Chapter 7
Collaboration Theory: ECEC Leading Families to Lead Their Own Partnerships with ECEC

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Abstract This chapter gathers collaboration theories together into a discussion of how a partnership between ECEC and families is possible. It starts with a description of such a partnership, followed by the presentation of the collaboration theory. The emerging question of what constitutes a leader and a follower in the partnership between ECEC and families is answered with the help of the concept of pedagogical leadership and an empirical example of ECEC's work with migrant and refugee children in the United States. The chapter concludes with an outline of ECEC's responsibility for guiding parents to become leaders of the ECEC-home collaboration.

Keywords Collaboration · Partnership · Leader · Follower · Parents

What Is a Partnership Between ECEC and the Family?

The concept of a partnership originates from the field of economics, where it means a shared form of ownership invented during the Renaissance epoch in Florence (Padgett & McLean, 2006). Specifically, this form of ownership meant that not only one, but also multiple owners could share responsibility for a company, its incomes, and losses. Without going into the economic and legal details, this form of ownership brought a novel quality to the business sector that balanced the omnipresent competition with a network of engagement and collaboration towards a joint goal: the best interests of the company.

The idea of such a partnership was transferred into the field of education, and the subject of parental involvement in educational institutions in particular, to highlight the *equity* between a (pre)school and a family, acknowledge the expertise of both, and enhance the mutuality of their collaboration towards a joint goal of ensuring the

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best development and educational interests of the child (Epstein, 1990; Hornby, 2011). Ideally, partnerships between parents and teachers should be effective and cooperative relationships based on equality, reciprocity, responsibility, sharing, mutual engagement, support, and respect. According to Hornby (2011), in a partnership, both collaborating parts are seen as experts. The parents serve as experts in emotional connection and knowledge about their child, and the teachers serve as the authorities of educational/pedagogical expertise. The parents' emotional connection with the child makes them the best advocates for the child's interests, which, together with the teacher's professional judgement of the child's possibilities, can result in a complete and optimal pedagogical strategy, which safeguards the fulfilment of the child's needs and the realisation of their potential. Patrikakou et al. (2005) support this perspective and point to the joint and multifaceted influence that parents and teachers have on the child together as the essence of the positive power of the family-(pre)school partnership.

According to Patrikakou et al. (2005), for the partnership to function and achieve its desired effect, a match between the family's and the ECEC's understandings of their common goal is required. Keyes (2002) adds a couple of other requirements, such as: "(1) the degree of match between the teacher's and parent's culture and values; (2) societal forces at work on family and school; and (3) how teachers and parents view their roles" (p. 179). Such a "match," however, is no longer a frequent occurrence in the increasingly diverse and unequal societies we see today; with parents and teachers coming from different backgrounds, languages, and communities, it is more difficult for the parents and educators to "match" (Keyes, 2002). The question asked in this chapter, then, is whether real partnerships between ECECs and families are possible, and how to collaborate towards such partnerships.

Keyes (2002) underlines the importance of mutuality at the level of understanding and action towards the common goal and highlights a two-way dynamic of work as characterising a partnership. However, she also concurs with Patrikakou and Wissberg (1999), who conclude that regardless of the ideal of mutuality, "teachers are really the glue that holds the home/school partnerships together" (p. 36). The reason for this may lie in the fact that the partnerships between ECEC and families are unlike many other kinds of relationships in people's lives, since "the parent-teacher pairing occurs by assignment rather than choice" (Keyes, 2002, p. 179), and many curricula around the world assign ECEC the responsibility of enabling and maintaining cooperation with parents (Sadownik et al., 2021).

As assigned and not chosen relationships, such partnerships may depend on how well the parents "fit" into the ECEC professionals' image of collaboration, which is why the ECEC's inclusive and responsive understanding of the collaboration and ways of enhancing it are of great importance. Those in ECEC settings, as responsible leaders of partnerships with families, need to embrace and address all vulnerabilities emerging in the subjective and emotional relation (Maleš, 2015).

In the next section, I will reflect on how the partnership between ECEC and families may be supported from the perspective of collaboration theories, which allows us to look at families and ECEC as collaborating teams.

