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Transformational Leadership and Community Engagement in Education: a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: The educational issue has always been an intersection between different components namely the school and the community. The dynamic interplay between transformational leadership on the one hand and community engagement on another hand, within the educational sphere offers a comprehensive examination of how these elements collectively foster an inclusive and effective learning environment. Learning and the educational success of students are the concern not only of educators but of the whole community because engagement implies shared concern, shared responsibilities and shared vision towards educational development.

This article explores the vital intersection of transformational leadership and community engagement in the educational field. It tends to justify the importance of transformational leadership in schools and universities as a threshold for success and development. Besides, the article emphasizes the necessity of community engagement and its transformational impact on the educational sector. The article adopts Epstein Joyce framework of community involvement as a pattern for parents and community partners to engage with the schools and educators. Epstein's framework with the six steps: Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaboration with the community provides a practical pattern for parents and community members to engage and contribute in enhancing the kids' learning and educational progress.

Key words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Transformational Leadership, Engagement, Education, School, Community, Inclusion.

I.   Introduction:

Leadership is a multifaceted concept that is based on the process of influencing, motivating and guiding others to achieve goals and objectives. It is often seen as a social relationship between the leaders and their followers: leaders are supposed to set clear vision, goals and enhance the sense of purpose to guide the followers in achieving such vision. This implies problem solving capacity, decision making, motivating and inspiring excellence hand in hand with a high sense of adaptability and flexibility. Leadership in fact a process not a position: it is an ongoing process that involves actions and behaviors that continue regardless of the official roles. Leaders are supposed to go beyond exercising power on the basis of the formal authority they are granted; they are to influence and inspire through actions. This requires a lot of adaptation to context as leadership is basically situational. Besides, leadership is about building bridges and nurturing relations. Besides, leadership is a matter of legacy and succession: successful leaders mentor and develop potential leaders to prepare the next generation leaders. In general, leadership is practiced and developed by individuals at all levels of an organization.

In the context of education, leadership encompasses a wide variety of components: teachers, students, administrators, curricula, communities, decision makers … Educational leadership is based on the roles and responsibilities that guarantee the effective functioning of the educational environment with its different components. Leadership is primarily about defining a clear mission and vision of the educational institution that determines what the school, university or college aspires to become in the future. This mission and vision is determined hand in hand with the different stakeholders' expectations. Besides, leadership in education context is based on curriculum development in the sense that educators are involved in designing and updating the curricula in order to match the educational standards and the whole country's goals and objectives. For this reason, educational leaders have to establish strong relations with the community in its broader sense. Community engagement implies the active and collaborative involvement of the

community including the parents of students, the residents, the businesses and community leaders, associations and organizations of civil society who are concerned with the success of the educational project within their community.

The field of education is special and unique. And thus educational leadership context is distinctive and challenging: educational institutions are mission-driven and they focus on the holistic development of individuals. The multiplicity of stakeholders in the field of education makes it complex and maintaining balance between all these partners require skillful leadership. Besides, the specificity of the field stems from being human- centric: education is fundamentally about people and its impact is long-term on individuals and societies. Education touches on everybody in the society: every house is concerned with the educational institutions either as students, parents, businesses etc. and maintaining a positive relationship between all these components is very critical.

Transformational leadership is more about inspiring and motivating others to achieve their potential fully. It is more concerned with conducting significant change in the environment concerned. Transformational leaders are those who exhibit visionary thinking in order to foster growth among followers. Transformational leadership in the context of education is crucial as it shapes the future of generations of students, educators and institutions.

Transformational leaders in general engage in behaviors that inspire followers and stimulate them to transcend their self-interest for the common good and collective interest. In the field of education, transformational leadership is more specific and unique as the transformational educational leaders (educators, principals, superintendents…) influence the quality of education and institutions environment not only at the level of teachers but also students, their parents and the whole community.

Transformational leadership and community engagement together represent an opportunity and a challenge at the same time. Critical thinking, the capacity to encourage development and enhance change are basics of transformational leadership and they have impact on students and educators as well as the whole community and the quality of education. And this requires effective community engagement in the sense that parents, community leaders, civil society organizations and educators have a stake in the success of the educational projects within their communities. All these stakeholders must actively and cooperatively take part and be engaged with the aim of improving educational achievements.

