Paratore et al., 1999; Seghers et al., 2021; Weininger and Lareau, 2003
The critic (praises, assesses, judges child and in some cases the home)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 2000; Aronia 2019; Caronia 2019; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Elbers and de Haan, 2014; Greenfield et al., 2000; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Inglis, 2014; Kotthoff, 2015; Maclure and Walker 2000; Pillet-Shore, 2012; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Pillet-Shore, 2016; Sanchez and Orellana, 2006; Weininger and Lareau, 2003	**The critic** (of child, of teacher and school)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 2000; Bilton et al., 2018; Caronia 2019; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Elbers and de Haan, 2014; Greenfield et al., 2000; Kotthoff, 2015; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Weininger and Lareau, 2003
The informer (provides information)	Caronia 2019; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Inglis, 2014; Kim and Chin, 2016; Lemmer 2012; Leung and Yuen, 2001; Matthiessen, 2016; Minke and Anderson, 2003; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Sneyers et al., 2017; Weininger and Lareau, 2003	**The informer**	Leung and Yuen, 2001; Weininger and Lareau, 2003
The controller (of time, topics, information, agenda)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998; Bilton et al., 2018; Goldstein et al., 1980; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Maclure and Walker 2000; Matthiessen, 2016; Paratore et al., 1999; Weininger and Lareau, 2003	**The controller** (of information, of participation, willingness to cooperate)	Leung and Yuen, 2001; Paratore et al., 1999; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Tveit, 2009; Weininger and Lareau, 2003
The supporter (of parents/child)	Bilton et al., 2018; Leenders 2019; Sanchez and Orellana, 2006;	**Supporter of teacher**	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998; Bilton et al., 2018; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Greenfield et al., 1998; Kotthoff, 2015; Matthiessen, 2016; Pillet-Shore, 2012;
The defender (of self/school practices)	Lemmer 2012; Maclure and Walker 2000;	**Defender of child**/Advocate	Kotthoff, 2015; Lemmer 2012; Maclure and Walker 2000;
A communication broker (in conflict situations, reduce and redirect conflict or negative assessment)	Caronia 2019; Leenders 2019; Tveit, 2009;	**A communication broker** (changes/tries to change the perspective that the teacher has, reframes)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998,2000; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Elbers and de Haan, 2014; Greenfield et al., 1998; Maclure and Walker 2000; Matthiessen, 2016;
		The good parent (supporting child, following up schoolwork, "a teacher", moral values)	Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998,2000; Förster, 2013; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Inglis, 2014; Kotthoff, 2015; Paratore et al., 1999; Pillet-Shore, 2015; Weininger and Lareau, 2003
		The defeated ((finally) accepting the teacher's narrative or conclusion)	Elbers and de Haan, 2014; de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Maclure and Walker 2000; Matthiessen, 2016;

and seven were carried out using quantitative and qualitative methods. More than half of the studies used observations with or without a camera. The remaining qualitative studies used interviews.

We were unable to identify specific theoretical approaches in nine of the studies. Conversational analysis (CA) is used in 11 studies and 5 studies utilize Discourse analysis (DA). The remaining studies use a wide range of theoretical perspectives: Grounded theory (3) Bourdieu's sociological theory (2), Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, Epstein) (2), Theory of communicative action (1), Theory of pre-textuality (1), Institutional theory (1), theory of conflict (1), Attributional theory (1), Positioning theory (1), Politeness theory (1) and Narrative theory (2).

Table 3

Student's roles in PTC communication.

STUDENT'S ROLE	Studies
The object (receiver of information or the talked about, the judged, assessed)	Adelswärd and Nilholm(1998), Adelswärd and Nilholm(2000), Bilton et al.(2018), Bilton et al.(2018), Elbers and de Haan (2014), Lemmer (2012), Maclure and Walker (2000),Sneyers et al.(2017), Tveit (2009), Weininger and Lareau(2003)
The informer (informs about self, progress, work)	Juniewicz (2003), Minke and Anderson(2003)
The defender (of self)	Bilton et al.(2018)
The interpreter	Elbers and de Haan(2014), Sanchez and Orellana(2006),

The 33 studies included in our review were conducted in various settings and for diverse purposes. To provide a structured overview, we categorized them into four different contexts or situations. The studies are grouped based on the identified contexts, and below we provide a brief summary of the topics discussed during the PTCs in each group.

