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Parental Engagement in Children's Learning: A Holistic Approach to Teacher-Parents' Partnerships

Cristiana Levinthal de Oliveira Lima and Elina Kuusisto

Abstract

This study presents the standpoint of parental engagement, conceptualized by Janet Goodall and collaborators, as a framework that is coherent to the principles of the holistic approach of pedagogy to teacher-parents' partnerships. We bring forward the evolution of the concept of parental engagement and its main standpoints, in relation to more traditional theories on parental involvement. We also discuss previous findings about teachers' and parents' roles in education and teacher-parents' partnerships, as well as how do changes in educational paradigms challenge home-school collaboration. Finally, the article highlights the need to implement research-based parental engagement practices in educational systems around the world.

Keywords: parental engagement, parental involvement, teacher-parents partnership, teacher-parents dialog, home-school collaboration, holistic education, children's learning

1. Introduction

Partnerships between parents and teachers regarding students' education have been a well-researched topic throughout the past three decades. Much more recently, both research and practice contexts started adapting their perspectives on the centrality of the parents' role in their children's learning [1–5]. Such a shift is embedded in a mainstream worldwide tendency to adapt the goals of educational systems to an ever-changing and globalized world, targeting to develop not only competences in individual fields of knowledge, but also transversal competences, such as, for example, learning to learn, cultural competence, and entrepreneurship [1]. These changes, stimulated by the latest educational reflections within the scope of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [5] are deeply framed by the holistic approach in education.

In pedagogy, the holistic approach refers to the development of the whole student, underlining all the dimensions in which he/she can learn and grow as an individual, for example, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions [6]. This approach faces such dimensions as interdependently relevant to the well-being, healthy development, and success of the student and carries the notion that each student is the expert that guides his/her own learning process in life [7]. The adoption of a holistic approach in education requires, consequently, a role re-conceptualization of both teachers and parents.

It is important to address that, in this article, *parents* refer to any legally entitled adult who takes care of the children and are seen as reference figures by them, while *children* and students have equivalent meaning. This study presents the standpoint of parental engagement, conceptualized by Janet Goodall and collaborators, as a framework that is coherent to the principles of the holistic approach of pedagogy to teacher-parents' partnerships. First, we bring forward the evolution of the concept of parental engagement and its main standpoints, in relation to more traditional theories on parental involvement. Second, we more deeply discuss previous findings about teachers' and parents' roles in education and teacher-parents' partnerships. Third, we address the actual challenges such an educational paradigm brings to stakeholders, especially teachers. Finally, a conclusion is drawn, highlighting the need to implement research-based parental engagement practices in educational systems around the world.

2. From involvement to engagement

There is a consensus in research regarding the favorable impact of parents' positive attitudes and behavior toward their children's learning, schooling, and schools [8–11]. Indisputably, research has shown that such parents' emplacement impacts positively students' academic achievement as well as learning in a broader sense [10, 12–14]. However, such a set of desirable parents' attitudes and behavior has been conceptualized in numerous different ways. Researchers are far from unified regarding the terms and so are school professionals. The most traditional termination to describe various types of parents' participation in education is *parental involvement*.

Research on parental involvement in education has mostly focused on the positive repercussion parental involvement has in students' achievement, achievement-related self-perceptions, and autonomous motivation [8, 11, 15–18]. Thus, there has been agreement that parental involvement is a multidimensional construct. On the other hand, most of the research conducted on involvement in the past decades is based on influential frameworks that conceptualize it in terms of parents' participation in children's schools or schooling, in other words, in the processes *surrounding* learning *in* school [19, 20].

Grolnick and Slowiaczeck [11] have stated the importance of integrating both educational and developmental constructs in the perspective of involvement, underlining the significance of *home-school partnerships* to the children's schooling. Hence, they built a framework that identified three types of parental involvement in the child's schooling:

a. behavioral, (e.g., participating in activities promoted by the school, such as parents' evening);

b. personal (e.g., positive child-parent affective interactions about and around school, such as parents' assistance with homework);

c. cognitive-intellectual (e.g., exposure to cognitive-stimulating events and materials, such as books, that would help the children practice skills *useful* in their schooling, like reading).

Later, Joyce Epstein [9] postulated a six-type model for parental involvement. In her model, Epstein underlines the concept of partnerships between parents and educators numerous times and calls for school staff's key role in involving parents. Her framework includes (1) parenting; (2) communicating; (3) volunteering;

(4) learning at home; (5) decision making; and (6) collaborating with community. Epstein's framework [9] seems to pursuit an even more home- and parent-related standpoint for academic success, enhancing the value of the home context and figures. Within each of the six types of involvement, the author highlights, based in a solid cluster of research findings, numerous advantages of involving parents in schools—for students, for teachers and for parents themselves [9].