As a matter of fact, the current study explores the dynamic interplay between the two poles: transformational leadership in education and community engagement and their role in shaping the future of generations of learners. The main problematic lies in understanding the ways transformational leadership practices can be used to foster innovation, boost motivation and promote significant change in the educational environment while maintaining a strong and productive relationship with the different community stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the dynamics, tactics and results of transformational leadership and community involvement in education with the ultimate goal of improving the quality and equity of education for all.

The proposed research uses a post-design method. It uses qualitative and quantitative data about the types of strategies schools will develop and assess how successful they are throughout the school year. It aims at providing participants in the educational field with the appropriate strategies for involving communities in schools as a means of improving the quality of the educational system. So after defining the importance of school and community relations and explaining the role of transformational leadership in education, we will identify and describe Epstein's Framework of School & Community relations; the framework that represents a well-known and widely recognized model of involvement based on six principles: Parenting, Communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community. The study also tends to generate practical strategies to be applied for an effective School & Community Relations.

Transformational Leadership in Education: a paradigm for success:

The field of education is continuously evolving and leadership plays a focal role in conducting positive change and shaping the future of learning. The quality, direction, and efficacy of educational institutions are significantly influenced by leadership. Therefore, leadership in general is of utmost importance in the field of education in the sense that educational leaders provide clear vision and establish strategic directions for the institutions. They create a sense of purpose for the different stakeholders and thus they shape the school culture based on collaboration, inclusion, achievement, personal and professional development and accountability.

The importance of leadership in education in unquestionable, yet the traditional leadership styles may not be enough to address the different challenges and the needs of the modern educational context. Traditional leadership models have proved to be insufficient and this opened the floor for the emergence of transformational leadership. It has emerged as a powerful concept that goes beyond managing the educational institutions to inspiring and empowering learners and educators as well as the community.

Transformational leadership is a concept that dates to the 1970s with the expert James Macgregor Burns. It refers to the leadership style that is based on a set of strategies beyond the traditional administrative techniques and that focuses on

fostering creativity and development through motivating, influencing and inspiring followers. He defines transformational leadership as the style that ***"occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality."*** (Burns 1978). The above definition refers to transformational leadership as a special style that is based on inspiring followers and motivating them to reach their full potential. It also highlights the important role of leaders in encouraging the team members to go beyond their personal interests to the collective goal. It is a powerful approach that wherein leaders are supposed to inspire the team members through increasing their intrinsic motivation; beyond the traditional exchanges and rewards, through creating a sense of belonging and purpose. Bass & Ringo define transformational leadership as the ***"leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its deal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders"*** (2006) it refers to the profound impact of leaders on followers and on the social systems in the broader sense: transformational leaders create change primarily on individuals by helping them grow, develop and realize their own potential. Besides, they do influence and transform the entire social system be it organizations or whole communities. Such change is conducted through reshaping the values and norms within these systems seeking to create a legacy for leaders in order to be able to inspire and lead others in later stages.

Transformational leadership in general is characterized by the ability of creating a clear vision and communicating it to the followers in effective ways. Followers are given a sense of purpose and direction to achieve success and development. Besides, leaders inspire followers both by words and deeds to stimulate critical thinking, creativity and problem solving among followers. Transformational leaders care a lot about empowering followers by granting them autonomy and ownership of decisions. The charisma of transformational leaders is very important in influencing followers to focus on long-term development.

The context of education is continuously evolving and it is a pertinent landscape for transformational leaders seeking to shape the learning of individuals and foster change in the school context. Educational transformational leadership gives a priority to developing a school culture based on collaboration, and personal and professional development of the various stakeholders. ***"Educational transformational leadership is the process of influencing major changes in the cultural, instructional, and structural aspects of schools to better meet the diverse learning needs of all students."*** (Leithwood and Jantzi 1990)

The above definition shows the continuous character of educational transformational leadership as a process encompassing a series of actions and strategies to be applied in the educational institutions. It promotes a change that is substantial and that englobes all the aspects of the school context including the curriculum development, the school rules and policies as well as the teaching-learning methods and the cultural norms and values.