Collaboration Theories

ECEC and Families as a Collaborative Team

Collaboration theories (Colbry et al., 2014) emerged from the perspective of economics, with the aim of clarifying the relationships enabled through the division of labour between an individual (leader) and a group (followers). This means that collaboration as a concept implies a power and leadership relation, even though scholars such as Colbry et al. (2014) define the term as a cohesive, interpersonal interaction without a power imbalance and with the purpose of achieving a common goal. Eventual differences between the team members and their different roles illustrate that the team members represent complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities to reach the common goal together, rather than indicating any hierarchical relations.

When acting in collaborating teams, reflecting together on the team's practice and its goals influences and contributes to the learning and development of the team members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Even though parents and ECEC professionals do not share the same daily practice, instead having their own fields in the home and ECEC, they still impact each other through collaboration. Henry's study on the interaction between parents and educators extended Schaefer's (1982) model of the interaction between these parts. Schaefer had shown that being in such a collaborative relationship influences the caregivers' ways of parenting and upbringing, as well as the ways the parents approach the educators. Analogically, this affects the teachers' ways of teaching and creating relationships with the families. Henry's (1996) study has additionally shown a reciprocal character of this collaboration that consists of the participant changing/developing various characteristics under the collaboration. The impact of collaboration was not seen as a one-way effect, nor was it only directed towards the child and her best interest; rather, it was to include all the parts involved.

The best development of the child and the child's well-being and well-becoming are at stake in ECEC's collaboration with parents. A common goal, and its common understanding, is the basis of a collaborating team. In other words, it constitutes the team. Robben et al. (2012) associate the joint understanding of common goals with shared values. The team's values, which they have in common or agree on, are then a prerequisite for the development of collaborative skills and actions. If the context shifts to collaboration between educators and parents, the team values can be related to the values or value-based goals of education and care that the parents and ECEC agree on. In increasingly diverse societies, it is thus important that the values of collaboration are formulated in a way that can include different cultural backgrounds and views.

Apart from joint values, or a value-related platform where diverse values can be practised, the team's ability to divide roles seems to be of importance. The role of the team leader is, however, an issue upon which collaboration theorists do not agree. While Robben et al. (2012) see the leadership role as crucial for a team's

success, Colbry et al. (2014) state that it should be avoided. Snell and Janney (2005), in line with Colbry, emphasise that collaboration is based on the principles of teamwork, collaborative learning, successful communication, and conflict management. Aasen (2018), who also sees teamwork as based on people's complementary competence in joining with each other towards a common goal, underlines, however, a great need for team leadership. In arguing for clear leadership, she underlines the need to make sure that all the team members share the same understanding of the common goal and coordinate the complementary character of cooperation, so that the diverse competences of different members contribute to the team's work in the best possible way. This approach is the basis for further reflection on pedagogical leadership in the next section of the chapter. Before I engage with this issue, I would first like to use collaboration theories to reflect on the possible challenges that may disturb teamwork and partnerships.

Collaboration Challenges

One of the challenges for developing an optimal partnership is implied in the team's orientation, which may be directed towards an individual or towards a team. The former is characterised by such activities as turn-taking, observing/doing, and status-seeking, and the latter by building and strengthening group cohesion, influencing others, and engaging in teamwork. While both orientations occur in a collaborative team, too much of an individual orientation may challenge the team character of the partnership. In parental collaboration with ECEC, all these elements come into play. Turn-taking emerges in the communication and information-sharing processes. Observing and doing may be related to both parents' and educators' observations of the child and family/ECEC functioning, whereby acting should proceed upon observations. In other words, the acts should be preceded by the sharing of each participant's observations. However, in all cases, collaboration does not necessarily go smoothly. Status-seeking practices interfere at both the individual and collective levels. Although both parents and teachers consider themselves and each other as experts in their respective areas of parenting and education, phenomena like fear of other people's roles, loss of one's own status, and caution about other people's opinions are very often present in the relationship between parents and professionals in the ECEC context (Gestwicki, 2016).

Moreover, distrust can also interfere with relations between parents and ECEC teachers. This distrust may be the result of negative parental experiences with other educational institutions. Some researchers (Gestwicki, 2016; Rockwell et al., 2010; Spratt, 2011) have emphasised personal experience as a decisive factor in achieving collaboration. People who had a bad experience of collaboration during their education, including those of their own parents and teachers, entered a cooperative relationship as adults/parents with resistance and negative attitudes and expectations. It is possible that competitive behaviour or status and confirmation seeking is often taking place within these groups of participants.

