

# Provoking Social Changes in a Family-School Space of Activity

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The aim of this paper is to show how family-school inter-contextual relationships can be analysed in terms of dynamic systems of interaction. By assuming the psychological notion of “activity space,” we intend to advance possible new theoretical and empirical reflections concerning the home-school relationships. Our goal is to provide useful ideas for promoting positive changes in the inter-contextual balance between school and family. By discussing some theoretical assumptions of sociocultural approaches in psychology, we account for a presentation of an action-research project designed to show how a particular space of joint activities, namely a socio-material workshop (atelier), produces relevant changes in relationships between children (pupils) and adults (parents and teachers). Implications and possible avenues are presented as further opportunities for provoking social changes in the family-school space of activity.

Human life could be seen as a complex sequence of activities that take place in more or less secure social spaces (Iannaccone & Zittoun, 2014; Perret-Clermont, 2001, 2004). In daily activities, humans regularly and frequently cross the boundaries between these spaces, implying fascinating consequences for processual and dynamic analyses, especially in psychology (Iannaccone, 2013; Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Among the large theoretical and empirical amount of scientific works focussing on inter-contextual concrete and symbolic movements, in the present paper we would emphasize the case of the family-school space intended as a dynamic system of interactions. Our goal is to show how a psychological intervention in the critical field of contemporary social life is sensitive to any situated perspective of action. Despite a large tradition of research that mainly collects beliefs of parents and teachers to reconstruct the interactions between school and family, we should assume a more dynamic perspective obtaining data through the systematic observations of parents’, children’s and teachers’ interactions during concrete activities. In this sense, we aim to highlight a perspective that should allow for a more ecological description of the inter-contextual interactions. We intend to show to what extent this approach (and its operationalization through the notion of the activity space) can favour new opportunities for the theoretical acquisition and the development of more effective pedagogical devices, oriented to the improvement of home-school relationships. According to a previous research tradition (Marsico, Komatsu & Iannaccone, 2013), we are convinced that this type of perspective can provide concrete opportunities to promote positive changes in the inter-contextual balance between family and school contexts.

In order to present the main elements connected to our goal, the paper is organized as follows: firstly, a brief review of researches conducted on home-school relationships is offered in order to highlight some central elements that socio-cultural approaches can bring to the actual theoretical debate on the above mentioned topic; secondly, the presentation of some reflexions about an action-research project we have recently

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realized will contribute to show how a particular space of joint activities (a “socio-material atelier”) can offer opportunities for positive changes in the relationships among pupils, parents and teachers.

## **A BRIEF SCHOOL-FAMILY LITERATURE REVIEW**

Investigations about school-family relationships are largely represented in psychology and in educational sciences. The number of studies in this area of research is very impressive. For example, the reviews provided by Christensen and Sheridan (2001), Hill and Taylor (2004), Pomerantz, Moorman and Litwack (2007), Galindo and Sheldon (2012) highlight the controversial effects of home-school interactions on students’ achievement. Another contribution (Akkari & Changkakoti, 2009) underlines the relevant problem of the co-presence of multiple cultural models of family in most European and north American schools. The large heterogeneity of cultural values, amplified by the frequent processes of geographical migration, is not any more an easily manageable question with respect to the school-family relationships.

Among the contributions dedicated to the question of the school-family relationships, different papers appear as reference in the psychological literature. For example, the works of Epstein (1990, 2001), Connors and Epstein (1995) focus on the role of information offered by the school to the parents, on the type of information between school and family, on the level of parental participation to the learning activities at home, and on the involvement of parents towards decisions and activities that are realized at school. Within the same framework, Fantuzzo Tighe and Childs (2000) have shown how these factors are connected to three main elements: 1) the modalities of parental participation to the various school activities; 2) their contribution to the learning activities at home; and 3) the communication between family and school. Other analyses have highlighted the relevance of parental sustain and affective relationships between parents and children (Deslandes, Bertrand, Royer & Turcotte, 1995). The main role played by affective relationships has been also highlighted by Gronlick and Slowiaczek (1994): the authors have studied the parental involvement in the school context (e.g., their participation to the activities organized by the school), the parental intellectual involvement and their interest towards children’s school activities. In addition, Eccles and Harold (1996) have highlighted the role of helpers played by the parents in realizing the school homework and, more generally, in favouring a good relationship with their children.