Educational transformational leadership is to a great extent student-centered and is defined ***"as leadership that motivates followers to transcend their self-interests for the good of the school, influences their values and beliefs, and empowers them to achieve excellence."*** (Bass & Riggio 2006). This clearly demonstrates the fact that transformational leadership goes beyond the other traditional leadership models on different scales: educational transformational leadership is based on motivation to transcend self- interests by prioritizing the institutions' goals and the well-being of the institution at the expense of the personal gains. Besides it has a strong influence on the stakeholders values and beliefs: the values and beliefs in transformational leadership are meant to be aligned with the shared vision of the institution to improve the educational environment. Empowerment through inspiring confidence and accountability are crucial components of transformational leadership and they pave the way to pursue excellence and higher standards of performance and achievement. In general, transformational leadership in education is basically about transforming individuals to work towards the collective goal and achieve excellence in the educational setting. It is a long term process that tends to conduct lots of changes and overcome the challenges in the educational environment: ***"Educational transformational leadership is a dynamic process where leaders inspire and empower educators to challenge existing practices, embrace change, and work collaboratively to improve student learning outcomes."*** (**Gronn** 2003).

The specificity of the educational landscape is reflected on the specificity of the educational leaders. In education, leaders are distinguished with a set of qualities and characteristics that are critical. First, educational leaders are supposed to have a high level of proficiency and academic background. Their high level of educational expertise, their comprehensive awareness of pedagogy, curriculum design as well as teaching learning methods and learners' development strategies guarantee a deep understanding of the nuances and complexities of the educational system. Transformational leadership in education is student-centered as it is concerned primarily with the learners' needs and well-being through creating the appropriate environment for success and development and the ***"educational leaders who embrace transformational leadership empower teachers to innovate, creating a dynamic and student-centered learning environment"*** (Kenneth Leithwood 2005). It is a sort of inclusive leadership that embraces diversity and equity of all team members.

Transformational leadership and Community Engagement in Education

Educational leaders are primarily concerned with their personal growth as they practice self-awareness as they consider themselves, as the other members, required to continually improve and learn. Educational transformational leaders are adaptable and innovative. They are open minded and proactive at the same time: their decisions are well-constructed and based on research and analysis of the situation. Educational transformational leaders are renowned for their charisma, capacity for intellectual stimulation, sensitivity to individual needs, and capacity for conveying a compelling future vision.

School leaders are required to adopt transformational models for three main reasons: to promote educational innovation in their institutions, to establish and reinforce a culture of collaboration between the different stakeholders and empower them to become leaders themselves. Robert Marzano (2005) summarizes these points stating that *"transformational leadership in education is a catalyst for positive change, fostering a culture of collaboration, creativity, and continuous improvement."*

As far as the vision for the future of education is concerned, educational leaders are very concerned with articulating a compelling vision for the educational institutions. They inspire and motivate school partners by communicating their vision which becomes in a late stage an element of unity between all the stakeholders who collaborate their effort towards achieving the same common goal. Such vision statement is a long term focus for all the stakeholders to be prepared for success and development. That is to say, it is a sustainable vision to education to be developed within the institution and the community. Such vision is embodied in a context of innovation and creativity. Educational leaders aim at fostering innovation in the institution. The vision they establish helps to guide teachers and learners to seek innovative methods and approaches in education. That is to say, transformational leaders create a mindset among the partners to contribute in creating a culture that encourages experimentation, initiative and innovation. Professional development is thus enhanced through providing resources and promoting and creating opportunities for development in accordance with the new trends in teaching learning tools and practices. The spirit of collaboration is closely related to the innovative perspective of educational leadership. Different partners are called for constructive collaboration with each other which itself carries the principle of risk-taking support wherein collaborators are encouraged to take decisions, assume responsibilities, take risk without fear of failure because the team is always present to provide support and guidance. It is a continuous process of learning from experimentation as well as failures.

One more central factor of transformational leadership in the educational context is empowerment. Transformational leaders are supposed to have power and are required to work with followers to transfer power that allows them to control over their lives. Empowerment in general is based on equity, respect, confidence…. In education empowerment enables both educational leaders and learners to have ownership of decisions, nurture continual growth and act to the fullest potential. Empowerment enhances autonomy in implementing the appropriate teaching- learning strategies. Thus, it brings about confidence in the educational landscape and between the different stakeholders: educators and learners boost their self-confidence and trust their abilities. Furthermore, empowerment ensures inclusiveness in the sense that all voices are heard including school leaders, learners, parents and the whole community.