Another challenge connected to achieving an equal, collaborative partnership lies in the context. As Patel et al. (2012) explained, it is the context of collaboration that determines its forms, frequency, and activity. As collaboration between ECEC and families most often takes place in the context of the ECEC setting, it is easy for parents to fall into the role of "visitors." As visitors, the parents are not "at home," which means that they participate in activities prepared for them by the ECEC teachers, at a time that is chosen by the professionals. Participation in already prepared modalities of participation, also called a democracy deficit (Van Laere et al., 2018), may significantly limit parental participation and the possibility of sharing knowledge, information, or other resources that the parents perceive as most important or relevant. The ECEC staff, being the host of the meetings in which the collaboration takes place, becomes the leader of the collaboration. Being both a leader and a participant in the collaboration may be problematic, as it limits the equity between the partners. In other words, it disturbs their equal influence on the common goal and places ECEC in a superior position. A partnership with the implicit leadership of one of the participants may confuse both sides. In particular, the parents may get the impression that they are only welcomed to the collaboration as long as they agree with the ECEC (i.e., tacitly deciding on the goals and forms of collaboration). However, clear pedagogical leadership may also be a practice that saves the partnership, which I will discuss in the next section.

Pedagogical Leadership as Facilitating and Saving Partnerships

Pedagogical leadership is viewed as separate from the managerial mode (Sakr & O'Sullivan, 2022) and is related to the diverse aspects of ECEC functioning that require planning, joint understanding, acting, and engaging in reflection afterwards. The implementation of the curriculum in ECEC's practice and the quality of the education and care offered for the children, as well as that of parental participation, depend on pedagogical leadership (Aasen, 2018).

Pedagogical leadership is also an important concept relating the ECEC setting to a learning organisation that shall be able to reflect over its own practice and change it in line with the changing world, so that the pedagogical offering is responsive to the children's contexts (Vannebo & Gotvassli, 2014). The concept also underlines the fact that ECEC settings are not run by individuals and do not depend on individual efforts, but are instead constituted and driven by teams whose competence and joint understanding of their own practice is crucial for the quality of each ECEC setting (Aasen, 2018; Taguma et al., 2013).

This brings us back the understanding of a team as a group of people with complementary competence in collaborating towards a common goal (Aasen, 2018). According to Aasen, for a team to achieve its own goal, leadership and coordination of the process of cocreating the joint understanding of the goal are required, as is

safeguarding the complementary character of cooperation. The team leader shall then facilitate processes where the joint understanding of the team's goal is co-created and follow-up on the team's work, so that everyone's competence is used as a resource (Aasen, 2018).

This necessity of involving all team members' competences indicates that the team's work is based on interdependence. While the ECEC staff-team depends on each other in achieving the goals of providing the children education and care and implementing the curriculum in daily practice, the team of ECEC and families depends on each other when collaborating towards the goals of the child's best development, well-being, and becoming.

Interdependence invites forth distributed leadership, a particular type of leadership that can be enacted by multiple persons (Heikka & Hujala, 2013). On the one hand, distributed leadership invites "separate but interdependent work" (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 25); on the other hand, it requires great "efforts of leaders to make it work" (Heikka & Hujala, 2013, p. 571), which demands planning, active monitoring, and following up (MacBeath, 2005). A team member becoming a team leader does not disturb the team's work as long as the leadership is transparent for the team members, and they can articulate their own meanings regarding the process and its content (Aasen, 2018).

This perspective on pedagogical leadership as distributed team leadership is very productive if it relates to the collaboration between ECEC and parents. It allows ECEC to take the leading role, without dominating or marginalising the parental perspective. In contrast, pedagogical leadership, understood as distributed team leadership, is what actually safeguards the conditions for equal participation in ways that the family experiences as meaningful and relevant for them.

In this sense, it is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure that, rather than making the parents "fit" the ECEC's image of collaboration, the ECEC engages in refection, flexibility, and dialogue with the parents, so that the modalities of collaboration that the parents recognise are in line with their values, interests, and heritages.

Pedagogical leadership in the parental collaboration that is located on the side of the ECEC relates this activity with parents to other demands that the ECEC needs to meet, such as the UNCRC (UN, 1989) and the curricula or framework plans. In anchoring pedagogical leadership in the child's right to grow up in his or her own family (Art. 9) and to obtain an education (Art. 28), the local framework plan or curriculum are important guidelines challenging the ECEC's leadership in collaboration with parents.