3.1.1. General PTC: conducted in mainstream schools

Three of the 13 studies we have categorized as "General PTC" are particularly concerned with educational decision-making related to future school choice (Kotthoff, 2015; Seghers et al., 2021; Sneyers et al., 2017). All three are European studies from countries where the school system streams children at an early age. Since this is typical of the school system, we have included these studies in the "General PTC" category. The other ten studies do not have a specific topic of interest but investigate the communication that goes on within common PTC meetings. Lemmer (2012) is interested in who does the talking and what roles teachers and parents take in the conversations. Pillet-Shore (2012, 2015, 2016) analyzes the use of praise in PTC communication and a phenomenon she calls "the good parent", and in her article from 2016, she studies how teachers evaluate students during parent-teacher conferences. The research questions posed are diverse, but the contexts are PTC meetings in mainstream schools.

The topics that parents and teachers discuss in these studies are quite diverse, covering assignments and tests the child has completed, the child's in-class and at-home behavior, how the school has treated the child, assessment, transitions, and the child's future. Maclure and Walker (2000) describe a common format where the PTC starts with the teacher's diagnosis of the child's work and/or behavior (e.g., "She's working well …", "She needs to spend a little more time on her homework"), followed by an "opening up of the dialogue". They point out that during these brief encounters, aspects of moral conduct, accountability, and responsibility are negotiated and defended (p.21).

3.1.2. Alternative approaches to PTC

The alternative approaches identified in this review are: Including students in PTCs (Bilton et al., 2018; Inglis, 2014; Minke and Anderson, 2003), using student portfolios as well as including students in PTCs (Juniewicz, 2003), introducing virtual PTCs (Grundmeyer and Yankey, 2016), and a study which tested four different approaches to PTCs (Lusse et al., 2019). The four approaches are individual introductory conferences, home visits, alternative individual parent-teacher conferences, and alternative collective parent meetings.

Although the study by Bilton et al. (2017) is not experimental, nor does it attempt to test alternative approaches, it has been placed in this category since 19 out of their 20 randomly chosen conversations (out of 52) include students, and most studies in the category General PTC do not include students. Inglis (2014) has investigated the actual and potential participation of students in PTCs through data collected in diaries, questionnaires, and interviews involving teachers, parents, and students. The other studies are studies that are trying new ways and that also include supporting teachers to develop new ways of planning and conducting PTCs.

Students are mainly present in the alternative approaches and more comments from the teacher are directed toward the student. The topics dealt with are, however, comparable to those evident in the General PTC studies: student behavior in class, student's academic achievement,

assessment, progress, and future. Bilton et al.(2018) reported that of the 20 conversations they analyzed, teachers reported problems or student shortcomings in 11 cases.

3.1.3. Individual special needs

This category encompasses PTC studies related to children with special educational needs, including one study involving a gifted child (Caronia, 2019). The classification of Caronia (2019) falls under "Individual special needs" due to its focus on unique requirements beyond mainstream education. The remaining five studies concentrate on children with mental disabilities (Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998,2000), those requiring Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (Goldstein et al., 1980), or attending special education schools (Leenders, 2019) and diagnosed with special educational needs (Tveit, 2009).

Goldstein et al.(1980) offers a comprehensive analysis of 14 observed conferences, addressing diverse topics such as curriculum, rights, responsibilities, health, instructional materials, performance, assessment, behavior, special services, and placement. The other five studies emphasize social behavior and performance. Adelswärd and Nilholm(1998) and Adelswärd and Nilholm(2000) focus on moral behavior and the ideal student identity. Caronia (2019) and Tveit (2009) highlight assessment, while Leenders, de Jong, Monfrance, and Haelermans (2019) discuss learning outcomes, educational decision-making, homework, and sensitive topics like nourishment and poverty.

3.1.4. Parents from different language backgrounds

Eight studies, conducted in elementary schools across the USA (Greenfield et al., 1998;2000; Howard and Lipinoga, 2010; Paratore et al., 1999; Sanchez and Orellana, 2006), the Netherlands (de Haan and Wissink, 2013; Elbers.

2014), and Denmark (Matthiessen, 2016), explore PTCs involving parents from diverse language backgrounds. These investigations share a common goal: to examine verbal and non-verbal communication between linguistically diverse parents and teachers during PTCs. Topics encompass students' academic performance (handwriting, reading, spelling, mathematics, specific subjects), teachers' evaluations, the child's social integration, and strategies for parental support at home. Notably, one study (Elbers and de Haan, 2014) primarily focuses on educational decision-making regarding school transitions, particularly the shift from elementary to junior high school.

3.2. What roles do teachers and parents enact?

Tables 2 and 3 provide an overview of the roles we have identified and in which studies they occur. Table 2 shows for instance that when the teacher makes statements using professional knowledge and shows that they are more knowledgeable, or that they refer to school rules or procedures in a way that conveys that they have more knowledge about this than the parent, we have categorized this as an "expert" role. The parents can also be experts about their child when they refer to areas that teachers do not know about, and sometimes they also show professional knowledge and have opinions about what is best for their child's learning.

