



Towards an ecological paradigm on formation of partnerships: Implications for educational leadership

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Our involvement

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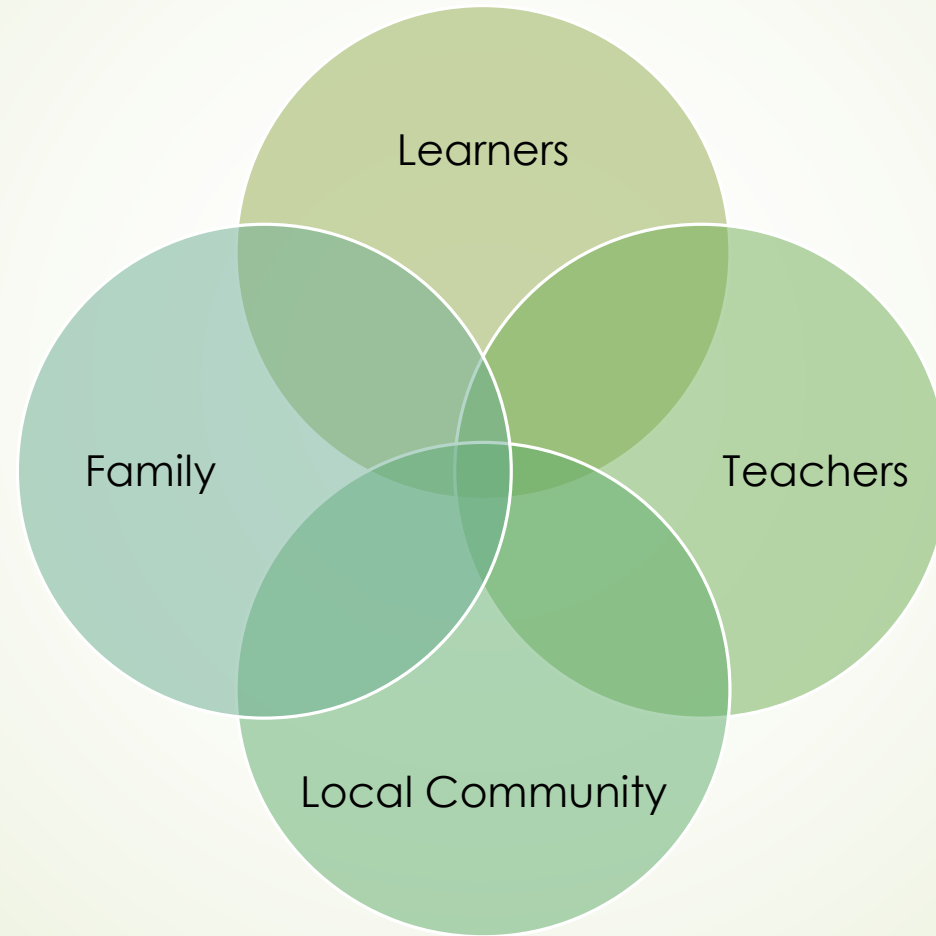
Male, T., and Palaiologou, I., (2012) Learning –Centred Leadership or Pedagogical Leadership? An alternative approach to leadership in education contexts, in *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, vol 15 (1) pp. 107-118 (DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2011.617839).



Epistemic nature of pedagogy

- ▶ pedagogy is epistemic in nature in that it supports the creation rather than transmission of knowledge;
- ▶ episteme is about striving to reveal general and everlasting truth (Mahrtdt, 2007) and is scientific in nature rather than practically oriented (phronesis) or practically applied (techne);
- ▶ 'negotiating actions between learners, knowledge and their personal contexts, cultures and ecology of their community' (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p. 228);
- ▶ ecological ontology of epistemology thus should be re-examined pedagogy as:
- ▶ [...] "the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family and community (i.e. their values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and economic circumstances) interact with external elements (such as the global economy, climate and social phenomena that additionally influence the life of the community) in order to jointly construct knowledge." (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p. 19).