Despite of viewing involvement from the perspective of ecological systems theory [21], considering various system levels that influence children's development (e.g., family, school, and community), Epstein's model is still school-centered, attached to a perspective of fulfillment of schools' needs and academic success of the students. For example, regarding the first type of involvement described in the model, *parenting*, the central goal is to help families establish home environments to support children as students, such as suggesting home conditions that support studying; or providing school meetings that would help families to understand the school functioning. Concerning, for instance, the forth type described in the model, *learning at home*, the emphasis is put on informing parents about skills required at each grade level, providing regular homework schedules or providing opportunities for families to attend math, science and reading activities at school [9].

The models of Grolnick and Slowiaczeck and Epstein highlight two main domains of involvement: *school-based* and *home-based*. School-based involvement is linked to activities where parents interact with teachers and the school community, home-based involvement refers to assistance with homework, study support, and talking with children about school [16, 22]. Still, both models imply the assumption of the parents' role as an assistant to the school's or the teachers' goals. Nevertheless, research has already shown that the relation between academic outcomes and parents' *school-based* involvement is *weaker* than between those and parents' *home-based* involvement [15].

In recent years, the body of research pointing to the centrality of effective teacher-parent communication and partnership have begun to expand consistently [23, 24], giving parental involvement a more family-centered approach and, consequently, questioning the involvement-concept and its adequacy. It has been strongly suggested that the termination *involvement* should be discarded and replaced [23].

In parallel, the term parental engagement has been gaining space in research on home-school partnerships and shedding new lights on the topic [4, 25–28], mostly in the United States and the United Kingdom. This is the case especially regarding studies focused on parental involvement from a comprehensive point of view, seeking to understand not only the parental role in academic success but also their role in teacher-parent communication and parent–child interactions outside the academic sphere (e.g., parenting styles and non-academic related activities away from school) [29, 30]. Similar perspectives can be found on educational policies documents of international organizations [31, 32].

From that standpoint and based on several findings and influential theories [33, 34], Goodall and Montgomery [10] built an original up-to-date framework on parental engagement, where previous parental involvement practices are included and extended.

Goodall and Montgomery's model [10] places emphasis on parents' relationship with their children and their children's learning, in *and* outside school, academically *and* non-academically, not on the parents' relationship with schools or children's schooling, as in previous models.

Goodall and Montgomery's model presupposes that the children's learning occurs in all varieties of contexts that largely surpass the school environment, giving the home environment and experiences, as well as other contexts mediated by parents, an enormous relevance as children's learning scenarios. This model is presented as a *dynamic continuum* of three main points, throughout which parent-teacher dyads can move

along on the course of their interactions concerning the child's learning. A summary of characteristics, examples, and benefits of each of the points are presented in **Table 1**.

By observing the information in **Table 1**, it becomes clearer that the third point of the continuum, parental engagement, integrates the positive characteristics of

		Point 1 Parental Involvement with school	Point 2 Parental Involvement with schooling	Point 3 Parental Engagement with children's learning
Characteristics	Communi- cation	Superficial level; flows one-way, from school; regards children's progress and little dialogue	Deeper level; flows both ways; initiated by both; regards children's schooling	Deeper level; flows both ways; initiated by both; regarding children's learning
	Ti- me	Very little, insufficient	More time from school	Sufficient time from school
	Inter- change	Between parents and school	Between parents and school; between parents and children	Mostly between parents and children; between parents and school
	Teachers	Control relationship and give parents important information	Seek information on children's home life; listen to parents and help reframe mindsets regarding learning	Seek information on children's home life; listen to parents and help reframe mindsets; eager to learn from parents
	Parents	Recipients of school and school staff information; schools' and teachers' helpers/assistants	Active contributors to children's academic future	Central figures in children's learning; aware of their role as parents regarding school and home
Examples		Parents' evenings of 10 minutes for each student's parents; parents' attendance to classroom to hear children reading	Teacher-parent conferences with two-way flow of information; parents' assistance in homework at home	Parents' interest in children's learning; open parent-child channels of communication about children's learning and life experiences; parents' attitudes and aspirations on children's learning; parents' providing of multiple learning experiences (e.g. music, dance, scouting)
Benefits		Starting point to ground a better future relationship; transfer of important information	Fuller picture of the child; better relationship built on trust and dialogue; breaks down barriers for engagement; shared power (partnership)	Raises children's achievement, self-esteem and aspirations; increases children's motivation and engagement in learning

Note: The information was extracted from Goodall and Montgomery [10] and compiled by the author of the present article.