We have identified seven roles that teachers enact during the PTC conversations, nine roles that parents enact, and four roles that students

enact. However, if we look at how many studies each role has been identified within, we see that some roles are more prevalent than others. In the following section, we will elaborate on the roles identified, and explain how we have understood each one based on the evidence provided in the included studies.

3.2.1. The expert

Most of the terms used to describe roles are used for both teacher and parent, but they can refer to different communicative behaviors or content. *Teacher as expert* has been identified in more cases than *Parent as expert*. In the studies, teachers often act as the "experts" by understanding school goals, and curriculum, conducting tests, and proficiently communicating results and grading using expert language. Their professional knowledge and the fact that they represent the institution allows them to take on an expert role in communicative situations. Parents as experts are less common, but Seghers et al.(2021) illustrates how the middle-class parents in this study know more about which school they want to choose for their child than the teachers, and the teachers are also very careful not to give precise advice on the matter. The mother, Molly, in Adelwärd's study (1998) also exhibits an expert role when she questions how much speech therapy her daughter receives, and she concludes that "A quarter of an hour a day would be fine" (p. 87). Weininger and Lareau(2003) offers a case where the mother takes on an expert role in assessing her daughter's reading abilities:

> Ms. Hopewell: So that's where I am with Alison. I think she is weak in math. I
>
> think her strong point is reading and the English side, the writing and the
>
> reading. She reads Edson's books. And she'll come in and she'll say, "oh, this is
>
> so exciting.'' She'll say, "listen to this.'' And she'll read part of this book. So, I
>
> think she's pretty much, at least up to class level, if not above, with her reading (p. 397).

3.2.2. The critic

Both teachers and parents *communicate critique* (positive or negative) of the child during PTCs. Assessing the child is considered the institutional goal of a PTC (Caronia, 2019). It is common for teachers to provide a review of the child's strengths and challenges, academically and socially, right after the formal greetings have taken place. Several studies note that parents are often silent or simply respond with short comments like "yes" or "uh-huh" to convey their agreement during this phase (e.g., Förster, 2016; Maclure and Walker, 2000), and others describe a more collaborative approach to critiquing, in Adelswärd and Nilholm(2000) where the teacher and mother of Cindy interact through dialog in describing "who Cindy is". Cindy is a child with special educational needs who is present at the PTC, and the mother assists in conveying the teacher's comments about her to make sure that Cindy understands. When the teacher says, "we think you're cooperative", the mother tells Cindy "you work well with others" (p. 554). Of the nine problems discussed about Cindy, the mother introduces three, the teacher five, and Cindy one.

Positive and negative critique: In the case study on a PTC between a teacher and a mother who had a child categorized as gifted, Caronia (2019) identified two assessment trajectories. The teacher preferred the "no problem" trajectory and constructed the child at school as relatively unproblematic, whereas the mother preferred the "problem" trajectory and questioned the "unproblematicity" (pp. 131–132). Positive assessments were more frequent in the teacher's talk (22 positive out of 28 assessments in total) than in the mother's talk (3 positive out of 10). Greenfield et al.(2000) corroborates this finding based on eight videotaped conferences that show how parents tended to respond with "harmony" when the teachers uttered negatively critical comments and

parents responded with discord when the assessments were formulated as praise. Greenfield discusses this in relation to culture as the parents in their study were all from ethnic minorities and posits that more individualistic societies (in this case the USA) value praise whereas more collective societies value negative criticism but are careful not to conclude. There appear to be good reasons to question whether this is a culturally motivated behavior or not. Neither the study by Caronia and Vandini (above) nor the study by Pillet-Shore (2012) is concerned with parents with a minority background. Pillet-Shore (2012) finds that teachers' praise of students is problematic for parents (her study is based on 41 video-recorded PTCs in the USA), and explains:

> Through their use of these interactional resources, parents index their
>
> orientation to the teacher's preceding student-praising utterance as a compliment,
>
> displaying their sensitivity to the preference to accept and agree with the teacher's
>
> compliment while at the same time avoiding self-praise by avoiding saying anything
>
> semantically fitted to the specifics of the teacher's prior turn (page 185).

A reason for avoiding praise could be a sense of self-praise, that praise for the child reflects on the parent, and Pillet-Shore refers to Goffman (1956) who describes how compliments can lead to feelings of discomfort. Parents work to avoid praise and rather focus on problems. Letting parents bring up problems the child is experiencing is also considered a way for the parent to present themself as a "good parent" (Pillet-Shore, 2015 – see below).