The Learning Community





Pedagogical Axes

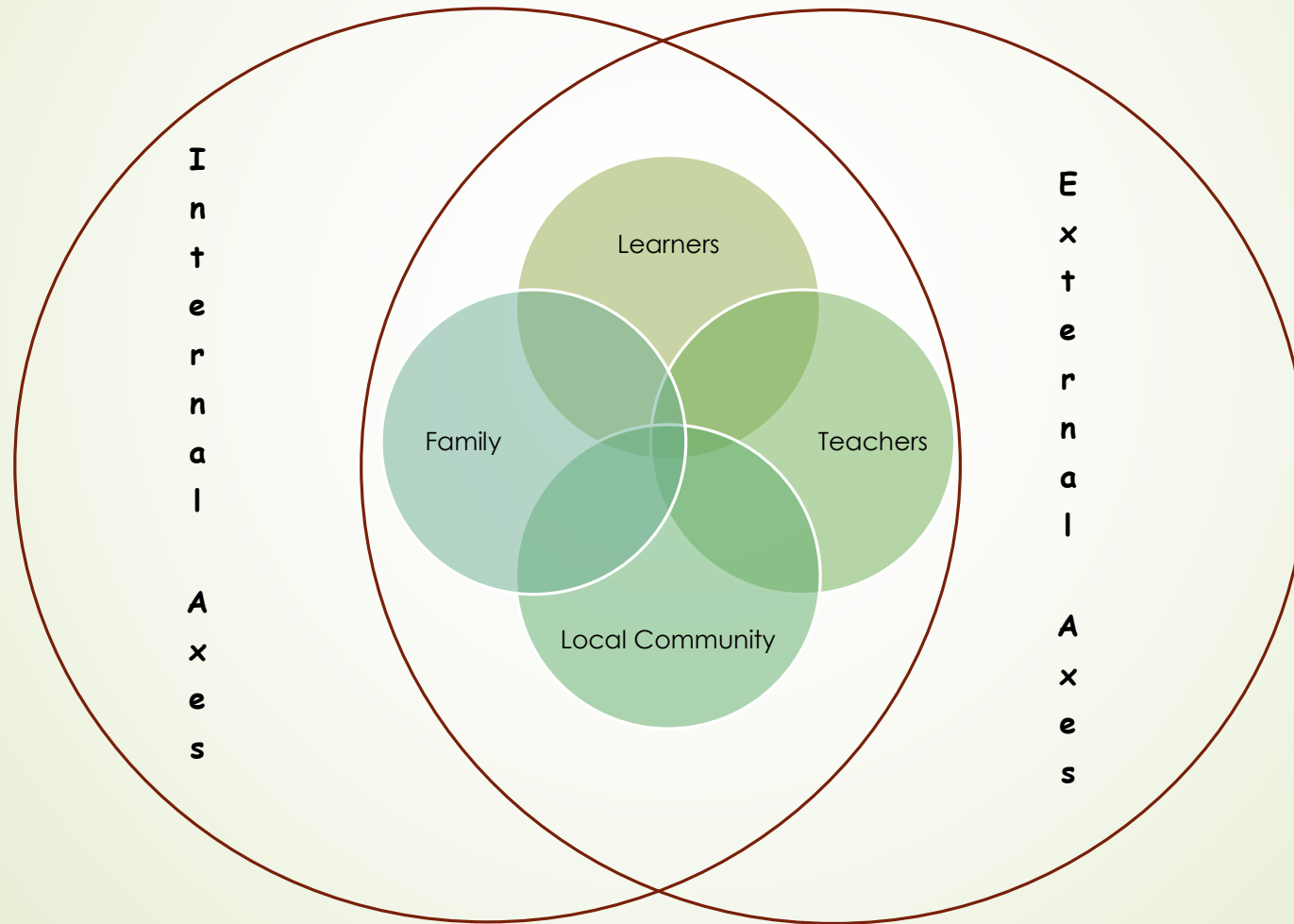
Internal to the Community:

- Values;
- Beliefs;
- Culture;
- Religion;
- Customs;
- Local economy.