Table 1.
Summary of the parental engagement continuum framework.

the previous two points, since it portraits an *authentic partnership* between teachers and parents. According to Goodall and Montgomery [10], while moving in the continuum, the closer parents and teachers get to the third point, the higher the level of *shared agency* and *shared responsibility* they experience concerning children's learning. The same is true regarding the frequency of involvement activities happening away from the school context and closer to the home context. Here, in contrast with previous conceptualizations on parental involvement, parental engagement refers to more than the parents' activity or participation—it encompasses a *greater commitment and a greater feeling of ownership of the action*, where the parent is *conscious* about his/her role as a parent [10]. Howbeit, this perspective on parental engagement does not compete with parental involvement; on the contrary, it integrates and complements it.

Thus, through this model's lenses, a true teacher-parent relationship encompasses reciprocal open mindsets, where both teachers and parents learn from each other, show mutual interest in what each other has to say, and have a genuine concern about not only the schooling success, but about all other life contexts that are significant for the child. Here, parents' levels of expertise on their own children are valued by teachers and their role is elevated, both teachers' and parents' perspectives matter and both have *equitable distribution of agency* regarding the children's learning [10].

The presented framework allows analysis and comprehension of the important relationships between parents and teachers, regarding the children's learning, from a holistic perspective. The word *engagement*, instead of *involvement*, refers to a broader and globalizing construct, as well as a more active and more genuine attitude from parents. Also, the choice of the term *children's learning*, instead of *children's education*, indicates that this framework views the learning process as one not attached to the classroom or the school, but intrinsic to the development of the student as a whole individual, in all contexts of life that concern cognitive, social, moral, emotional or spiritual growth. In addition, Goodall [35] also brings up the term *dialog*, as it is considered to better define a two-way communication pattern in a partnership.

However, it is important to address that the third point, as well as the whole continuum dynamics, refers to an ideal framework, one that parents and, especially, teachers should aim to [10].

2.1 Teachers' role on parental engagement

Although *involvement* and *engagement* are not synonyms, in this article, we take the studies adopting the involvement concept into account, as we consider mandatory to acknowledge them in order to reach an accurate comprehension of parental engagement and its relevance to children's learning. *Involvement* and *engagement* share paths both in research and practice, as the latter derives from the former. Therefore, we consider they should not be dissociated.

Teachers are central stakeholders in education and constitute cohorts of powerful agents for change, due to their training, specialization, and experience [12, 36]. Teachers' psychological and behavioral characteristics regarding the involvement of parents have been strongly associated to parents' actual involvement [8, 30, 37]. Additionally, although teachers are more successful in involving parents during the initial levels of schooling [38, 39], they continue to act as key figures for parental engagement throughout all levels of children's academic life, especially regarding difficult pupils and hard to reach families [40–42].

Research has evidenced that teachers consider families' involvement important to the students' school success, recognizing that parents are positive contributors. Howbeit, the majority of these studies focused on the home-based academical

involvement of parents (e.g., reinforcement of the learning that occurs in school, especially in supporting homework at home), pointing out such forms as the most valued types of parental involvement [43–47].

In different cultures, teachers' conceptualizations and practices have been focused on and proven to be crucial to parental involvement, in particular for those parents who have difficulties in being involved [41, 42]. These include the emotional climate experienced when teachers and parents interact, including the time dedicated to effective communication and dialog, but also other aspects, such as teachers' self-efficacy and role beliefs, expectations about involvement and specific practices to promote involvement [13, 37, 48–51].

Improving home-school effective communication has been identified as a primary way to enhance trust between teachers and parents, as well as has the *nature* of the teacher-parent interaction proven to be a better predictor of trust than the frequency of interactions [12, 52–54]. This means that it is more important that each dialog makes teachers and parents feel heard and respected, even if there are not so many of them, than to keep constantly in touch without the feeling of true commitment and interest from the other part.

Much of what is considered to be structurally necessary for an effective dialog in teacher-parent interactions lies in the teachers' set of competences such as managing the time dedicated to talk to and *actively listen* to the parent and making sure that the specific goals of the contact are met [55]. Although both teachers and parents reveal their highest level of trust in each other at the elementary level of education, parents tend to trust teachers more frequently than the contrary [52]. This fact puts teachers in the spotlight again, regarding the major role they play in building a reciprocally respectful and considerate relationship with parents.