These investigations, as the large part of other similar works conducted on parents’, children’s and teachers’ beliefs, have collected data by using methods largely inspired by questionnaires and interviews. In other word, these studies essentially collect verbal reports that are detached in many cases by the temporal and spatial contexts of concrete activities they are referring to. The obtained data are then informative about the parents’, students’ and teachers’ statements, and account for different representations of the school and systems of beliefs towards formal and informal education. In this kind of research, a methodological risk is to underestimate the gap between beliefs and concrete actions of people engaged in social activities. Moreover, interesting examples are represented by the models of investigation connected to the ethno-theories of the development and learning (Rubin & Chung, 2006; Lancy, 2012). However, in spite of the large amount of empirical works, there is little fragmentary consensus among findings

(Bérubé, Poulin & Fortin, 2007) and probably an insufficient space for theoretical innovations.

A main question concerns the impossibility of generalizing conclusions that are related to a multidimensional area of research (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Probably, some aspects of the results that are not generalizable depend on the methodological choices of these types of research. In spite of the potential methodological limitations that will be discussed later on, these studies have the merit to collect a large amount of interesting information about the relationships between school and family, as well as the cultural, social and economic contexts in which they are built. In fact, the adoption of the ecological perspective, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), although recently criticized (Boulanger, 2019, this issue), has offered an explicative frame of this type of data, relatively coherent to the complexity of the multiple social relationships within educational contexts. In addition, these studies have contributed to identify a certain number of representations that parents, teachers and students produce reciprocally and about the academic achievement of pupils. Among the factors that are considered crucial, the active participation of parents to the school activities appears essential, also because the parental involvement seems to favour a normative development of children's educational experiences. However, as we have already highlighted, the main problem of these studies concerns the static view of the school-family relationships. According to Akkari and Changkakoti (2009), we believe that it is not possible to catch a causal connection between educational strategies deployed by families, parental implications into school activities, communication between parents and teachers and academic achievement of pupils without taking into account a perspective of investigation that precisely focuses on activities. This view sustains the need of considering the local school culture, mainly through an ethnographic detailed observation of the interactions within the school context (Selleri & Carugati, 2013; Giglio & Arcidiacono, 2017). This implies that within situations of complexity and full of implicit rules and meanings, it is essential to understand to what extent the parents' statements cannot be adopted as unique source of information, without the analysis of the activities and processes of regulation/negotiation that characterize the interactions around school-family relationships. This perspective is confirmed by a relatively small number of interesting works in which researchers have adopted techniques of participant observation, by collecting verbal and nonverbal data during everyday social interactions across contexts. These investigations have been conducted in specific micro-settings (e.g., home, classroom) and have been largely inspired by the symbolic interactionism and ethnographic approaches. In this sense, there has been a shift of the focus of analysis from the second-hand verbal reports (the representations) to observable elements of complex events, trying to present evidences of interaction as they happen (Arcidiacono, 2014; Arcidiacono & Pontecorvo, 2004; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2014). The relevance and the pertinence of the observation as a way to integrate verbal and nonverbal elements is then recognized as necessary condition in order to produce abductive interpretations of the dynamics of social interactions, and in particular the family-school relationships. This type of approach seems to be adequate in maintaining the focus to the progressive construction of discourses and activities in which participants are involved, as well as the dialogical dimension of their interactions. These investigations assume that the unit of analysis is not the isolated phenomenon under study, nor the individual conduct, but the entire system of interactions, time and the space of action in which a specific activity is

constructed and performed (Arcidiacono, 2013; Buđevac, Arcidiacono & Baucal, 2015; Iannaccone & Arcidiacono, 2014; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2007).

The two types of methodological approaches that we have briefly described above (producing analyses based on verbal report and/or observation) are relevant in providing possible procedures to investigate the relationships between school and family, but at the same time, present limitations in their way to use the obtained information as data to perform a post-hoc reconstruction of the interdependence between micro-contexts. The question of taking into account the concrete conditions of the field at that time (Lewin, 1997) influences in a substantial way the educational policies related to the school-family: it is a point that is questioned since 90's (Montandon & Perrenoud, 1994), although without conceiving a new way of investigating the field, nor proposing alternative models of intervention. In the last thirty years, several interesting proposals have suggested ways to cope with these methodological limitations, especially within the theory of systems and complexity (see Price-Mitchell, 2009 for a review within the school-family domain).