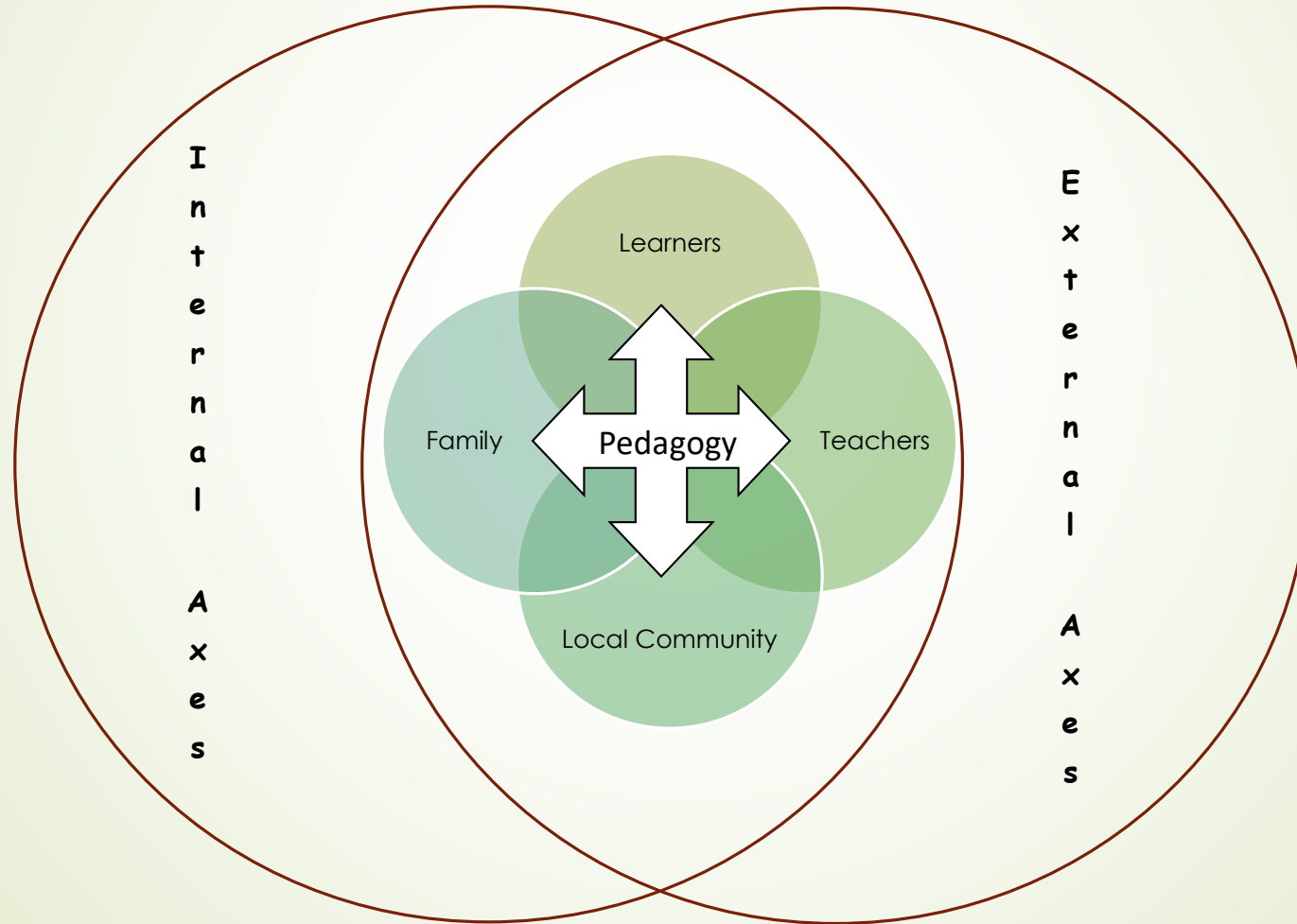
External to the Community:

- societal values;
- global economy;
- mass media;
- social networking;
- information communication technologies;
- national/localised curriculum;
- the 'academic press' of student test scores.

Influence of Pedagogical Axes



Pedagogy in Action



Types of Partnership: Dualistic paradigm

Spokes on a wheel (Ian Gordon 1970) :


- ▶ parents as an audience
- ▶ parents as direct and active teachers of their children at home.
- ▶ parents as volunteers within and outside the classroom.
- ▶ parents served as paid employees.
- ▶ parents served as decision makers





Types of partnerships: Dualistic paradigm

- ▶ Three models depicting parent roles were presented by Susan Swap (1993).
- ▶ The **Protective Model** which separates the functions of school and home with parents delegating and holding schools responsible for the education of their children;
- ▶ The **School-to-Home Transmission Model** holds parents accountable for supporting teachers in their efforts to educate children. Supportive activities are outlined by schools and include fund raising, reinforcing school expectations at home, supporting school parties and providing a home environment that nurtures school success;
- ▶ The **Curriculum Enrichment Model** supports the partnership approach to parent involvement with parents and educators working together.