The child is the main object of critique, but parents do bring up a critique of the school or the teacher, and teachers are also critical of parents. Transcripts in the study by Weininger and Lareau(2003) illustrate how a mother (defined as "middle class" in the study) was able to probe the teacher's behaviors, and implicitly criticize the teacher's neglect to communicate a grade to her daughter. Maclure and Walker (2000) reports on a similar phenomenon. The mother in this case starts by saying she isn't sure her son is completely honest with her, "but he says there's a lot of messing about going on in his class and he does want to get on with his work" (p. 13). Both examples show how parents were able to be critical in subtle ways. Another mother with an ethnic minority background (Matthiessen, 2016) was not as successful with her complaint (see below under parent as controller). Parents also report feeling negatively judged by the teacher for their child's mistakes or for not helping their child enough (Minke and Anderson, 2003).

One study found that teachers tended to make more *effort attributions* when describing children of minority language parents than when describing children of majority language parents (DeHaan, 2013:304). A "lack in" psychological factors was used to describe children in 33% of conversations with majority parents but only occurred in 8% of conversations with minority parents. Minority parents confirmed the explanations but did not elaborate on them in the interaction. As a rule, minority language parents in DeHaan's study argued for more advice on how their child could succeed in school, whereas the teachers pleaded for "realism" (p. 306).

3.2.3. Providers of information

Teachers as *providers of information* is more prominent in the studies than parents as providers of information. This could be expected since the PTCs are commonly about schoolwork, academic achievement, and behavior at school and the teacher will have more relevant information about this. However, Lemmer (2012) refers to parents wanting to have the role of informer, being able to share information with the teachers, but who are unable to because of limited time and the teacher making use of the whole time slot. Leung and Yuen(2001) reports that parents appreciated teachers' active listening skills, so they were able to share their experiences, and Weininger and Lareau(2003) reports that

conferences "also entail an exchange of information concerning the child's progress, needs, and "interests'"" (p. 384). Teachers are the ones who take on the primary role of an informer, the person with the most important information in the PTC context. Minke and Anderson(2003) also finds agreement among teachers and parents that the main goal of the PTC is for the teacher to convey information to the parents.

Parents do, however, provide important information to teachers about their children as pointed out by Leenders et al.: "It seems common practice in all schools that teachers in their first interview with parents and in the parent–teacher meetings ask parents how their child is doing and take this information into account" (Leenders et al., 2019: 525). This, the authors explain, lays a foundation for mutual trust, and provides the teacher with relevant information that is used.

3.2.4. The supporter

Both parents and teachers take on a *role as supporters* during PTC communication. Quite a few studies show how parents support the teachers by corroborating the teachers' assessments, by taking the teachers' side when discussing future needs for a student's behavioral change, and by emphasizing the importance of what the teacher says. Teachers demonstrate sensitivity to parents' needs, offering support and reassurance. Parents often express appreciation for the teachers' helpfulness and insights during conferences (Lemmer, 2012). Additionally, teachers can provide support directly to students in situations where parents adopt a very critical stance regarding their child's achievements.

There can also be instances where teachers expect too much support from parents. Teachers in Elbers's study (2014) emphasized that parents are co-responsible for their children's school success and behavior at school. For Dutch (majority language) parents, this assumption was shared by teachers and parents. Minority language parents rejected this responsibility, however, arguing that they as parents are not educated teachers and thus not knowledgeable of the school subjects, nor are they able to influence the other pupils' behavior at school (p. 259). This is in line with Greenfields' study (2000) where the parents see the teacher as the child's academic instructor, and the parent has the responsibility for the social construction at home. On the other hand, the teachers see parents as auxiliary teachers, helping the child succeed at home.

3.2.5. The controller

Tveit (2009) reports that teachers in her sample (working with children diagnosed as having special educational needs) explain that they withhold information if the teacher believes it is too much for the parent to deal with. Parents bring up what they perceive to be most important, what needs to be changed, and what they also believe the parents are aware of. Matthiessen(2016), p. 328) points out that once the PTC communication has commenced, the "organization of the turn-taking [thus] becomes mechanical, leaving it up to the teacher when it is the turn of the parent's to speak." In another PTC conversation, a mother discussed a situation where her son, who is Muslim, was required to participate in a church visit. Other Muslim children hadn't participated, and the transcript highlights how the teacher's interpretation of events took precedence over the mother's account. In this sense, the teacher also controls the narrative, and the mother gives up (see also the role of Defeated). Maclure (2000, p. 10) finds that teachers "claimed, and were accorded, the right to speak first, and at some length—an advantage which allowed them to define what would count as a 'legitimate' conversation about the student." This is also the case when a mother tries to question the teacher's routines for checking homework, a question the teacher does not care for. The teacher simply denies that her routines are not good enough and then proceeds to end the PTC: "So, I guess we're – if you don't have any more [questions] I think there may be someone waiting …" (p. 393).