Empowerment encourages initiative on the one hand but also highlights accountability on another hand. No empowerment without a sense of responsibility: different partners are meant to be accountable for their actions and are provided with feedback. The reason for which transformational leaders do encourage change and are adaptation to change. They prepare educators and learners to adapt to the changing landscapes of education with all the challenges.

Overall, transformational leadership is a strong catalyst for positive change. It has a remarkable impact on the educational landscape as it contributes in creating a culture of success and excellence.

Community engagement and the transformational impact on education

The conventional model of education based on the concept of "the island of education" wherein the classroom experience remained isolated and limited within the confines of institution wall; that model, seems to become insufficient and inappropriate in the recent time due to the tremendous changes in the educational landscape. The educational context has experienced remarkable shift namely that education nowadays is extending beyond the classroom boundaries and is becoming a concern of not only teachers and students but the whole community. The educational sphere is far more expansive and the teaching learning process has become a lifelong endeavor not confined to the institutions' walls.

Community engagement is the process of working with other people of the same interest, shared geographical position or affiliated identity and interest in their well-being. Community members are engaged with the objective of having a say in some decisions and increasing visibility of various issues that affect individuals' lives as Doherty Roger (2016) claims: *"community engagement involves individuals working collaboratively with groups in order to address issues affecting the well-being of those people."*

Transformational leadership and Community Engagement in Education

The concept of community engagement is not restricted to a specific field; rather it is a multifaceted concept that depends on the context and discipline it is called for. Community engagement takes different perspectives such as healthcare, non-profit programs, governmental issues, community development as well as the academic perspective. The common denominator between all these aspects is the fact that community members have shared background and interests. That is to say, *"Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with groups of people who are affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations with respect to issues affecting their well-being."* (Barbara A. Israel et al. 1998)

Community engagement is related to the practice of collaboration between individuals and groups connected by proximity, interest, vision, desire of change, concern by community problems and interest in the common well-being. It is an active form of involvement and collaboration between those interested in the well-being and positive change via a two-way communication based on synergy and accountability between the community and the other external stakeholders. Reciprocity resides in the fact that the community benefits from the expertise of its members who, in turn, benefit from the spirit of purpose and fulfillment that they cultivate in the community. Involvement is not the ultimate goal rather, community engagement is about the active participation of members who share a vision and collaborate in decision making with a high sense of commitment to community issues. Community engagement values the effective practical participation of members and their genuine connection with the community. It is more about being present, following up with community concerns and collaborating consistently. Engagement is transformational as it aims at fostering change and transforming the community for better.

In the new context of education community engagement is a factor of quality achieving in the sense that education, as we justified in the previous chapter, has become a concern of many contributors: educators, parents, families, policy-makers, NGOs, businesses….. it is related to the partnership and interaction between the educational institution and the whole community. The educational landscape is fertile for community engagement as education has become a shared responsibility of the various stakeholders aiming at enhancing education and developing the institutions.

The implication of the community in the educational context contributes in establishing a culture of involvement and enriches the process of learning through bridging the gaps between the real-world and the institutions. Community engagement implies providing opportunities for students to shift from the purely theoretical aspect of learning to connect to the practical character of they are exposed to in the institutions. Connecting the theoretical and the practical aspect of learning allows students to make sense of their learning and its relevance in their community. Community engagement has a lot of positive impact on individuals: First it is a way of developing personal efficacy through the active participation in the community concerns. Individuals develop a sense of confidence when they see their efforts giving positive results of change and development. Second, community engagement develops a sense of personal identity among learners and spiritual growth. Individuals within the engaged communities are allowed opportunities to address different issues and work on projects. Thus, they test their skills and develop their talents. Working on social issues in the community can be a spiritually beneficial experience of spiritual growth. Besides, community engagement develops the ethical concern among individuals and nurtures awareness of concepts related to social justice, equity, fairness, moral reasoning…

Community engagement is closely related to transformational leadership because engaged individuals tend to develop their interpersonal skills and work with others. In the field of education, both concepts (engagement and transformational leadership) value the principles of collaboration, team work, motivation and inspiration.