Types of partnerships: Towards the empowerment of parents and families

A six-element empowerment paradigm
for parent and family involvement

(Souto-Manning and Swick, 2006)

- (1) focus on family and child strengths,
- (2) include, validate and engage families,
- (3) recognize and value multiple forms of involvement,
- (4) provide lifelong learning for teachers, children, and families,
- (5) build trust through collaboration, and
- (6) reflect linguistic and cultural appreciation, recognition, and responsiveness.



Types of partnerships: Towards the empowerment of parents and families

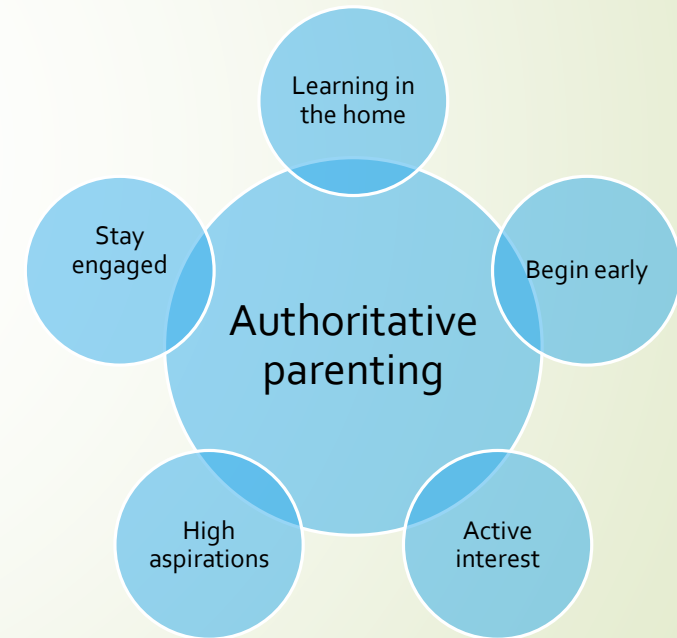
Family-Centred Practice


(Rouse 2012, Keen 2007, Christensen, Palan and Sculin 2009, Leving-Rasky 2009, Graue and Sherfinski 2011)

➤ Power and Empowerment

Types of partnerships: Towards the empowerment of parents and families

- Six point model (Goodhall 2013)





Types of partnerships: Towards the empowerment of parents and families

Six types of involvement school-family-community partnerships

(Joyce Epsteins 1995,1997, 2001)

- (1) assisting parents with parenting skills and schools in understanding families,
- (2) communicating with families about school programmes and student progress through home-to-school and school-to-home communications,
- (3) involving families as volunteers and audiences at school and locations as supporters of student learning,
- (4) involving families in working with their children in learning at home,
- (5) including families as decision-makers through school Building Partnerships councils, parent-teacher organizations, committees and other parent groups; and
- (6) providing services to the community and coordinating resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other community groups.



But...

- **Parental knowledge is inadequate:** [Parents as actual or potential teachers]. Here, parents are seen as ignorant about what and how to teach their children and parent involvement programmes rectify this;
- **Parental knowledge is supplementary:** [Parents as collaborators]. Here, parents' knowledge of their child allegedly complements staff's professional knowledge, but in reality merely supplements it;
- **Parental knowledge is unimportant:** [Parents are absent]. Perhaps the simplest and most effective form of 'othering' – parents' voices are absent from much of the literature about parent involvement.

(Hughes, P. and Macnaughton, G. (2000) Consensus, Dissensus or Community: The politics of parent involvement in early childhood education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1(3), pp.241)



But...

- ▶ Schools do not exist in a vacuum and have the potential to be shaped by local as well as wider societal influences, including national governments.
- ▶ Schools are concerned with complex social phenomena that are multi-factorial and multi-layered in nature which go beyond teaching and learning and there is a direct causality with environmental factors that impact on the way partnerships are formed
- ▶ Collaboration between school and families should be based on communication, trust, acceptance and shared values and an appreciation of difference and diversity of families and schools

(Male and Palaiologou, 2016).