Although the studies report fewer instances of parents being involved in setting the agenda and controlling time and narrative, Paratore et al. (1999) reports on a situation where the *parent as the controller* is evident. A parent in this study refers to the use of a portfolio to assist her in

bringing up topics and playing a more active role: "It gave me more confidence," the mother explains (p. 66). The portfolios contained information about how the parents had supported their child's literacy learning at home. The parents used this information during PTC communication and were able to share their ideas and even play a role in the pedagogical development of learning at school.

Weininger and Lareau(2003) considers whether control is a question of class. In this study, middle-class parents tended to take over the conversational space to a greater extent (p. 386). One example provided is one of chatter rather than having any substantive impact on the topics normally covered. However, by taking command of the time spent on chatter, the parent is also appealing to the teacher as a friend. In addition, middle-class parents would, according to Weininger and Lareau (2003), bring up topics they were interested in discussing further, and the teacher would be more of a passive listener.

One main way that parents control PTC communication is, however, through what information they wish to give and what to withhold (Leung and Yuen, 2001; Tveit, 2009). Leung and Yuen(2001) describes the parents as taking a "mouth-shut strategy" and refusing to express opinions openly (p. 29). The authors believe this might be due to Chinese politeness (a study carried out in Hong Kong), but also other studies have found that parents control what they say. Tveit's study was carried out among Norwegian parents and teachers (Tveit, 2009), and although parents in her study do say that they are frank and open, there are also instances where they hold back. If their child is present, they refrain from being too critical, they gloss over, what they say. Others hold back because of their personality. Parents control information strategically as they can also say they will do one thing, but then decide to do something else (Leung and Yuen, 2001).

3.2.6. The defender

Teacher as defender and *parent as defender* occurs when teachers and parents hold opposing views of a situation. Kotthoff (2015) presents a conversation between a teacher and a father where the father defends his son's absence from school by explaining that they had a doctor's appointment. A teacher in Maclure's study (Maclure and Walker (2000) believes a student has had too much help on a geography task. The teacher says she "had to write excellent on it" (p. 15) since he had answered all questions correctly, "so whether he got any help from anywhere, I don't know." The parents explain that their son has been a scout and that can explain why he knew all the questions concerning latitude and maps, taking a defensive attitude towards the teacher's insinuations of receiving too much help. In Lemmer's study (Lemmer, 2012, p. 91), parents state that "Teachers take the whole 10 min. I think it's a defense mechanism. I don't think there are many teachers who listen." They also explain that "Teachers get quite defensive and sometimes become very unapproachable." Parents experience teachers as defenders of themselves or the school, and teachers experience parents as defenders of the child.

3.2.7. Communication broker

A role as a defender entails taking the other person's side (or your own side) or acting in ways that are perceived as defensive – not listening or ending an uncomfortable conversation. The role of a *communication broker* means trying to alter the other person's perceptions through communication that reframes or redirects. This can be in situations where e.g., the teacher tries to reduce the seriousness or relevance of negative results (e.g., Caronia, 2019).

Difficult themes and conflicts are the areas where communication brokerage is mostly used. Leenders (2019) describes a special education teacher who has a student that refuses to take their medicine. In this case, the teacher "helps parents to become conscious of the problem while finding a solution that fits the child, parents, and home situation of this particular family" (p. 528). Teachers in this study reported on instances of conflict with parents during PTCs, and Leenders (2019, p. 528) concludes:

In all these cases, the teacher remains calm and gives the parents the opportunity to become calm again. Teachers are prepared to admit possible mistakes by the school, even little ones, and are sensitive to deep emotions of parents. This results in seeking a solution together. By taking the initiative and showing their own vulnerability, teachers contribute to the restoration of the trustful relationship.

A conversation between a mother, son, and teacher referred to by Tveit (2009) also illustrates how teachers can be communication brokers by admitting to mistakes or flaws ("I certainly don't see everything", page 248) and at the same time continuing to explain and elaborate on her view of the situation. The teacher maneuvers her way by showing empathy and understanding yet holding her ground and finally arriving at a solution.

Communication brokerage can also be used to the advantage of one position. Matthiessen(2016), p. 330) describes an incident with Hadia who is teased by some boys for wearing a head scarf and reacts strongly to this. Hadia's mother wants to bring this up with the teachers because she believes the teachers do not understand why her daughter reacted so strongly. But the teachers reframe the situation by questioning how Hadia is doing with her eczema. The mother's concern about the teasing behavior is not followed up.