There are plenty of benefits of community engagement in the educational field. Schools are essential for reaching active engagement of the community and having successful individuals. It benefits all parties: parents, students and educators in a direct way and the community in general on another level. Involvement leads to enhancing academic engagement because learners make sense of their learning; *"community engagement can be a powerful catalyst for academic engagement. When students feel connected to their communities and see the real-world relevance of their studies, they are more likely to be engaged in their academic pursuits."* (Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E. 1999). Learners within an engaged community try to make relations between the institution content and the real world outside. Thus the learning process becomes meaningful and complete in the sense that both the theory and real-world experience become complementary.

Research has proven that community engagement in educational field enhances not only academic success but also life success in the long term. Transformational educational leaders in engaged communities have a positive and lasting influence on the personal and professional individuals. Many scholars argued that community engagement has a sustainable impact on individuals.*"Engagement in community-based learning experiences during one's educational journey contributes to the development of important life skills, civic responsibility, and a sense of purpose that can lead to long-term personal and professional success."* (Ibid). the same view is shared by Bringle& Hatcher when stating that **"community engagement in education has been shown to not only enhance academic outcomes but also to instill a**

commitment to lifelong learning and active citizenship, which are cornerstones of sustained personal and societal success." (Bringle, R. & Hatcher, J. 2000).

The long term effect of community engagement on the learners success is due to the high skills they develop in the process of learning which is characterized by collaboration, empowerment and inspiration: *"the skills, networks, and sense of empowerment cultivated through community engagement experiences can have enduring effects on individuals, leading to greater well-being and professional opportunities throughout their lives."* (Astin, A & Sax, L. 1998).

The transformational impact of community engagement on education has gained recognition as a catalyst for transformational leadership in institutions due to the dynamic connection between the school and its community. Nurturing this relation is a powerful means of bringing about transformational influences on educational outcomes and the whole community life.

Community engagement has both direct and indirect impact on school life: it is closely related to achieving academic success because of the remarkable role of community partners on enriching the students' learning experiences. The community tends to complete what the school has started in a two-way direction. **"Community engagement is a proven strategy for enhancing academic outcomes. When students see the relevance of their studies in real-world contexts, their motivation and achievement soar."** (Eyler& Giles 1999).

Furthermore, community engagement is meant to promote equity between learners.

Transformational leadership and community engagement are two pillar for nurturing individuals' civic responsibility. Educational leaders contribute in motivating students and inspiring them to achieve their potential for the common good. They develop their sense of purpose and empower them to take initiative and contribute in conducting positive change.Transformational leaders enhance individuals' interest in community issues in the sense that

"Community engagement under the guidance of transformational leaders fosters a sense of collective responsibility for the common good, encouraging citizens to actively participate in shaping their communities." (James, C., & James, E. 2010). Individuals are given a sense of responsibility and empowerment and thus **"transformational leaders inspire individuals to see themselves as responsible agents of change in their communities. This empowerment is a catalyst for nurturing civic responsibility."** (Bass, B, & Riggio, R.2006).

Community engagement in the educational context is a distinguished mode of engagement as it encompasses a variety of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, principals…) that should be empowered and given chances of active involvement in order to contribute in the common- goal of improving education and conducting positive change. It is an engagement that is centered on the goals and outcomes of educational relevance. The main goal of community engagement in education is to contribute in the overall success of the learners. Besides, it is an engagement based on inclusivity of the different stakeholders: different partners are meant to take part in shaping the practices and policies of education within the given community. Another characteristic of community engagement is its emphasis on the the real-world application: it is an engagement that aims at enabling the students to see the relevance of their education through implementing their educational practices in the real world and the local issues.

Now that we have justified the importance of transformational leadership and community engagement a structured framework for such engagement is of great importance. Even though transformational leadership prioritizes motivation, inspiration and collaboration on the basis of a shared vision, a roadmap remains essential for implementing theses principles and applying them on the basis of clear strategies. Having a clear framework for community engagement would necessarily ensure harmonization between educational leadership goals and objectives with the mission and vision of the institution as well as the efforts of engagement of the community partners. All the stakeholders would find the appropriate guidance to interact with each other and with the institution. Moreover, a framework of engagement can serve as a means for assessing the effectiveness of the community engagement and enhance accountability of the different partners engaged in the educational landscape.