Possible Partnerships to Lead

After the concept of a partnership was shifted from economics to the educational field, it started to be defined and systematised in very different ways, and various types of partnerships were developed, such as formal, didactic, and pedagogical.

Below, I will briefly describe each of these and argue for the pedagogical as the optimal and most in line with the collaboration theory perspective.

Formal partnership refers to ECEC-based activities that involve parental participation. This means that this form of partnership assumes the parental presence in the place of the ECEC and active participation in the activity settings. According to Oostdam and Hooge (2013), active participation includes being in educational groups, helping with the organisation of various events, or participating in the work of governing bodies. Being aware that ECECs around the globe may engage in different activities for and with parents, it is possible to extend the forms of formal partnership to all kinds of planning, preparation, help, and volunteering in events/meetings happening in the ECEC settings. Active participation, however, is not a form of every parent's participation. It is a form of participation "reserved" for those who see it as relevant, and whose preferences, possibilities, and interests match with the possible modalities of this kind of participation. When leading collaboration with all parents, it is easy to consider the most active parents (i.e., the most active in the given modalities of participation) as a representation of the entire parental community. This is why an ECEC, when leading formal partnerships with families, needs to facilitate the communication and participation of those who, for diverse reasons, do not choose this option.

Another kind of partnership is the didactic form described by Oostdam and Hooge (2013). With a clear goal of enabling and enhancing learning processes and outcomes, it invites parental activity both in ECEC settings and at home. Within this partnership, the parent participates in the ECEC-based planning of the learning process of the child and implements these plans within his or her own time with the child. Regardless of the very narrow focus of this partnership, it invites a wide spectrum of possible activities, depending on the parental resources and activities agreed upon with the teacher. Even though Oostdam and Hooge (2013) use the term partnership to describe this relationship, I argue that it differs from the partnership described by other scholars (i.e., Hornby, 2000; Whalley, 2007), who underline the reciprocity and equity between the collaborating parts. In other words, this form of partnership requires a lot of sensitivity from the leading part, the ECEC, to embrace the knowledge and cultural resources on the parental side.

The third kind of partnership is pedagogical in nature, combining the educational and child-rearing goals and assuming the engagement of both the educators and parents. It also requires an overlap and completion of each other's roles, as in a team, as well as the understanding that "we" are a team, and not competitors, or experts and followers. The intersecting roles and responsibilities of both parties thus require a very careful balance of leadership, so that the parent feels recognised not only as an expert in the "upbringing" area, but also as an important voice in the development of an educational plan for the child.

Such a partnership can become very vulnerable if any of the collaborating parties are status seekers (Gestwicki, 2016). Status-seeking may take different forms, from direct discreditation of the other part in direct communication to avoidance of all interactions. In such cases, it is again the pedagogical leadership that comes into the picture, with the ECEC's responsibility to enhance positive collaboration with the

parent in a way that will reassure him/her in their role and diminish the possible status-seeking or other negative communication patterns. Another challenging aspect of this kind of equal partnership may be a parent in a vulnerable life situation, seeking necessary help and advice in/with/through the ECEC, whether it be economic, psychological, or of another subject. When facing such an imbalance of powers and resources between the family and the ECEC, pedagogical leadership is again the concept that enables reflection over the possible best response, which in the long run will enable parental participation. In the case of a vulnerable life situation, the distribution of leadership can take the form of help and a focus on fulfilling the parental needs or contacting the relevant institutions, so that the parent, after getting the necessary help, can participate as a partner.

Despite these possible challenges, I see this model as the most optimal and worthy of all leadership efforts, as it proposes a reciprocity-, equity-, and respect-based, two-way interaction model with a division of responsibilities and encourages reflective communication on common goals (Višnjić Jevtić, 2021).

Challenges to the Pedagogical Leadership of Collaborative Partnerships

What may pose a significant challenge to the distributed pedagogical leadership of partnerships with parents is the fact that many teachers tend to perceive themselves as experts, which, right at the start, considers the parental voice to be of less value and importance (Goldstein, 2003). Hiatt-Michael (2006) points out that the relationship can differ depending on whether parents are met on equal, democratic premises or allocated to silence and thus marginalised, depending on the teachers' internal standards for a proper parent to collaborate with (see also Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Another challenge may be connected to the fact that educators operate with an us-them dichotomy in contact with parents, where the educators feel entitled to judge and assess the parents' ways of parenting, participating at school, and so on (Olender et al., 2010). Such attitudes do not seem to be a good basis for pedagogical leadership and the safeguarding of partnerships that parents could experience as acknowledging and meaningful.