Educational contexts are embedded in social structures that has substantial influences in all their functional variables



The discourse of partnership: Towards an ecological paradigm



Towards an ecological paradigm

- ▶ Partnerships should start from the premise that families, learners, community and school should all be involved in the creation of learning environments and collaborate in meaningful ways to create educational experiences that will be beneficial to all involved in the process.
- ▶ Effective education settings are those which have developed productive and synergistic relationships between learners, families, the team and the community, because the context, the locality and the culture in which learners live are vitally important (Male and Palaiologou, 2012: 112).
- ▶ The '**equitable dialogue between families and schools**' (Miller *et al.*, 2014: 341) thus ***needs to be extended beyond simple home-school connections and be approached from an ecological paradigm.***
- ▶ Reciprocal relationships and activities that are shaped by efforts towards common goals whereby ***all*** stakeholders are equally engaged to form partnership as an interactive process.



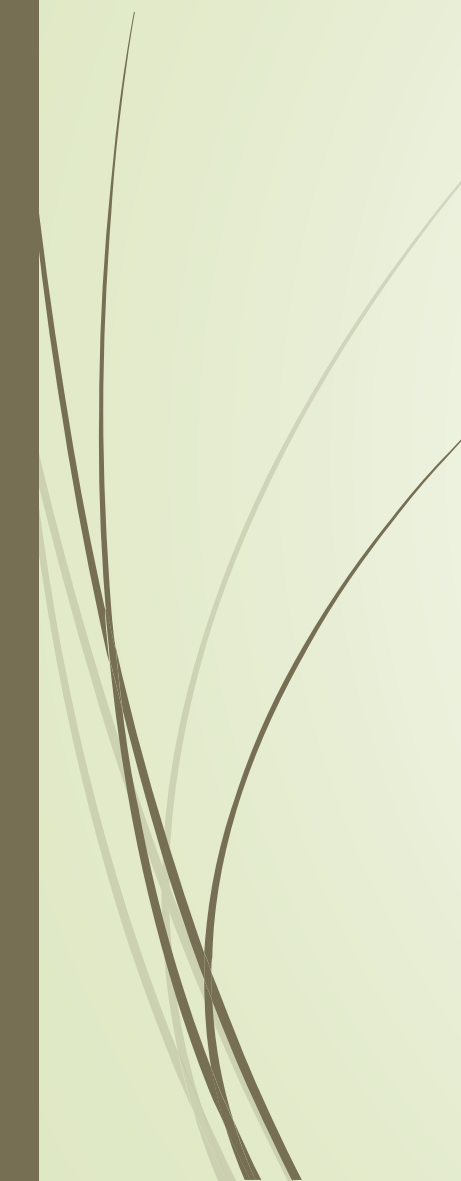
Towards an ecological paradigm

- ▶ The relationships between the school, the families and the community indicate complexity, non-linearity and non-predictability which are influenced by a variety of interrelated and interwoven factors.
- ▶ In any environment values, beliefs and identities are formed and are inherent within families and children.
- ▶ Schools are also part of the environment and that means either they understand the sociocultural context, expectations and effective interactions with families because they are part of this or need to come to such an understanding in order to create a 'shared commitment and responsibility' between school, families, learners and communities (Giovacco-Johnson 2009, 128).
- ▶ In that sense partnerships should be approached from an ecological perspective where 'learning and development of children is essential in forming partnerships and where strengths, perceptions, and priorities can be seen as complementary rather than conflicting' (Giovacco-Johnson, 2009: 128).



Towards an ecological paradigm

[...] that respects values and does not engage in any project that will only benefit the individual, but instead looks after the ecology of the community [because] the creation of learning environments in which the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family and community (i.e. their values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and economic circumstances) interact with external elements (such as the global economy, climate and social phenomena that additionally influence the life of the community) in order to jointly construct knowledge (Male and Palaiologou, 2015: 219).





Towards an ecological paradigm

- ▶ Thus we propose that partnerships should be approached from an ecological perspective that represents a way 'to read and corroborate the importance of developing good relationships' (Migliorini *et al.*, 2016: 167).
- ▶ The ecological paradigm is concerned with the examination of partnership as a complex social phenomenon while taking into account:
 - multiple behaviours,
 - multiple views,
 - non-predictable actions
 - and all key elements for effective relationships that are interrelated, interdependent and interconnected in a non-linear way.
- ▶ When partnerships are developed through the ecological paradigm they become **a connected network** where the nucleus is effective relationships between parents, community, school and students. It is an approach where all participate in the creation of learning environments that are meaningful, diverse, responsive to the evolving demands of the society and actively engaged in the learning process (Male and Palaiologou, 2016).