Epstein's model of engagement as a framework for transformational leaders

The 21st century context of education is very rich in opportunities for leaders to seek and reach educational excellence. Innovation, empowerment and inclusiveness are marking characters of evolutionary education. Yet , many scholars state that the key to transformational leadership in education lies outside the institutions' walls; it is within the community and the different stakeholders of the school. Joyce L. Epstein provides a framework that believes in the power of community integration in the educational context in the era of collaborative educational excellence.

Epstein framework is considered a model of community and education converging. It is a pioneering work that illuminates the path to school and community integration. Epstein's framework is an accredited model for transformational educators and community partners. It is considered a roadmap for a meaningful community engagement in the teaching-learning process on the basis of the belief education is communal journey not just an institution concern. Epstein framework with its comprehensive guide for integrating community partners and

educational leaders in the educational life is considered a philosophy that encompasses principles of transformational and collaborative leadership with community driven creativity and principles of inclusive decision making.

Epstein's Six Types Model of Parent Involvement

Many researches in the educational field have tried to assess ways to make sure that families and educational institutions remain engaged. According to Haine-Schlagel, Brookman-Frazee, Fettes, Baker-Ericzen., & Garland (2012) **"parent involvement has consistently been associated with improved child outcomes"**. Moreover, the two-way relationship between the school and the community has been considered a key to educational success and excellence as Gartrell claims; **"when a school works hard to maintain ongoing reciprocal communication with families in order to promote educational engagement, mutual trust grows and parents begin to work together with teachers on behalf of their children."** (Gartrell, 2012). Similarily, Pushor (2011) states that **"it is common for educators to state that they believe parents hold knowledge both about their kids and about teaching and learning, but a deeper kind of family engagement requires that schools lay parent knowledge alongside teacher knowledge to make more fully informed decisions on behalf of the students."** In this case, **"parents have a voice in the process of schooling"** (Ibid).

So, it is clear that school and community relations set the stage for establishing shared goals and mutual decision-making, avoiding misunderstandings, and helping parents and the community understand how to reinforce learning and school instruction.

Joyce L. Epstein, director of the center on school, family and community partnerships at John Hopkins University, has identified a comprehensive model for integrating school, families and communities on the basis of six important types. These six types of involvement are: parenting/ communicating/ volunteering/ learning at home/decision-making and collaboration with the community.And each type of these plays a unique role in enhancing this mutual relationship.

1. Parenting:the first type of involvement in Epstein framework is related to the set of activities and strategies for enabling families support the learning of their kids through establishing ahome environments that is favorable for learning. Parenting involves providing parents with the necessary and appropriate information, resources and directives to nurture the personal growth of the kids. Parents are considered very important in the educational life of their kids. They only need to be granted the right tools and knowledge in order to be more effective in their role as it is a great supportive foundation for the success of kids.

Parenting is very important in the success of learners and it is critical for their early learning: good practices from the part of parents contributes in making strong foundations for the academic success of learners. The supportive home environment depends the family structure, the background and the whole culture of this environment. Therefore, it is necessary to build bridges between the school and the family through providing resources and support to parents.

Parenting efficacy is related to the parents' belief in their role and influence on their children's education. Epstein claims that **"Overcoming barriers to family involvement and engaging a diverse range of parents requires an understanding that different families have different needs and contributions. Schools that recognize and plan for these differences can create more effective partnerships and enhance student learning."** (2001)

Parenting has positive effect on students achievement in the sense that the academic performance of kids becomes a concern of the kids, the school and the family as well. **"Involvement that is characterized by supporting learning at home and high educational expectations has been found to have a positive relationship with achievement."** Hill, & Tyson (2009)

2. Communicating: According to Epstein, success in the involvement of the community with the school require effective channels of communication between the parents and the educational institution. **"Frequent, positive communications about school programs and children's progress build parent and teacher trust and understanding."** (Epstein. 2001)

Communicating should be bi-directional: from home to school and from school to home. Parents need to be informed about the children's learning and their academic progress. Communicating through school magazines, e-newsletters, meetings, emails and updating websites keep the parents informed about the events and activities in the school and allows these parents to share their insights and feedback.