As the pedagogical leadership of collaborative partnerships is important, I conducted an expert interview in the field of educational institutions' collaboration with refugee parents, a professor and OMEP's representative in UN, to discuss the characteristics of good partnerships, particularly with migrant and refugee families, and ways of leading such relationships in a respectful and acknowledging way. The response is based on the expert's experienced with educational system in the USA and comprises the following topics: trust, collaboration with the preschool, respecting family cultures, parental strengths, and the responsibility of the educational institution and its professionals.

Trust

Parents trust teachers, but communication is key to maintaining a trusting relationship. A reciprocal relationship develops when mutual gratitude and a commitment to lifelong learning are established. Parents for whom English is not their first language often apologise for their language skills (in English). An expert pointed out that it is good to mirror these behaviours; therefore, teachers could apologise for their Spanish-speaking skills (in Spanish) or Haitian Creole-speaking skills (in Haitian Creole). This approach can lead to the creation of a shared human experience and stress reduction. In such circumstances, it is more comfortable to speak in native tongues while referring to objects than relying on technology and gesticulations to communicate.

Migrant families often decide to leave their countries to provide their children with a better quality of life. Considering the different pathways of their migration, which often involve difficult conditions, it is necessary to understand their aspirations for better living conditions and the circumstances they went through as a result. The expert's experience is that about 10% of students had at least one parent walk them to school each day. Children would commonly comment on how nice their parents appeared during this activity, often saving their best clothes for the effort. Consequently, this attitude indicates that the education system is trusted and highly valued as a treasure beyond measure. Upon arrival, many families often share their aspirations and dreams for their children. Some of them would like their children to have the ability to attend medical school or pursue other prestigious professions, which would secure the children with a socio-economically comfortable lifestyle in the future. Unfortunately, this was only possible when the DREAM Act (offering support for individuals who are undocumented to receive higher education) was available. Schools have become a trusted beacon of hope for families in migrant communities in Florida and other states. Some may see children as a solution to their difficult situation. These expectations may place pressure on the children because they are more aware of their families' future expectations than the parents/guardians may realise.

Challenges to Trust

Given the situation in which there is a fear of possible deportation, sharing personal information is a challenge. Therefore, some parents/guardians may give their child an alternative name upon registration. Consequently, the calling of children's attendance on the first days of school can be a challenge for teachers who may not find a child on the class list, but also for children who do not respond to new names. In a small community of families in migration (many of whom are undocumented refugees), many people tend to know each other. Therefore, new arrivals become more confident about their status in the community. If their friends don't offer their real name first, eventually the family will often share their real names after a few months.

Collaboration with the Preschool

Parents tend to be enthusiastic about the schooling experience, although collaboration can be a challenge for families working long hours. The expert found that, often, both parents were working, and the children were at home with siblings and cousins. Sometimes, students joined the expert over the weekend in classroom preparation for Monday, and the expert recognised and acknowledged the opportunity to celebrate their involvement. Staying at school was one option; another option was staying at home all day and playing on the streets. Being on the street poses dangers for children who, due to peer pressure, are often dragged into gang violence. At first, the attraction strategies are friendly, with a few compliments from teenagers, such as promises for friendship, meals, cars, and money. After a few gifts, children are asked to commit violence to remain a part of the group. Young children are often easy targets. If a young child refuses to commit violence, as gang members request, they can end up in abusive situations. For example, in such situations, gangs may threaten to hurt the child's family with rape, fire, and more. If the child still refuses, the gang may beat up the child and leave it in a remote location. Oftentimes, teachers are the first to hear about these situations from children. They are often the first to report these events to school officers, counsellors, administrators, and home liaisons. This may place teachers in a position of high secondary stress.

Considering parental (in)ability, it is necessary to organise certain activities in a way that is acceptable to parents. To deepen cooperation with families, the expert offered audio books as an option that enables parents to participate in supporting children's learning. According to the expert, many parents enjoyed this experience because it provided them with an opportunity to learn English with their children.