Parental involvement is greater when parents feel that teachers include them and value their contributions [37, 56]. In fact, teachers whose expectations are that the parents can contribute to the children's learning are more likely to involve parents than those teachers who have low expectations on the competences of their students' parents [13, 54, 57]. Teachers' support of parents to learn how to help their children is appreciated by parents [54] and teachers' invitations for involvement are positively responded by parents [30], which gives teachers' solicitations an important and predicting role on the dynamics of parental engagement. Additionally, teachers' self-efficacy perceptions on parental involvement has been significantly related to involvement itself, also functioning as a predictor [11]. These studies corroborate the importance of student teachers having an academic path that highlights parental engagement strategies and attitudes.

On the other hand, and despite agreeing that home-school collaborations are essentially important, teachers and parents differ in opinion about the extent in which each other actually meet their expectations. Research has shown that often teachers and parents have incongruent parents' role perceptions and that teachers expect parents to perform academic-related tasks in the home more frequently than parents do themselves, both in primary and secondary levels [43]. This adds, once more, to the evidence on the power teachers do have, to change the perspective from *involvement* to *engagement*.

2.2 Parents' role on parental engagement

Parent's influences on their children's achievement have been largely studied [8, 11, 16, 18]. Factors like parents' socioeconomic status and educational background are known to act as predictors of students' achievement and school adaptation, as well as of parental involvement [9, 42, 58]. Literature is also consistent about the positive response from parents toward their children's learning, regarding

teachers' expectations and solicitations of parental involvement [13, 37, 49, 50], which is believed to contribute to the parents' role of themselves and for them to view their own participation as important, through the teachers' eyes.

However, in comparison to research on teachers' role and perceptions or studies where both teachers' and parents' attributes are analyzed regarding children's academic success, only more recently, parents' role and perceptions started gaining significant space as objects of study on parental involvement [19, 59, 60]. That can be explained, in some extent, due to the history of school and home contexts' instituted views of each other as entities with different and complementary objectives [52, 61], where children's schooling was a school duty and children's basic well-being and healthy development was attributed solely to parents. Lately, as these two tremendous tasks increasingly merge into each other, the role of parents' attitudes and behavior is being progressively more taken into account, from a holistic point of view.

Today, we know that parents who believe that their own role is important in affecting their child's achievement in school tend to more often facilitate the development of their child's interests, in comparison to parents who do not view their role as important [20]. Role beliefs identified in research are, in part, related to what modern expectancy-value theory refers as task-value [62]. Task-value beliefs are key determinants of choice, persistence, and engagement in tasks. Eccles and Wigfield [62] outlined four components of task-value: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and costs. Regarding parental engagement, these components would refer to (a) the personal importance the parent would attribute for positively contributing to their child's learning; (b) the genuine enjoyment the parent would feel about doing so; (c) the relation the parent attributes between positively contributing to their children's learning and their own personal goals in life; and (d) the amount of effort or negative experiences a parent feels they have to go through in order to do so.

Recent findings point out that enjoyment and genuine interest of parents about their children's learning have life-long positive impacts. Parents who read recreationally to their children at young age and who talk informally to their adolescent children around a table, about political or social issues, are more likely to have a significant impact on children's life and school outcomes than those parents who do not [32]. These kinds of *engagement* practices from parents since young age of their children, impact not only children's language skills later on, but also their development of valuable transversal competences, such as ability to plan, set their own goals, initiate and follow through in their studies and individual projects.

Various authors [2, 22, 30, 63, 64] have recently studied the impact of parental styles at home. Goodall [2] points to the *authoritative style of parenting* as one that effectively supports children's learning throughout their lives, once it encompasses parental warmth, discussion, and appropriate level of control regarding the stage of development of the child, underpinning parental interest and involvement in children's learning. Accordingly, Silinskas and colleagues [14, 29], concluded that, regarding parents' support in homework at home, the most beneficial style of parental involvement is the one that is autonomy supportive, process focused and that includes positive effects and positive beliefs from the parent. These findings support, once more, the significance of *parents being conscious about their role* and *being expected and solicited* by their children's teachers to engage.

