



## Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC

A review based on empirical research

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## Background

- The relationships between parents and professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is widely acknowledged as important for child well-being, learning and developmental outcomes (Epstein, 2001).
- In Europe, 94% of all children attend ECEC before starting in primary education (Eurostat, 2018)
- Bridges between the different contexts surrounding the child, are crucial for the child's positive development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).



Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of personal development (adapted from Sanrock, 2007)


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## The present study

- Persistent educational disadvantages are found for immigrant groups (Passaretta & Skopek, 2018).
- Studies have shown that parents with immigrant backgrounds may view interactions with ECEC-professionals as challenging (Cheatham & Santos, 2011).
- To develop inclusive practices with diverse families in ECEC, there is a need for empirical knowledge about the experiences of families with immigrant backgrounds and the professionals working with them.
- This knowledge is a crucial prerequisite in order to provide better policies and practices to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children in increasingly multicultural European countries.

*What do we know about barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care?*

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## Theoretical background



- A variety of concepts are used to describe the relationships between parents and professionals.
- *Parent-professional partnerships* can be seen as an extension of parental involvement (Epstein, 2001).
- The concept *parental involvement* describes “the resources that parents invest in their child’s learning experience” (Calzada et. al., 2015).
- Epstein’s (2018) typology of involvement includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

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## Theoretical background

- The term *partnership* extends on Epsteins typology of involvement
  - focus on how the two main systems in which a child is developing and learning, namely at home and in (pre) school, work together to bridge the contexts, creating coherence in children`s learning and caregiving environment, and building on each other`s recourses.
- Whereas parental involvement often focuses on the role of the parents, parent-professional partnerships expands the focus and assign equal status to parents and professionals as co-constructors of the child`s learning environment.



## Theoretical background

- The current paper builds on Epstein`s (1987) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which is inspired by Bronfenbrenner`s (1979) ecological model.
- Emphasizes a holistic approach where schools, families and communities work closely together, locating the student in the center.
- The different spheres can be either pushed together or pulled apart, by time or by characteristics, philosophies or practices of the family or the school (Epstein, 2018).

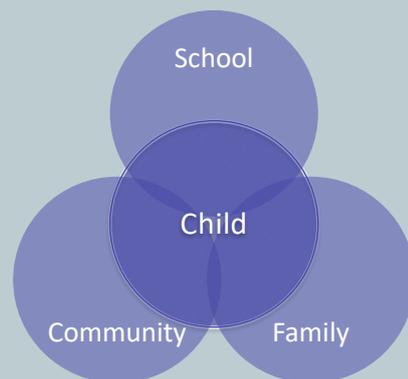


Figure 2.  
Theoretical model of the overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1987)

## Methods

- Overview review approach (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016).
- The overview review reflects a systematic and comprehensive approach, although not exhaustive, and allows for inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative studies.
- This approach allows for a thematic analysis and a narrative dissemination.

	Included	Excluded
Databases	Academic Search Premier, ERIC	Other databases
Timeframe	2000-2018	Studies published before 2000
Publication type	Online peer-reviewed articles	Books, book chapters, grey literature
Focus	Empirical studies focusing on the collaboration between ECEC-staff and parents from families with immigrant backgrounds.	Non-empirical articles
Language	English	Other languages
Target population	Articles focusing on staff and/or parents perspectives and experiences, and articles focusing on how this impacts children's wellbeing, development and learning.	Articles focusing on teacher education, school leadership, children with special needs, indigenous families
Target teaching level	Kindergarten, Preschool, Early childhood education and care; Children from birth to compulsory school age (European Commission, 2018)	Primary School, Secondary School, Higher education

## Search terms

		OR	OR	OR	OR
AND	Parents	Families	Mothers	Fathers	
AND	Early childhood education	Preschool	Kindergarten	Child care	
AND	Ethnic diversity	Minority	Immigrant		
AND	Staff	Professionals	Teachers	Educators	
AND	Communication	Collaboration	Cooperation	Relationship	Partnership

## Results

- Language barriers are one of the most frequent findings addressed in 67% of the studies included in this review.
- To facilitate communication the centers utilize a number of different strategies:
  - Bilingual educators and staff members
  - The use of translators in parent-teacher conferences appears to vary, some studies find that translators are used systematically (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Howard & Lipinoga, 2010; Heng, 2014), but other studies find that parents who experience language barriers are not provided any interpreter service (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009).
  - Translated materials
  - Translanguaging

	Results	Potentially relevant (after reading abstract)	Included in review
Academic Search Premier and ERIC	143	47	20
Manual search (based on references in the most relevant articles)		15	6

Table 3. Search results

## Results



- Asymmetrical power in the relationship between parents and teachers emerges as a barrier to creating partnerships across several of the studies in the review (Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012; Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Guo, 2005; Heng, 2014; Howard & Lipinoga, 2010; Vanderbroek, Roets & Snoeck, 2009; Whitmarch, 2011).
- Parents with immigrant backgrounds largely seem to be hesitant to approach disagreements with teachers in a confronting manner, and this finding seems to be evident across different immigrant groups.
- Despite the different nature of the disagreements that parents with immigrant backgrounds experience with teachers, the role of the teacher as the expert appear to inhibit parents from confronting teachers.



## Implications

- **Communication is key for partnerships**, and we need more knowledge on *how* to overcome language barriers
- **Partnerships takes time**, especially when partners have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- The **asymmetric power relations** between teachers and parents seems to add to difficulties in creating partnerships based on equality between the parties
- This might not always be visible to the teachers, as parents might appear to be polite and satisfied
  - more **creative strategies from the teachers might be required**, to ensure that all parents feel comfortable to express their views



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# Thank you!





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