

# Navigating Power Relations: Towards Inclusive Communication in Education

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# Our Aim!

**How** can we create and sustain a culture of effective and inclusive **communication** among **stakeholders** in Education?

# Key Questions

1. **Why** explore Effective & Inclusive Communication?
2. **How** to Create and Sustain a Culture of Effective Communication in Education? – **3 Levels of Analysis**
3. **Who** is involved? – **Navigating Power Relations!**
4. **So What?** - Challenges to build a 'Culture of Communication' - **Structural Constraints and Contextual Factors**
5. **What Works?** - How to address these Challenges *in Practice?*

# Why Explore **Communication**?

- **Message:** What is being said? What is not being said?
  - **Stakeholders:** To whom? – who is included and who is excluded?
  - **Means:** how? verbal/non-verbal? Is it clear?
  - **Purpose:** Why is this message conveyed? Compliance? Consultation? Other?
  - **Tone:** how did recipients feel? Responsive? Responsible? Compassionate?
  - **Timing:** When is a message communicated? Is it timely or too late?
  - **Impact:** what is the effect of the message on each stakeholder group?
  - **Feedback:** Are recipients able to respond? Is it reciprocal?
- ⇒ What are the dynamics of power relations in this communication?

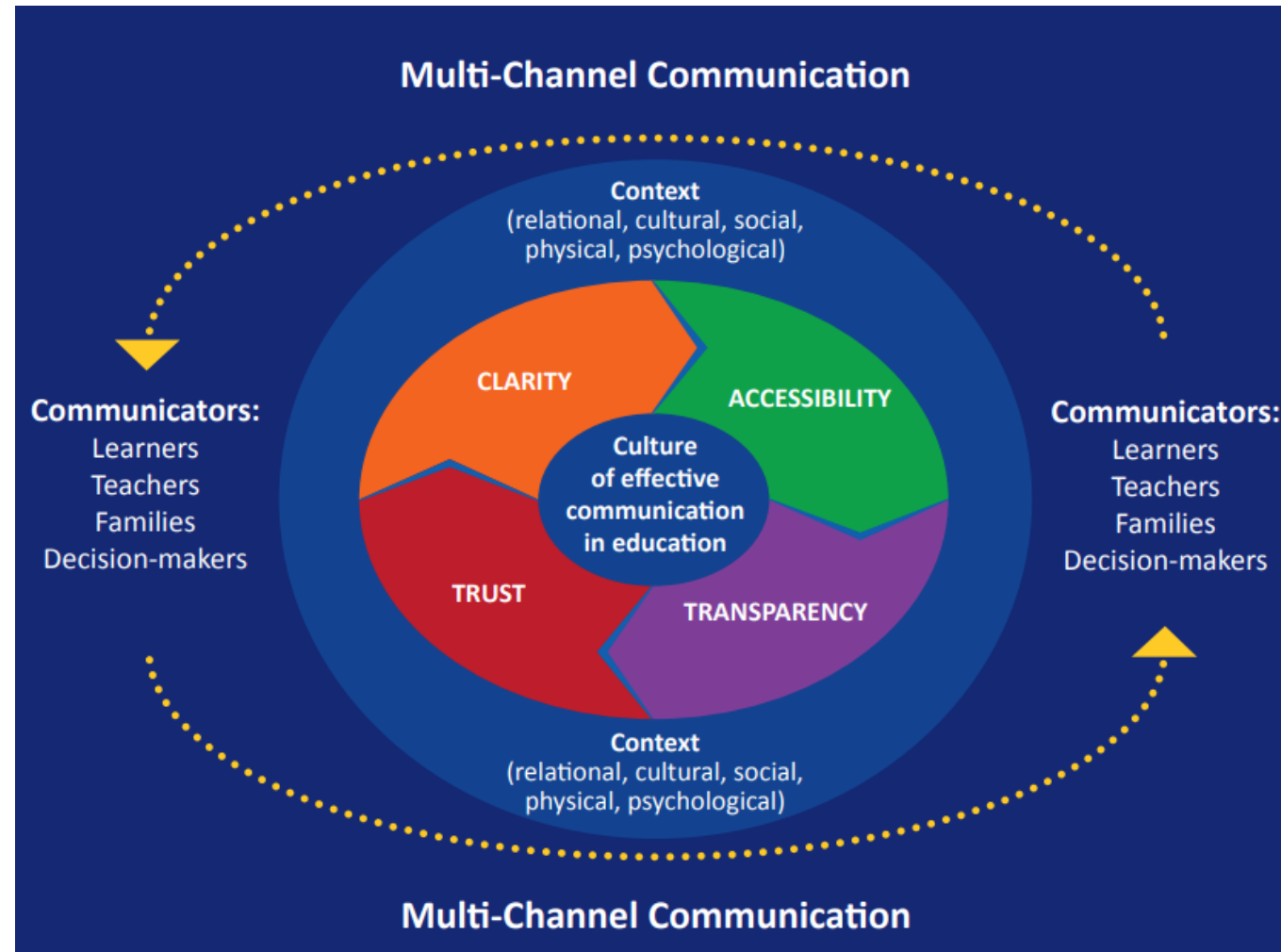
# Effective Communication as Collective Capability:

Why?

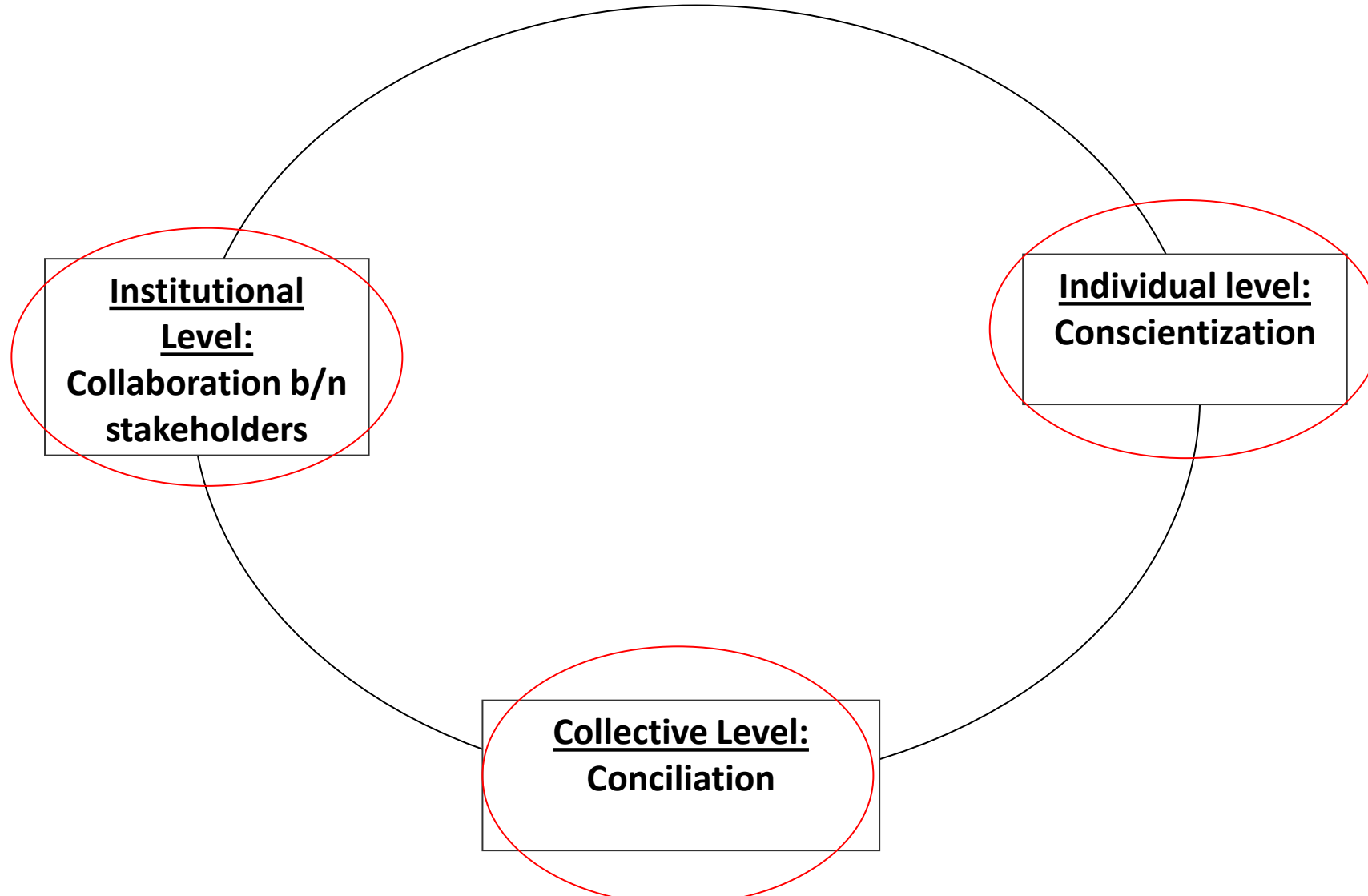
- It can only be achieved **if everyone is on board!**
- Its **benefits accrue to everyone in the system** (even if at different degrees)
- **However** - *Easier Said than Done!*