Respecting Family Cultures

A global education involves infusing elements of multicultural appreciation into each lesson, and such an approach must be central to curriculum development and modification. Unfortunately, children are often caught in the crossfire of a cultural mismatch between communities and big-business prescribed, fragmented, top-down school curricula. For example, while completing a standardised math test, they may be asked to imagine a certain number of fish in an aquarium. On one occasion, the expert reported that only one child in class had visited an aquarium. These test developers must consider socio-economic opportunities and cultural heritage before designing such distracting questions, which have culturally confounding variables. Children may walk away defeated when they cannot perform with such unreasonable, high-stakes expectations. No matter what the teachers say, children may hold an unreasonable understanding of their worth based on the scores they receive.

To make matters worse, the expert reported that some districts promised each child who scored above a 3.0 on a writing assessment a trip to Disney World. Despite

the learning gains, the children were entirely defeated when they did not get to go to Disney World. The children who did get to travel returned with the sense that society did not care for the poor village where they lived. For many, it was a socio-economic, spatial, and cultural shock to see children in new clothes, moving around the park with both parents available for a vacation/play time, and a bunch of money to be spent on materials within the park. This juxtaposition further confounded feelings of societal abandonment in the migrant community. This community was located an hour away from one of the wealthiest cities in the United States. Nevertheless, it took more than 50 years for the district to renovate the school, and when wealthy individuals came to donate bicycles at Christmas, this was simply a multicultural exchange without a sense of global education, shared community, and ongoing opportunities for mutually beneficial interaction.

Also, these schools were commonly graded as D or F schools based on a high-stakes assessment, yet these were some of the most supportive and talented educators that worked with the children. Thus, it was evident to the expert that choosing the appropriate methods or cognitive apprenticeships enhanced learning experiences.

Parental Strengths

Parents can give children experiences other than those they have in school. Some of the experiences promote ongoing love for learning outside of the classroom; model pride in their everyday tasks, no matter how big or small; encourage an expanded, extensive sense of civic agency/community involvement; and identify rare sources of cultural knowledge, among many others.

Responsibility of Educational Institutions

Given that we are talking about children who come from vulnerable environments, the (pre)school/ECEC must take responsibility for those areas in which their families do not (yet) feel sufficiently empowered (i.e., offering expert professional educator support in scaffolding and extending information, enhancing children's skills, and supporting discussions). As these families are often exposed to socio-economic deprivation, it is likely that the children do not have the necessary materials for their education. Therefore, it is important that the school provide basic materials and services that might be missing at home (e.g., food, health screenings, shelter for the day, and donated clothing).

Finally, the school represents a safe environment for children to stay. Very often, parents from deprived environments work multiple jobs to meet their most basic needs, so it is important to provide social environments that are monitored while parents are working.

Conclusion

The partnership between parents and educators represents the most desirable type of collaborative relationship in this context, whose characteristics are equality, responsibility, two-way communication, and action towards a common goal (Višnjić Jevtić, 2021). In this chapter, I tried to show that such partnerships are possible. Based on the collaboration theory and the concepts of a team and team leadership, I presented how ECEC's leadership of parental collaboration through reflective and distributed pedagogical leadership can enable pedagogical partnerships, with parental participation occurring on their own premises. Ceding to the leadership of ECEC does not need to mean that the ECEC dominates over parents but is instead cocreating and maintaining an inclusive framework for all parents' participation. This means that the ECEC that is leading the parental partnerships becomes responsible for empowering the parents and encouraging their leadership in the partnership.

As highlighted through the expert's interview, empowering partnerships with parents from minority, migrant, and refugee backgrounds is of particular importance. The more diverse modern societies are, the more likely the ECEC settings are to be understood as an arena for social inclusion (Sønsthagen, 2020; Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2021). Children from culturally diverse communities face multiple difficulties. Some of these include lower participation in the educational process, difficulty adjusting to cultural contexts, peer violence, and mental health problems (Stevens & Vollebergh, 2008). Cooperation between teachers and parents is a key prerequisite for the well-being of children, especially vulnerable ones (Garvis et al., 2021; Višnjić-Jevtić, 2022).

The well-being of the children enhanced by ECEC and parents in collaborating partnerships is also implied in the rights of the child. As mentioned in the introduction, the collaboration between ECEC and parents is connected to Article 9 and Article 28 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989). The ECEC, through its wise leadership of parental collaboration, is then respecting children's rights, but it could also be violating them when ignoring or marginalising the parents' perspectives and input. Given that professionals may be the most familiar with this concept of children's rights, they are the most responsible for establishing effective cooperation with families.

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