More recently, Iannaccone and Marsico (2013) have suggested the necessity of studying the relationships between family and school as a specific unit of analysis, accounting for the need of highlighting phenomena within interconnected contexts. One of the main contributions of this approach is the possibility to conceptualize a specific identity construct that emerges in educational settings. In our opinion, this methodological option should be useful and beneficial at least for two reasons: a) it can contribute to increase the awareness, within the scientific community, of the limitations of the data collected in situations that are "distant" from the related activities; b) it can implement the adoption of units of analysis that contribute to avoid a monological reductionism. Concerning the first point (the distance from the activity), we are convinced that it is necessary to reflect about the nature of the information we have about the family-school relationships. An access to these data should be possible through questionnaires and interviews, as a way to reconstruct the representation of events generated over spaces and times. These data usually refer to past experiences that are often very far from the actions performed during the investigation (Iannaccone & Marsico, 2013). In this sense, data allow a partial and indirect reconstruction that is not specifically oriented to the real experienced situation. Iannaccone and Cattaruzza (2015a) have specifically discussed the problem of the access to events located in the past, by highlighting that the distance from the activity increases the likelihood of a static view of the representations elaborated through different surveys.

An opposite view based on the dynamic character of the interactions within the two contexts should be exemplified through the notion of "educational self" that has been proposed to account for a certain number of scientific results in the field of education (Iannaccone, Marsico & Tateo, 2012). The idea of the educational self implies a dynamic vision (positioning) of the participants involved in interpersonal experiences in context. The elaborated representations are then considered as forms of organization of identities connected to educational experiences. These forms could vary during the course of the interaction, according to the dynamic characteristics of the contexts. According to Iannaccone (2013), data collected through questionnaires and interviews can be considered as more or less stable expressions of the representations that participants have about the context of the educational practices. However, as observed in investigations in which the focus is on the interconnection among actors of an educational context (e.g., the parents, the teachers), the initial representations and the system of

values that guide actors in their activities are exposed to a dialogical process of continued re-elaboration during the social experiences (Iannaccone & Marsico, 2013), as already highlighted within the dialogical approach assumed by Linell (2009) and Marková (2013).

According to what has been highlighted above, we are convinced that, apart the amount of data that are available by using questionnaires and interviews, the methodological process of analysis of family-school relationships should benefit of a further step taking into account the processual dimensions of the representation offered by participants. For example, the information obtained through questionnaires and interviews can constitute the starting point to promote forms of interactions (in our specific case, between parents and teachers) as a sort of narrative interview (Daiute, 2014). These situations, partly inspired by the techniques of the focus groups, are settings in which the participants can “present” their own narrative within a collective situation in which the personal positions are confronted to the points of view of the others. It means that in these cases the interpersonal confrontation can offer the opportunity to reflect on the nature of each point of view, with respect to the others’ positions, and to modify it during the interaction. Other research perspectives have also highlighted the importance of crossed self-confrontation methodologies (Clot, 2000), especially in the field of work psychology.

In order to avoid the risk of transforming and reducing, even partially, the interactive dynamics into elements that are exclusively monological (as it is typically the case of the questionnaires), we are convinced that two passages are necessary: from one hand, it is important to consider the notion of the transaction between contexts of activity (for example, contexts in which school-family interactions are concretely realized); on the other hand, it is necessary to look at the representations that are dynamically elaborated by the different actors. In order to attend these two passages, it is important to interpret the activities produced by the participants as forms of conversational interaction, as elements of specific *interactional contexts*. In other words, in analysing the verbal reports and transcriptions obtained by the researchers it is necessary to constantly refer to the specific activities that participants realize during their everyday interactions. The observation of these activities can offer relevant elements contributing to better understand and interpret “static” verbal reports. The complementary information can also allow to identify the interconnections among actors, as it has been the case during a recent research project<sup>2</sup> (Iannaccone, 2010; Iannaccone & Marsico 2013; Marsico & Iannaccone 2012). The analysis of some aspects of the mentioned project suggests the relevance of integrative situations that occur while actors of schools and families met and, in many cases, make difficult the change of the relationships. More particularly, the above-mentioned research focuses on the dynamics of cooperation versus dynamics of conflict that emerge during school-family meetings and that regulate the deployment of conversation. Results show that the families’ capacity of playing an active role during the interactions with the teachers (for instance, to be able to show clearly a disagreement, to argue about evaluations made by the teacher, etc.) is mainly connected to the socio-professional status of the parents. Families with low socio-occupational status show their disagreement in a less explicit way, leaving the impression of a reduced degree of family-school conflicts. However, by analysing the conversations among actors it is evident that this kind of interpretation can emerge exclusively by a static look to the data. While a separate approach to the representations of parents and teachers provides somehow a