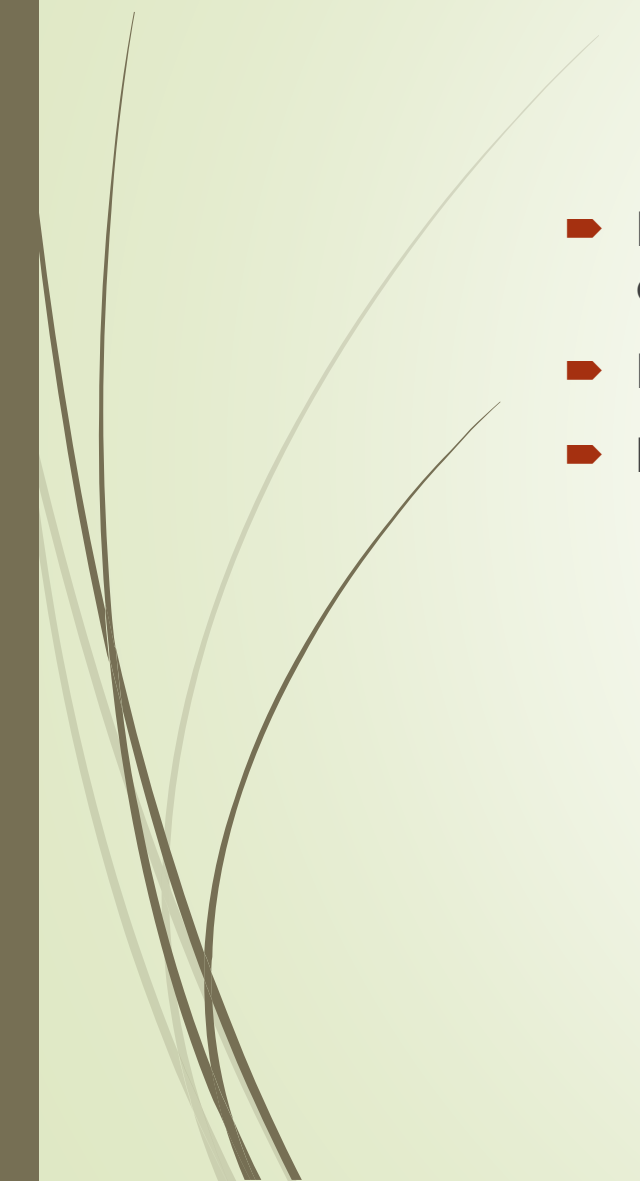


Towards an ecological paradigm

- ▶ We argue that partnership is a complex phenomenon and a process, not an event. As such it requires an in-depth understanding of causality and processual aspects such as knowledge, skills, understanding values, attitudes and a holistic desire to share responsibilities of home, educational settings, communities which can lead to effective mutual actions that assist the learning environment.
- ▶ The study of partnerships requires **an ecological ontology** which seeks an in-depth investigation of the complexity of partnerships and there is the need for this approach to be extended further to also include the community in order to form effective multi-modal relationships.
- ▶ [...] partnerships between communities, parents, students and schools need to be approached as a holistic dynamic where relationships are shaped as much by the local culture, values and ethos as well as external influences such as government agendas or policies' (Male and Palaiologou 2016: 153).



Research Aims

- ▶ Explore the views of the relationships between staff in educational settings and children, parents and communities;
 - ▶ Examine how these relationships are formed;
 - ▶ Investigate how (if) partnerships are sustained.
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Research Design

Participants	Methods
12 Educational Settings (schools and early childhood settings)	Interviews
56 Parents	Focus groups interviews
16 Children (ages between 3-8)	Use of vignettes
26 Children (ages from 8-16)	Interviews
28 Community members (local shop owners, bus drivers, local police, community centres)	Interviews



Findings (1/4)

Parents valued:

Acceptance
Understanding of their:
Goals
Cultural values
Experiences
Support

Community valued:

Safety
Outreach activities
Economical value for the locality
Reputation



Findings (2/4)

Staff valued:

- Willingness
- Cooperation
- Trust
- Communication
- Parental knowledge

Children valued:

- Involvement
- Presence of family
- Approachable staff
- Awareness/familiarity with family structures, norms, habits

Findings (3/4): Required Elements

- Shared values and beliefs so that all can engage and participate in the creation of the learning environment;
- Proximity/nearness - meaning community, parents students to come physically together often as possible;
- Willingness;
- Trust;
- Shared responsibility;
- Avoidance of blame culture;
- Aspirations;
- Resilience as the ability to adopt successfully in each situation and circumstance;
- Commitment;
- Altruism;
- Empathy;
- Inclusion ;
- Reciprocity;
- Complementarity of needs (cognitive, social, emotional).