As the role of parents in engaging in children's learning is acknowledged to be such an essential element in the children's lives, in and outside school, research also underlines the existence of a pattern in the quality of the child's affective relationship with parents and with teachers, since children seem to have a concordant evocative impact on both parents and teachers [14]. This gives teacher-parents' partnerships even more centrality, once teachers, as professional educators, have

opportunity to identify and break such patterns when they are not effective for the child's sake [24, 65, 66]. In such cases, teachers have the ability to comprehend more complex home dynamics such as those of students from diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds, *listening to* parents that may be little engaged as well as instructing them about more effective attitudes and behaviors in the home [28, 40].

2.3 Challenges for parental engagement

Surpassing the sphere of children's academic achievement or school engagement, teacher-parents' partnerships are nowadays seen as a powerful tool for breaking undesirable patterns. It has been considered an extremely important element on equity issues in education when built on effective teacher-parent dialog [40, 42]. Yet, this scenario is not prevalent in most schools around the world, since, as Goodall [3] attests, the most popular perception of working with parents is still *school-centered* instead of *learning-centered*. This means that the traditional *involvement* approach to parents is still much more often used in schools than the more effective and integrative approach presented by the parental *engagement* framework.

Despite the growing knowledge regarding parental engagement in a larger sense, one of non-dependence of the school environment, many are the obstacles for engagement to take place in schools and homes around the world. Some of them have been around longer than the others, which make it even more difficult for the school community to tackle them, as they seem to pile up. For instance, the lack of resources such as time and personnel, in many schools, prevents teachers from developing consistent approaches for parental involvement itself, let alone practices of engagement, that demand an even superior amount of time and follow-up dialogue between teachers and parents. Some of the linger drawbacks for involvement and engagement practices also list: lack of support from schools' administration or simply a set of school's beliefs that do not favor teacher-parents' partnerships; mothers' over fathers' representativeness in schools; and difficulty of maintaining or establishing effective home-school dialogue throughout the levels of schooling.

Regarding the institutional level, leaders such as the school's headmaster or department's head teachers may or may not adopt a facilitator role to involving and engaging parents [67]. For the engagement path to be accessible, it is essential that a consistent definition of parental engagement is shared between school's administration, teachers, and parents of a specific school, so all these cohorts are able to develop realist and shared expectations about each other's roles [68]. Thus, headmasters and head teachers have a decisive role on the development of a school culture which values the engagement of parents in the children's learning [69].

Such school's guidelines can also make a difference in engaging *both* mothers and fathers in the children's learning and therefore turning engagement even more effective. It is true, for both research and practice, that even though, today, families as institutions encompass much more different structures and dynamics than 15 or 20 years ago, the presence of mothers is still more common regarding school- and education-related issues, over the presence of fathers [64, 70, 71]. This constitutes an obstacle for engagement as each of the child's parents have their unique relationship and perspective regarding their child [72], and a fuller picture of the child's home life is only possible when the teacher can reach both mother and father. Also, any needed positive impact of what the teacher may recommend is multiplied when both mother and father establish an authentic partnership with the teacher.

Another well-known stumbling rock for parental engagement, that is cited above, constitutes the difficulty of maintaining or creating teacher-parents' partnerships as children grow in age and grade level. As children develop into young

adults, the nature of their relationships with adults and peers changes, as they look forward to a progressively more independent life, which originates a growing distance between teacher and parents dialogs [73]. Additionally, in most countries, as children progress in education, the number of teachers grow, fact that also handicaps teachers-parents' partnerships and holistic education. In that matter, Goodall [35] encourages that schools explore the numerous possibilities technology provides for engagement of parents of older students as well as busier or hard to reach parents (e.g., e-mail, texting, and specific channels of communication).

Technology transports us to a more recent range of challenges for parental engagement, together with diversity in classrooms and teacher education programs.

Despite the lack of research in the topic, that, as Goodall [35] herself attests, consists in a very difficult theme to study appropriately, the transformation in the major routes of communication between teachers and parents has crucially changed in the last few years. In Finland, for instance, digital communication has become the primary means for teachers and parents to communicate [74]. The advance and accessibility of technology consist of an advantage for parental engagement, when the tools are well used by professionals, for example, as it helps professionals to communicate with parents more efficiently and reach a higher number of parents in a little amount of time [35]. However, these practices elicit new and unknown difficulties that need to be outpaced by schools. As pointed out in Finland [74], such strategies may shorten distances with a specific group of parents, such as the ones from rural contexts, but other groups may feel they are not given enough space to communicate as teachers would think. The lack of substantial education of teachers on how to use technology to improve teacher-parents dialogue, during their trainings, needs to be tackled in order to bring schools and homes together [35, 74].