Adelswärd and Nilholm(1998) uses the term communication broker about the mother, Molly, in her case study. She explains that "Molly can be seen as a communication broker by asking Cindy questions, expanding Cindy's turns, and presenting Cindy as active and communicative" (p. 88). Molly is trying to expand the teacher's view of Cindy's language and communication abilities and attempting to get the teacher to see her differently by engaging Cindy in a conversation. The teacher sees Cindy as a girl with speech problems, and the mother sees her as a child who actively claims too much communication space. Another example of teachers and parents framing a problem differently is provided in the study by Elbers and de Haan(2014). Here a teacher believes a boy has ADHD, but the father sees the son's behavior as "laziness". The father tries to influence the teacher's perceptions but does not appear to be successful. Maclure and Walker (2000, p. 15) finds that especially in the case of parents with children who have special educational needs, "… parents strongly contested good news or 'no problem' diagnoses by the special needs teacher and drew attention to problems which in their view required specialist support." In other cases, parents would contest positive comments by saying that their child's abilities were underestimated, attempting to reframe the problem and influence the outcomes.

3.2.8. The defeated

However, parents do not always succeed in reframing or brokering. In many cases, the parents take on or are given the role of *the defeated* when their attempts at communication brokerage fail. de Haan and Wissink(2013) provides a transcript of a conversation between a teacher and a father where the teacher believes the child in question has learning difficulties, whereas the father wants the school to help the child more. This father does not speak Dutch well, and eventually, he accepts the teacher's explanation of learning difficulties with a "well …" (described as a "disappointed well", see p. 307). In Maclure's study (2000, pp. 18–19), we witness a "blame game" where the mother and teacher keep tossing the blame for a student's failure to complete an assignment correctly (reframing the problem) between student, teacher, and mother – before it finally settles with the mother.

In the case of Hadia (referred to above), the mother accepts defeat and discontinues her story about how her daughter reacted when the boys took her head scarf. In another encounter involving Hooya (mother) and Sharon (teacher) (Matthiessen, 2016, pp. 328–329), Hooya succeeds by reaching an agreement that her son will not attend Christmas services. However, she still faces defeat as her account of the situation, where her son was compelled to participate while other Muslim children were not, is not acknowledged. The teacher's perspective on the events prevails, and Hooya accepts this defeat.

3.2.9. The good parent

Much of the information that parents share can be regarded as essential for the role as the "good parent". *The "good parent"* is knowledgeable and caring and wishes to help her (mainly mothers took part in the PTCs) child succeed in school. Parents use narratives to present themselves as competent and supportive regarding their children's learning, showing their capability to play their part in their child's education (Kotthoff, 2015, p. 389). Parents stage themselves as pedagogically competent. They supervise homework and support the same educational goals as the school has. In this way, teachers learn about what goes on at home, how the child performs and behaves, and what kind of support the parents can provide. They are to be trusted.

3.3. The students' roles

Thirteen studies in this review included students in the PTCs. In Table 3 we present students' roles which have been categorized as "the object", "the informer", "the defender", and "the translator".

3.3.1. The object

Students in the 13 studies are mainly talked about, assessed, and critiqued. The transcripts rarely reveal utterances from students, sometimes only one or two words as a brief reply to questions such as the student in the excerpt below from Bilton et al.(2018), p. 239):

> T: I've noticed in my classroom for example where your bench is that sometimes (.) you're quite (.) willing to be distracted by other people around you would you say that was a fair comment?
>
> S: yeah (0.5)
>
> T: now Miss Regan said that she's moved you to the front of the class (1.0) do you think that's improved things?
>
> S: (1.0) not really
>
> T: why's that?
>
> S: (1.0) I don't know
>
> M: are you still getting involved in others' conversations?
>
> S: yeah

Tveit (2009) found that the pupils (mostly) did not play an active role but managed to squeeze in a sentence or two in between. In the case of Cindy (Adelswärd and Nilholm, 1998), teacher and mother oscillate between talking about and talking with Cindy, prompting her to engage herself in the conversation. The students were also rather uninvolved in Weininger and Lareau (2003), and generally described as being quiet.

3.3.2. The informer

However, there are some studies that show a different picture, where students are more active. The study by Minke and Anderson(2003) was an intervention study aiming to enhance communication among the participants in the PTC. One of the interventions was called the Family conference model, and teachers were given training in how to establish, set up and conduct such a conference. Participating students were active in the conferences, engaging in dyadic exchanges with parents and teachers. On average, 81% of the questions teachers asked were directed to the students. Teachers were also active, trying to elicit the student's engagement and participation in the conferences. Parents reported enjoying hearing their children discuss their own work in school. One mother stated: "Looking at [my child's] face, it was amazing. Actually, having her telling me what she's good at and what she's not good at … and we agreed on it … her eyes lit up and she's like, 'Okay, we can do this'." Another mother is quoted as saying: "I'm shocked that he realized he needs to work on [being bossy], shocked that he admitted to it. But

I'm glad … maybe he wants to get a little bit better." (p. 60).