In the 21st century, technology contributes largely in connecting schools to families in effective ways that can ensue better understanding of families and whole community of the educational programs and policies. Such understanding would build long term relations on the basis of trust and respect between the school and the community.

Steven Sheldon emphasizes the importance of communicating claiming that **"effective communication facilitates the development of a partnership by keeping parents informed about their child and school matters, leading to positive attitudes towards the school and teachers." (**Sheldon & Epstein2005).

3. Volunteering: this is the third step of Epstein's framework of involvement and it is considered a cornerstone in the frameworkof involvement. Parents are referred to as partners and thus they are required to devote some time and contribute with their resources in support of the activities and programs of the school. Parents cannot be involved unless they give time, effort and resources to their kids schools. **"Schools can improve volunteer programs by organizing an array of interesting activities and scheduling them to enable all families to participate."** (Epstein. 2001) Parents have to take part in both curriculum and extra-curriculum activities: the events at the school, at the libraries, and even in the classroom they are expected to assist the learning of their kids.

Volunteering in Epstein framework should be understood in its broader sense as it has a broader impact on the learning and the educational performance of students. Effective volunteering will not only support the students learning but also it contributes in building and strengthening the relationship between the school and community because **"when families volunteer at their children's school, they can gain a firsthand understanding of the school culture and the challenges educators face, which can lead to stronger empathy and support for the school's efforts." (**Henderson & Mapp2002).

Consequently, schools' responsible and educational authorities are required to be open to parents initiatives and create opportunities for volunteering for them. This can be through creating welcoming environments for parents to contribute in the school activities, sharing the necessary information with the community members on regular basis. Schools may even organize training sessions for parents wishing to volunteer in order to teach the good practices. Parents do expect feedback and recognition to be encouraged to give more and thus they would collaborate efficiently in decision making processes.**"Offering training for parent volunteers can be as simple as a one-time orientation or as extensive as a series of workshops. The key is to provide parents with the information and skills they need to participate effectively in school activities." (**Epstein.2001)

4. Learning at home: as we stated before, not all parents are able to support their kids learning. Parents do need to be trained on how to assist their kids namely in the home tasks. Learning at home is a very important step in the framework of Epstein and it focuses on how parents would contribute in the learning of students beyond the traditional formal school environment.

Learning at home is about **"providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework, and other curricular-related activities, decisions and planning " (**Epstein.2001) Assisting parents by providing families with the skills and homework policies in order to be able to monitor and discuss schoolwork in the house.

As many parents are not expert in educational issues, schools need to schedule homework on regular basis taking into account the parents levels, availability and the expected tasks. Epstein underlines the importance of assisting parents in their role claiming that **"it is not only what parents do, but also how they do it that influences student achievement"** (Ibid).

Sometimes school need to prepare summer learning packets or activities to enhance families participation in planning school work and setting goals in general.

This step is very beneficial for assisting the learning of kids because it can ensure the practical role of parents who assist and guide the learners in completing tasks in comprehensive ways.

The most prominent role of parents in this step is to assist their kids in solving problems and doing homework. **"Homework is a key link between school and home...parents need clear, shared information about how to help with homework"** (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

The role of parents does not stop at the level of homework assisting but also in being engaged in the educational activities that reinforce the whole learning process. Parents can be of great help in encouraging the task of reading, critical thinking, developing attitudes and opinions about current events… Parents who work with their kids keep track of the academic performance of their kids and thus contribute in creating a conductive environment of learning. Children are generally influenced by their parents; therefore, parents involvement would inevitably transfer the positive attitudes to kids towards school and learning in general. The role of families is undeniable and it is certain that **"family involvement in children's learning at home influences not only academic success but also develops a lifelong love for learning"** (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

5. Decision making and advocacy: The fifth step in Epstein's framework is about **"including parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives"** (Epstein 2001). Epstein underlines the role of families in practice and in effective ways. Active involvement of parents is conducted through their active membership in organizations, councils and comities. Parents Teachers Organizations (PTO) are fundamental basis for parents to lead and participate in school activities. This step is based on two main components: 1. Decision making 2. Advocacy.