# Culture of Effective Communication in Education:

## Revisiting the BRIES Model



# 3 Levels of Analysis: Individual, Collective, Institutional



# Unpacking the Model:

## 3 Level Analysis

1. **Conscientisation** at Individual Level
2. **Conciliation** at Collective level(Parents/ Communal/School)
3. **Collaboration** at Institutional level between *all* stakeholders



# At the Individual Level

## ■ Voice and Agency

- **Listen** to learners, teachers, headteachers, parents, policymakers at local, municipal and national and international levels
- Need to **think critically** about the existing communication systems – **imagine** a different way of thinking about communication.
- Need to be **willing to take action** to change the existing systems for effective communication – cannot force change, they all need to be on board! No wishful thinking; but strategic agency

## ⇒ Conscientisation:

- What do they value in effective communication? (*values*)
- Why do they value these aspects? (*voices*)
- What are they willing to do to achieve those 'new' standards? (*agency*)

# At the Collective Level

## ■ Deliberation and Consensus building

- Articulate common goals to work towards them
- Negotiate to prioritize and reconcile these goals
- No one-size-fits-all hence the need for flexibility and adaptability
- Inclusion is key especially of underrepresented groups of students, parents, teachers and decision-makers.

## ⇒ Conciliation: (Horizontal)

- Which communication goals are agreed at the collective level? (*agenda setting*)
- How can these goals be achieved? (*processes*)
- Whose role is it to promote which goals? (*delegation and local ownership*)

# At the Institutional Level

## ■ Capacity building and Mutual Support

- Linking up different stakeholder groups
- Involve other relevant institutional structures such as civil society organisations and external agencies
- Establishing effective partnerships: deliberating roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group as an equal partner

## ⇒ Collaboration: (Vertical)

- What are the roles of each stakeholder group? (*Strategies*)
- How can accountability and transparency mechanisms be established? (*governance*)
- **How to navigate unequal power relations between stakeholder groups? (power)**

# Navigating Power Relations –

## Different **Types of Power** in Communication Systems

- To generate and sustain capabilities, individuals need to navigate several **Power Relations** (Rowlands, 1997; Alkire and Ibrahim, 2007):
  1. **Power over** (Control): ability to resist manipulation
  2. **Power to** (Choice): creating new possibilities and affect change
  3. **Power from within** (Change): enhance self-respect and confidence
  4. **Power with** (Community): act in a group or join a collectivity