Student-led parent conferences are also the topic in Juniewicz (2003). Teachers reported that students showed more enthusiasm and engagement throughout the entire process which encompassed portfolio development for the parent conference. Students expressed positive views about the experience, although some did raise concerns about the extra effort and time required.

3.3.3. The defender

Being under scrutiny and listening to others' judgments can be uncomfortable. Bilton et al.(2018) brings this up in a scenario where parents and teachers were in a discussion, comparing hard-working students with another student present at the PTC. The objective was to encourage the student to put in more effort. This created pressure on the student, leading to resistance as he defended himself: "[yeah I mean I do] do that on the practice papers (sounds indignant)" (Bilton et al., 2018, p. 241).

3.3.4. The translator

Some students are placed in more challenging situations. They are the object of the conversation, but at the same time they must perform as translators for their parents. Nahdir, a student in Elbers and de Haan (2014), was both the student in question and acted as an interpreter. The mother was less active, and the teacher conducted the conversation with Nahdir. In this case, Nahdir was the student in question, the translator, and the one who took part in the conversation with the teacher while his mother "… contributed occasionally in short phrases of poor Dutch (p. 257)."

Four students in Sanchez and Orellana(2006) study acted as translators between home and school. They were the oldest students in the family acting as interpreters for their parents. In these cases, the siblings of the child in question took part in PTC meetings to assist their parents.

4. Summary of main findings

We will summarize our main findings on what characterizes research on communication in PTCs (RQ1) with the following four points:

(1) There are few empirical studies from each country and from each of the context categories identified, indicating that the research field is not well-developed.

(2) Most of the studies share similar research designs, frequently employing observations, sometimes supplemented by video recordings, to document communication. Real-life conversations are recorded and transcribed. Notably, these studies adopt a single-time-point approach for each PTC, lacking longitudinal exploration over extended periods, which could provide insights into the progression of communication dynamics and role evolution within PTCs. Furthermore, only one study has an experimental design. Despite design similarities, the theoretical perspectives vary.

(3) PTCs are recognizable across studies. Aside from the experimental study by Minke and Anderson(2003), the study involving portfolios used by students (Juniewicz, 2003), and the study by Grundmeyer and Yankey(2016), which basically only involves one phase (the assessment phase), the conferences included in these studies are traditional in the sense that they follow the main and seemingly universal script which involves greetings – small talk – assessment of child – dialogical phase – closing (see e.g., Maclure & Walker, 2000). Some of the conferences are very short, lasting only about 5 min, and it is not uncommon that they last in the range of just 10–20 min. Time is limited, and teachers control this time. They maintain the pace needed to "get through" all the topics on their agenda, and they round off the conference to make room for a new parent.

(4) Although the meetings are brief, teachers and parents can expect to be involved in conversations about ethics, child-rearing, morality, assessment, religion, rights, decisions that can shape the child's future, and much more. There are very many topics that are discussed in the PTCs, but the main topics are assessment of the child's academic learning and social behavior.

Concerning RQ2, we identified seven roles that teachers enacted, nine roles that parents enacted, and three roles that students enacted. One issue related to roles that stands out in this review is the issue of power. There are examples of shared power and authority in the studies included in this review (especially in the case of middle-class parents and school choice). For the main part, however, the teacher is the person who is in charge, who is the expert, and who controls what goes on and for how long. Parents express a desire to learn about their child at school, but there are also examples of parents wishing to be able to provide information. They also try to reframe a story in several cases, but not always with success. The studies that used portfolios showed some promising signs of parents who felt they were more in control, and that they could contribute more equally. However, there is not enough evidence to conclude how portfolios can be used or what effects they might have in strengthening parental power and control. The roles that students enact in these studies are few, and mainly type-cast the student as "the object".

5. Limitations

Answers to our research questions have been achieved by conducting a qualitative systematic review of existing research. However, systematic reviews, although they provide a rigorous account of a larger body of research (Gough et al., 2017), also have limitations. In our case, the search strategy only involved searching in English language databases. We have not searched the references in each paper for other studies, nor have we hand-searched specific journals or websites. This might have produced more studies and could possibly also have provided insights into other roles.

We cannot assume that the roles we have identified are the only possibilities in the material we have analyzed. The first and second authors have carefully extracted utterances and descriptions and have discussed each role, but we must accept that there could have been other interpretations.