Findings (4/4): Influential Factors

- ▶ ongoing communication and not only when there was a crisis or an issue;
- ▶ ongoing sharing of information;
- ▶ the flow of power and empowerment meaning that all stakeholders believed that and enhanced the principle that **learning happens at home , in the community and at school;**
- ▶ advocacy, (the desire to improve the quality of life and promote overall welfare);
- ▶ mutual respect between families', educational settings' and community's culture;
- ▶ connectedness and responsiveness to the values and expectations of all stakeholders.
- ▶ emphasis on the role of leadership as orchestrator;
- ▶ clear commitment to developing partnerships and holistic involvement (all stakeholders, learners, families, school, community such as local business);
- ▶ use of positive communication about students' school performance and productivity;
- ▶ avoidance of stereotypes at all levels (family's norms, students' performances and community's norms);
- ▶ believing and not doubting the abilities of families and the local community;
- ▶ investment of time and funding for outreach activities;
- ▶ negotiating situations rather than engaging in conflict.

	<p>Reduced capacity for rational explanations</p> <p>Impulsive behaviour</p> <p>Blame culture</p> <p>Apathy</p>		
Isolation	<p>Obedience to authority, antagonism, dominance of opinion/s</p> <p>Ambiguity</p> <p>Anti-inception</p>	<p>Destructive</p> <p>Exclusion</p>	<p>Authoritarian</p> <p>Emphasis of power of the dominant culture –school</p>
Passive	<p>Manipulation</p> <p>Ritualistic</p> <p>Anti-inception –no tolerance for difference</p> <p>Relative deprivation: a gap of what we have done and what should do</p> <p>Ambiguous situations</p>	<p>De-penetration (deliberately reduce disclosure of information)</p> <p>Destructive</p>	<p>Obedience</p> <p>Bystanders (Stakeholders have bystanders attitudes, they are likely to participate if they feel they have relevant skills)</p>
Active	<p>Reciprocity</p> <p>Mutualism</p> <p>Emphasis on acceptance</p> <p>Informational exchange from school</p> <p>Reactive</p>	<p>Conformity</p> <p>Perceived quality</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>Direct private influence</p>
Dynamic /Ecological	<p>Common goals</p> <p>Consolidation</p> <p>Investment</p> <p>Reciprocity</p> <p>Complementarity of needs</p> <p>Strategic</p> <p>Empathy-altruism-proactive</p> <p>All...</p>	<p>Effective</p> <p>Maintained</p> <p>Identification</p> <p>Consistency</p> <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Developmental</p>	<p>Public influence</p> <p>“Holism” desire to identify common goals for the learning and joint decision making</p>

Implications :

Effective long term partnerships require analysis at different levels:

- *Structural*: underlying issues that impact on the structure of the partnership (such as poverty, multi ethnicities, policy)
- *Contextual* : creation of a diverse environment where shared values and beliefs are negotiated towards the creation of a common culture
- *Spatial-Organisational*: the physical nearness and how this is achieved to share information and exchange ideas to meet reciprocity and in-depth understanding of complementarity of needs of all stakeholders.
- *Interactional*: examination of individual and collective interactions, behaviours in the localised social context.
- *Leader position power*: and how this is exercised at social exchange relationships in which partnership is dependent upon.
- *Responsiveness*: a critical consciousness to reflect/challenge/develop/maintain /sustain participation of communities, parents , students and school.
- *Advocacy*: cooperative actions that strive to enrich the lives of children, families, community, staff including challenging injustices and promoting overall welfare.



Conclusion:

Formation of partnerships should focus on

Sources of influence focusing on the human elements such as :

- Ensure the educational settings have a clear understanding of the needs and expectations of the local community;
- Undertake analyses of how the educational settings and its representatives engage with the community, parents and children when seeking effective relationships.

Nature of influences focusing on the context elements such as :

- Having clarity of vision and expectations that are shared and based on reciprocity of needs;
- Being adaptable with their leadership behaviour according to context.



Thank you!

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