As far as decision making is concerned, partnership between parents and schools is achieved through sharing views and actions for the same goals. A partnership that is based on collaboration and empowerment rather than conflict and struggle; **"parents and families are partners in school decisions and governance, with opportunities to be involved in advisory committees, school improvement planning, and policy development"** (Epstein, 2001). Empowering parents entails the process of collaborative decision-making wherein parents and educators work for the benefit of the school and the learning of the kids. Collaborative decision making raises the awareness of representation of parents in educational decisions, protecting the learners rights, ensuring the parents voice in different decisions….

The second component is advocacy: on the one hand parents' advocacy involves supporting the kids in their learning journey and ensuring that the children's needs are met. **"Advocacy involves parents and families speaking up for policies and practices that support children's learning, and advocating for resources that contribute to student success"** (Epstein, 2005). Effective parents advocacy stems from building positive and collaborative relations with teachers and educators through regular communication and sharing insights about the kids' learning.

On another hand, community advocacy is an outcome of effective parents involvement. **"Advocacy extends beyond the individual child to include efforts by parents and communities to promote educational equity and excellence for all children" (Epstein, 2001).** Therefore, the whole community can collaborate on broader levels to promote some values such as equal opportunities, educational equity and excellence.

Community advocacy can call for collective actions in relation to the policies adopted in the educational context and may address systemic challenges such as initiatives to facilitate the learning of marginalized or underserved areas. Community advocacy leads to promoting diversity, inclusivity and engagement. It may even target socio-economic disparities within the community and seek for ensuring equal opportunities for success for all the children.

6. Collaborating with the community: In addition to the families, a synergic relationship with the community components is vital for the academic success of kids. Community entities are invited to work in collaboration with families and schools to enhance students' learning and academic development. Epstein makes it a shared responsibility between all three components in the sense that **"schools, families, and communities collaborate and share responsibility for developing, implementing and evaluating programs and policies in and out of school for the benefit of all students."** (Ibid)

School headmasters and educators need to seek active partnership with organizations, businesses, stakeholders in their communities because they would provide the schools with resources to nurture their initiatives and support for their programs and strategies. Community entities can offer expertise and support to allow schools implement their programs and events especially that **"community involvement creates a web of support for students, educators, and families that not only enhances academic success but also contributes to the overall well-being and vitality of the community."** (Henderson & Mapp. 2002)

Schools can benefit from community entities in different ways: they can share spaces, human resources as well as materials and financial support. Community members can be beneficial for students in volunteering activities, by having

guests giving lectures and career talks to share their expertise with learners. Members of the community can be practical members in the school councils and boards and they can offer opportunities for internships, field trips, training sessions in their organizations as well as project based learning experiences. In general we can claim that**"partnerships with community organizations offer unique opportunities for schools to expand their educational reach, providing students with experiences and resources that are not typically available within the traditional school setting." (**Hill &Jochim. 2009).

Collaborating with the community allows school to respond to the different needs and face challenges that extend beyond the schools environment. Community partners can address extra-educational issues such as health issues, safety and wellbeing concerns, literacy programs etc. Integrated communities imply engagement of the different ethical and cultural perspective in the educational context and this leads to less stereotypes, less conflicts, no bullying because all the students backgrounds would be represented in the school context and this is what we can call enhancing sustainable community relations for sustainable educational values.

Conclusion:

Community involvement and transformational leadership play a critical role in reshaping the educational system: they do influence the growth and success of educational institutions, in addition to the work of educators. Engaged communities in transformational context are key factors for teachers toward innovation and quality within transformational leadership. Such leadership aims to inspire the larger community to share in the vision and accountability for educational success in addition to providing guidance to educators and students.

In essence, the combination of transformational leadership and community engagement creates a potent strategy for educational advancement. Thus community engagement in education is a great strategy for reforming schools and improving the educational process. It highlights the common worry, obligation, and outlook for education's future. This cooperative approach guarantees that education is inclusive, dynamic, and sensitive to the needs of all students while also improving the quality of instruction. As we move forward, it is evident that transformative leaders and an involved community work together to create the way for educational success by pursuing shared objectives.

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