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<sup>2</sup> We are referring to the research project “Parental styles and processes of socialization during adolescence” (grant obtained by Antonio Iannaccone for the years 2004-2007).

“static” and non-engaged vision of the reciprocal beliefs, an analysis of the interactional dynamics during the real encounters can make visible the conflictual dimensions that remain often implicit in families with low socio-professional status. The lack of explicit reference to conflicts seems connected to the fact that families perceive meetings at school as “insecure” spaces of activity, situations in which they did not feel comfortable. In fact, the interactions are regulated by linguistic exchanges that often emphasize the cultural differences between parents and teachers. These aspects are confirmed by the existing literature pointing out the case of parents with low socio-professional status who have been confronted to difficult school experiences. In such a case, it is crucial to take into account the specific point of view of parents and teachers, through the creation of secure spaces of interaction in which the actors can advance explicit elements that otherwise are not visible during school-family meetings.

Studies related to the analysis of communities of practices (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) suggest the possibility that a research-action in the zone of contact between the two systems of activity (the family and the school) should be more effective and pertinent than other types of interventions exclusively based on preliminary knowledge emerging from social representations and conceptions. Our choice of implementing a “socio-material atelier” is exactly situated within this logic of research and intends to offer and guarantee to the participants a secure space of activity.

### **THE ACTION-RESEARCH PROJECT *PARENTS-SCHOOL: LEARNING AND COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY***

According to the previous considerations, in the following part of the paper we describe the combination of ethnographic and participatory elements that are at the core of our interactional setting, and that have been planned in order to facilitate a process of change within the specific system of the home-school relationships. Through the reference to empirical evidences related to a project<sup>3</sup> we have conducted in 2014, we present a theoretical perspective on how a collaborative socio-material atelier (hereafter, the atelier) could open new and concrete perspectives for orienting future pedagogical designs to improve the relationships among parents, students and teachers. The collaborative work consists in an activity that mobilizes *processual* and *dialogic* dimensions of the school-family meeting: at the core of our proposal there is the opportunity to invite the participants (parents, preschool children and teachers) to activate, within a creative and open space, processes of re-interpretation of their reciprocal interpersonal relations. The space is based on a conception of socio-materiality that has been described by Iannaccone and Cattaruzza (2015b) and it is connoted by an explicit ludic dimension: parents, children and teachers are invited to attend an atelier in which they can build small ships, by using tools and materials available during their everyday life.

Parents’ involvement (Fleer & Rillero, 1999) as co-researcher with the teacher shows a new way to conceive the traditional relationship between parents and teachers. This is related to some socio-cultural assumptions that characterize our approach and that we

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<sup>3</sup> We are referring to the project “Parents-School: Learning and Community” involving a Primary School in Neuchâtel (Switzerland). The project is based on a collaboration between the Institute of Psychology and Education at the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and the Department of Family and Community Service of the Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland).

intend to clarify as follows. Firstly, the space of the atelier has been created in order to provoke a reorganization of the processes of attribution/modulation of meaning to the proposed activities (e.g., school-family formal meetings). In our idea, a reorganization at the level of the meanings can impact the system of relationships among participants. Secondly, the atelier was designed in order to sustain a collaborative activity favouring the participants' awareness of the family's and school's systems of rules and the specific representations and repertoires of practices (Carugati 2013; Crafter & de Abreau, 2013). In the following part of the paper, we briefly present and examine some salient characteristics of such an approach designed around the atelier.