In fact, teacher education needs reflections and updates in many parts of the world. In Portugal, for example, only 39% of lower secondary teachers reported feeling prepared, by the time they had finished their studies, to teach in cognitively diverse settings and 27% reported a strong need to receive formal education in this area [75]. Classroom diversity certainly challenges teachers, often causing tense relationships to emerge with parents. To respond this and other flaws, a huge educational reform based on a holistic approach has been recently implemented by the Portuguese government [76], even though no additional training for practitioners have been made available, so far.

Finally, and because education needs to be approached from an ecological systems perspective [21], one of the greater challenges for parental engagement dwells not only in the classroom, but in the community and the society. Along with globalization, teachers all around the world must deal with a rising diversity of students and parents, which demands teachers to have a creative, sensitive, and versatile attitude toward parents. Such diversity requires a greater amount of resources from the teacher than it does in cases where he/she deals with more uniform groups of children.

3. Conclusions

In a primary contact, parental engagement may seem complex and sometimes even utopic. The holistic approach to pedagogy calls for a holistic approach to teacher-parents' partnerships and vice-versa: one cannot fully achieve its goals without the other. It is probably one of the main reasons it has been so difficult even for well-intentioned and well-educated teachers to introduce engagement practices and to break the traditional cycles where schools ask parents for more than they can give and the whole family ends up feeling frustrated.

After a closer look, one may realize engagement practices have, in fact, a simple foundation. It is based on authentic interactions, true acceptance, trust, and believe in bringing out the best of each family; it goes beyond interacting as teacher and parents—rather, refers to interacting as whole individuals that are sensitive about each other's needs, beliefs, and ideas and instead of competing with each other, unify their strengths for the common goal of the child's success in life.

For a teacher of a holistic classroom environment who wants to develop a closer and an authentic partnership with his/her pupil's parents, there is a need to preserve his/her attitude in the classroom, reflecting it in the interactions with the parents [3]. If the teacher has the goal to prompt the development of the student as a whole person, then, first, the teacher needs to *see him/herself* from a similar perspective, including when establishing partnerships with parents. The paradigm of education has been strongly changing around the world, from one that the teachers hold the truth about all academic content to one where the students are strong contributors for learning. Accordingly, the paradigm of teacher-parent relationships shall necessarily follow the same principles. Teachers are not, anymore, the only ones to have valuable information to transfer to parents and parents are no longer merely recipients of information on children's accomplishments and behavior outcomes. Instead, parents' knowledge and thoughts must be heard and appreciated, because they carry equally valuable information about children's learning and development as the teacher does.

Beyond all challenges presented before, it has been difficult to move from an *involvement* to an *engagement* perspective because whereas the former allows teachers and schools to address request in a regular basis, the latter demands teachers to reflect about themselves, as professionals and individuals, and implies that schools let parents in as *equal* partners. Engaging parents shall, necessarily, be viewed as a team effort, not an individual task. Schools' leaders are more decisive in the way parents play their role in children's learning than it has been pointed out until the date [77].

However, as stated above, engaging parents demands a deep reflexive attitude from the teacher—one that most likely develops through practice and meaningful internalization processes of knowledge [78]. "Beginning teachers need to be encouraged to develop a moral stance in relation to their professional responsibilities" ([78], p. 33) in order to meaningfully develop the ability and sensitiveness to stablish authentic partnerships with all parents. The teacher's professional knowledge will reveal itself in pedagogical decisions that cannot be dissociated from his/her own principles and values. This means that each student teacher's path will be unique and will be shaped by the formal education they will receive, the thoughts and discussions they will encounter during this period, and the moral choices regarding values and principles they will make along the way.

A purposeful teacher looks for not only fulfilling his/her own goals in life but has a profound sense of beyond-the-self impact and self-transcendent goals [79]. Teacher education can establish optimal contexts to foster student teachers' sense of purpose in life and in teaching, self-knowledge, and reflection ability. Methods that involve guided analysis, group, and individual reflections and are based on authentic cases from student teachers' past experiences in school [79] seem to offer a promising wellspring for teaching how to engage parents. This could involve, for example, student teachers' recollection of memorable learning experiences with their parents, reflection about the meaning and impact it had in their studying-learning process and reflection about their teachers' attitude toward parents at the time.

Practitioners' and researchers' efforts, through research-based practices and practice-based research, are crucial in giving life to such a framework in schools and homes, more and more as years go by, and making the holistic approach more than a *utopia*, but a reality.

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