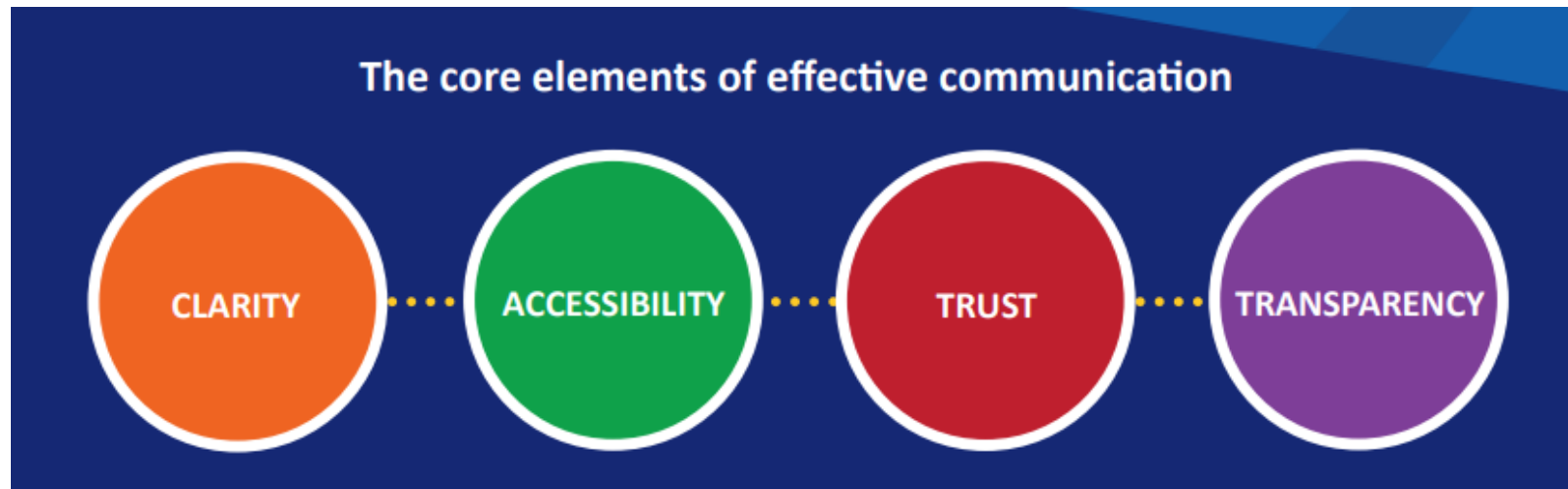
# Mapping Power Relations within Communication Systems

## in Education: Who is involved?

1. Among Learners
2. Between Learners and Teachers
3. Among Teachers
4. Between Parents and Teachers
5. Among Parents
6. Between Teachers and Headmasters
7. Among Headmasters
8. Between Parents and Headmasters
9. Between Learners and Headmasters
10. Between Headmasters and Local Decision-makers
11. Among Decision-makers
12. Between Local and National Decision-makers
13. Between National Decision-makers and External Agencies
14. Etc!

# Linking **Communication and Power**

- Being Aware of these **Power Dynamics is Key** for effective communication
- **Unequal Power Relations affect all 4 Elements of Effective Communication:** trust, clarity, transparency, accessibility



# Linking **Communication and Power**

- **Unequal Power Relations affect effective communication model:**

- **4 Aspirations**



Figure 4. Aspirations

# Linking **Communication and Power**

## ■ Power Dynamics affect Effective Communication goals:

- Wellbeing and Resilience
- Conversion Factors

## ■ Need to address various Challenges encountered when creating a culture of effective communication





# Challenges encountered to Create Culture of Effective Communication

- Avoiding the **'No-Communication'** Trap
  - **Respecting 'Voices'** – especially of those marginalised
  - Virtual vs. Actual Communication – **not a 'tick box' exercise**
  - Communication **without Fear** – being **taken seriously**
  - **Demystifying Communication:** who communicates, how and why and what impact does it have?
- ⇒ **Need for Communication that Changes and Challenges existing Unequal Power Relations**



## Communication that **Changes** Power Relations

“Participation without redistribution of power is an **empty and frustrating process for the powerless**. It allows powerholders to claim that all sides were considered, but **makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit.**

**It maintains the status quo”**

(Arnstein, 1969, 216)

# What Works?

## Addressing Unequal Power Relations

- **Awareness**: examine the Impact of Power Dynamics on Effective Communication Systems in Education
- **Flexibility**: communication systems need to effectively adapt to meet diverse and changing stakeholders' needs
- **Feedback**: examine and analyse existing communication and how it affects different stakeholder groups to constantly improve those systems

# Power Dynamics

need to change for a *truly*  
effective & inclusive communication system  
to be established....AND SUSTAINED!



*Towards an **Effective, Inclusive and Empowering***

*Culture of Communication in Education for ALL!*

**Thank You**

# Questions or Comments ?

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