## The Research Site and the Data Collection

In our perspective, the atelier constitutes a space of socio-material activity in which the participants (in our case, parents, teacher and children) can be involved at the same level at different kinds of hand-on activities, canonical/non-canonical use of objects, free organization of the interpersonal distances and types of engagement in the activity. According to the Reggio Children approach<sup>4</sup> based on the prominence of relationships (Malaguzzi, 1993,1994; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998), the atelier was hosted by a class of a pre-primary school in Switzerland. The participants were twelve children aged between 4 and 5, and their parents (Portuguese, Italian and Swiss families). The atelier was organized in two half day sessions, outside regular school hours. For each session, small groups of participants, involving the children and their parents, were organized. At the beginning of each session, we introduced the participants to an assignment related to the construction of a small ship by using different materials (wood, plastic, paper) arranged on the tables. We did not give them further details, in order to leave them free to use the materials and to choose the modality of work. Researchers and teachers were present as participant observers. Audio and video recordings were collected by means of four fixed cameras positioned on tripods within the classroom. We also collected notes during the observation and pictures during the atelier, especially concerning drawings, artworks or any other materials produced during the activity.

As conjectured during the preliminary steps of the research, the atelier plays as space of activity that favours the construction of school-family relationships in a systemic and dynamic perspective. This space constitutes a real field of research in terms of characteristics that are close to an eco-systemic view of educational contexts. The practical parameters that have been fixed during the organization and the accomplishment of the atelier concern different elements. Firstly, according to Lave (1988), the distinction between *arena* and *setting* has been considered to reflect on the different operational uses of the term context. In this sense, an arena (see figure 1) refers to the contextual aspects of the context that are not directly negotiable by the individuals. The arena is a "physically, economically, politically, and socially organized space-in-time" (Lave, 1988, p. 150).

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<sup>4</sup> Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the "Reggio Emilia approach," puts at the heart of his mission the need to define the role of the adult not as a transmitter, but as a creator of relationships - relationships not only between people but also between things, between thoughts, with the environment (Malaguzzi, 1994). He imagines a school as an immense hot air balloon in which children can see the world in a different way, and the teacher needs to learn how to be a better hot air balloon pilot, in order to convince parents that what they are doing is something extremely important for their children. This metaphor highlights how Malaguzzi considers teachers and families as central actors for the children's education.



*Figure 1: the arena*

Instead, a setting (see figure 2) refers to the context created by the individual during his/her interaction with the arena - including interactions with other individuals.



*Figure 2: the setting*

This distinction between the arena and the setting is helpful in order to avoid a mechanic vision of the interaction: in fact, the focus is neither the individual nor the environment, but the dynamic relations between the two elements. As highlighted by Valsiner (1987), “once that adult organizes the child’s movement from one well-organized setting to another then the child may accept expectations of the new setting without difficulty” (pp. 183-184).

In our case, based on the assumption that the movement is an important aspect for working and learning, especially because provides communication (Martin, 2006), the arena is jointly designed by the researchers and the teacher in order to favour the maximum degree of freedom to the participants’ movements. On the one hand, different tables and chairs are arranged alongside each other in the middle of the classroom. As the

participants are invited to work together in the same space, we assume that their interactions, the physical arrangement of the work place, as well as the possibility to observe the work of the others could be important sources of learning (Mottier Lopez, 2004). On the other hand, the setting is organized autonomously by parents and children: in some case, they decided to share the same material in order to build together all the pieces of the ship; in other cases, they decided to work separately and then to gather all the pieces at the end. As Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry and Göncü (1993) pointed out, “children’s roles in structuring an activity in social interaction may involve central responsibility for managing the situation - even when their partners have greater knowledge - and for adjusting their own level of participation” (p. 236).

According to the mentioned approach, a second main issue concerns the fact that, as partners of the participants, we are inside the learning situation (Bradekamp, 1993), for instance by asking questions and redirecting the activities. A couple of months before the beginning of the atelier, we met the director of the school and the classroom teacher in order to share with them our ideas about the activities to be proposed. This preliminary step was very important, because the “dialogue implies not only talking but also acting together” (Wardekker, 2000, pp. 269-270). After this meeting the teacher decided to participate to the atelier. She was helping us to set the room and to prepare the necessary materials. During the activities, we did not give her specific instructions: we have observed how she spontaneously acted and, for instance, we noticed that she never evaluated or judged the work of parents. On the contrary, she always respected the collaborative work between parents and children. Within our design, we have worked with the teacher for each group of parent-child and, as well as between the groups. As pointed out by a former collaborator of Reggio Children, “the teacher must be involved within the child’s exploring procedure, if the teacher wants to understand how to be the organizer and provoker of occasion, [...] and co-actor in discoveries on the other” (Filippini, 1990, cited by Edwards, 1998, p. 181). The parents revealed to have appreciated this way of working, especially because they did not perceive our presence as evaluators. On the contrary, they considered the observers as partners for their discoveries with children.