6. Discussion

Despite apparent limitations, the studies included in this review have provided insights into some of the complex roles enacted during communication in PTCs. As mentioned above, role theory suggests that individual behaviour and interactions are influenced by the roles or positions individuals have within a society. These roles come with expectations of how individuals are supposed to behave and what they are supposed to do in different contexts. A teacher represents the school and the expectations that the educational system has for both achievement and behaviour. The roles that teachers are expected to fulfill have previously been described as "specific and limited" (Getzels, 1974 in Katz, 1984), but also demanding and overwhelming (Arvidsson et al., 2019). In our review, we have identified seven roles, and we would not describe these as specific or limited because they are constantly ongoing and can change rapidly. This may be an indication of how being a teacher has evolved and become more complex, and that communication with parents requires different skills today. However, our study also reveals that in these 33 studies, the teacher is mainly the expert and in control of the PTC situation. The parents are on the teacher's turf. Despite decades of promoting more collaborative approaches to PTCs, with common goals and shared responsibilities (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2019), even the latest studies in our review reveal a traditional conception of the PTC.

According to Turner (2001), being a teacher as well as being a parent or a student can be classified as structural roles, whereas the roles we have identified are functional group roles. Since a role always bears a functional or representational relationship to one or more other roles, Turner explains (p. 88), change in one role always means change in a system of roles. Furthermore, if role change implies that the responsibilities or territory of one participant is encroached on, change processes might become competitive. This can help us understand the communication that takes place when parents attempt to reframe a situation and are more critical of the teacher's or the school's role in creating difficult situations. Role change is the shift in definition, rules, or norms for the performance of usual behaviours (Turner, 2001). To effectuate change in roles, there has to be an impetus for change, a shared vision of change, and support for change. A lack of a shared agenda, shared goals, preparation, and of follow-up can enhance role ambiguities and may create more anxiety and uncertainty for teachers, parents, and students.

One way to support change can be to address the expectations that the participants bring with them to the PTCs and to ensure shared responsibility for preparations and follow-up. Sharing the responsibility for follow-up is a key recommendation emphasized by researchers (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2019). However, reaching a stage where all participants achieve a mutual understanding and agreement can present challenges. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) note that in addition to differences in race and language that can exist between teachers, students, and parents, there are also marked differences in their biographies and experiences. In the study by Cil and Dotger (2017) which we referred to above, the preservice teachers encountered difficulties in determining what they could or should communicate and defining boundaries between their professional responsibilities and those of the parents. In-service teachers might have the same struggles, and this uncertainty can be heightened in situations with cultural and language differences.

There are three roles that are evident for students (plus the possibility of being the interpreter) in this study. None of the roles are concerned with being ambitious, setting goals, and having expectations. Instead, they seem to take on the role of the teacher as provider of information. Although student-led conferences have been advocated for many years (Benson & Barnett, 2005; Tholander, 2011), the studies identified here do not reflect this change. It could be that our search terms were not as useful in identifying studies where students lead or play more active roles (see suggestions for future research).

The roles that we have identified in the studies on PTC communication are, however, many and challenging. This meta-synthesis sheds light on the intricate nature of PTCs by synthesizing data and results across studies. It can serve as a resource for the creation of simulation cases and can also serve as a resource for fostering in-depth discussions within schools, parent associations, and teacher education programs.

Teacher education programs need to actively contribute to the cultivation of knowledge and skills that facilitate positive communication between schools and families. Equally vital is the role of schools in shouldering the responsibility of honing skills, competence, and practices that align with their objectives for effective home-school collaboration.

7. Future research

This first meta-synthesis of communication in PTCs provides a foundation to understand the complexity of the communication that goes on. However, the studies included do not shed light on how skills to enhance partnership and shared responsibility during PTCs develop or how they differ under varying circumstances. Based on this review, we see a need for longitudinal research, comparative research, and experimental research designs to address learning and change. A relevant question to pursue is how teacher education *and* schools effectively contribute to developing pre-service and in-service teachers' skills. What

is possible to learn as pre-service teachers and how can knowledge and skills development be supported in the workplace?

The studies included here did not investigate the consequences of PTCs in a wider perspective of home-school collaboration. It could be relevant to address questions such as: What value do PTCs have? What role do they play in enhancing parental involvement? How does student involvement matter?

By studying the development of skills, the broader collaborative implications, and the value of PTCs, research can paint a more complete picture and contribute more profoundly to knowledge that is essential for teacher education and schools.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Chat GPT in order to get suggestions on how to reduce the number of words in five paragraphs. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

A review of research from databases

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