### **Some Observations**

As first analytical step, a global examination of the groups’ activities has been conducted. Afterwards, we identified more precise sequences of activity concerning the relationships between parents, children and the teacher.

Taking into consideration the arena and the setting, we have observed several interesting interactive processes: more particularly, we are referring to the support provided by the adult (Stone, 1993), the recruitment of the children according to their interests, the capacity to maintain the goal’s orientation, as well as the consideration of the critical task features. In general terms, we have observed practices framed by the participants in relation to specific characteristics of the available tools and the local context in which the activities occurred (Puntambekar & Kolodner, 2004). The parents were actively involved in problem solving situations, they were interacting with their children in order to find technical solutions and to share the use of the tools. This aspect seems relevant because the collaborative problem solving has the potential to teach participants how to deal with complex tasks and how to work with and to learn from others (Forman & McPhail, 1993).

According to Paradise and Rogoff (2009), during the atelier we have observed frequent collective efforts to concretely contribute to the problem solving activities. For example, we are referring to cases in which a father discovered some problems during the construction of the ship, or the mother did not find a good way to paste different pieces of material, or the child intervened to offer his/her personal idea about a possible solution. Based on the Reggio Emilia approach, we can highlight a large amount of collaborative practices that were shared by adults and children in order “to explore, observe, question, discuss, hypothesize, represent, and then proceed to revisit their initial observations and hypothesis in order to further refine and clarify their understandings (Hewett, 2001, p. 96). In this sense, within the atelier the participants assumed roles that “were more as apprentices than as the targets of instruction” (Katz, 1998, p. 9).

## **CONCLUSION**

We would like to complete our reflection about the implementation of the atelier by summarizing the reasons of some choices adopted in the presented project. As we already indicated, our intention was to favour the participation of the parents and to suggest new avenues for future research about family and school relationships. According to our observations, participants show mutual knowledge and respect of cultural differences while working together, in a face to face situation. By assuming the perspective of the Reggio Children approach, it was expected that the presence of families coming from different cultural and social origins can offer more “possibilities for dialogue and to grow up amongst a plurality of contributions” (Spaggiari, 1998, p. 111). More concretely, a space of interpersonal and intercultural activity seems an element that offers educational opportunities and allows families assuming a more effective role as co-educators, rather than the actual pedagogical practices. On the other hand, we have noticed that the space of the atelier can expand the positive attitude of parents who did not perceive the presence of the teacher as a judging observer, but as a resource person to deal with the complex issue of the formal children’s education.

The ludic character of the activities proposed during the atelier seems to contribute to the awareness, especially for the adults, of a multiplicity of the educational process and the utility of a participation based on the freedom to advance different points of views, without the constrained frame imposed by traditional rules and expectations. As consequence, the idea that parents “avoid” to actively participate to the school life – idea that seems to be documented by many research based on different quantitative surveys – can be considered as the result of designs that leave no space to the parents to be aware of their agency. Numerous studies realized to stabilise forms of interaction between schools and families have obtained contradictory results, or, in some cases, even opposite findings with respect to the expectations of the research designers.

As we have tried to show, the approaches centred on the activity (Engeström, 1987) seem to better fit to the need of developing a real collaborative activity between school and family. In this vein, we rely on the proposals of the above-mentioned author who highlight to what extent the reference to the psychology of activity can contribute to make less ambiguous the concept of collaboration, by applying it to a real behaviour and not just to (partial) representations of human conducts. In addition, this option will allow to precise, within a collaborative activity, the various levels of participation, by facilitating an effective organization of the activity and by defining its specific modality of evaluation.

We are convinced that, apart the dimension connected to the activity, researchers in psychology and education should take into account the dimension of the constant construction of meanings that are mobilized by participants during their interactions. In this sense, the access to the subjective experience of the activity could be an important resource for learning (Mouchet & Cattaruzza, 2015). Further research could set out to examine how we can assess the participants' experience to the atelier. This step will contribute to make clearer and effective the results of interventions (such as the atelier we have proposed) developed within inter-contextual interactions and aimed at sustaining social changes in the family-school space of activity.

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