

Book Review: Promising Practices for Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education

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Parental involvement at home and at school is very important in helping children succeed in school. This can look different from home to home, city to city, state to state, and certainly from country to country. In particular, fathers' roles in raising children can be vastly different depending on the cultural norms where they live, their work status, their need to help based on the mother's (or extended family's, caregiver's, etc.) availability, the mother's willingness to be open to the father's help, and time permitting.

Research already exists on fathers' involvement in their children's lives, yet not as much exists related to their involvement in schools, though it is growing (Abel, 2012; McBride, Dyer, & Laxman, 2013; Terriquez, 2013). The book *Promising Practices for Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education*, edited by Hsiu-Zu Ho and Diana Hiatt-Michael (2013), provides an overview of studies about fathers' involvement in children's education from numerous places around the globe. The various chapters are written by authors from different countries, making this a captivating volume and adding to our knowledge a wide range of perspectives in one book.

The first chapter, written about fathers from the United States, discusses how fathers might be hesitant in school settings based on their own past negative experiences, or the high number of females working in schools, or the fact that they may have dropped out of school. The authors also discuss how gay fathers face obstacles of acceptance by school administrators or teachers. On a

more positive note, the chapter covers how Head Start programs, virtual visit programs with fathers in prison, and reading programs targeted to immigrant fathers motivate fathers to be more involved with their children.

Father involvement in Canada was examined in Chapter 2. Overall, father involvement has increased there. In a study of 1,000 families, fathers were engaged in playing, bedtime routines, and going to sporting events; whereas, mothers were more involved in cooking, caring for sick children, and homework. The authors then summarized five other studies about father and mother involvement, which described specific ways fathers have become more proactive in their children's education.

Chapter 3 covered father involvement in students' education in Taiwan. Customarily, caring for children is done by mothers there. However, with the increasing number of women working, sharing tasks is becoming more accepted. A review of studies in this field was offered. Promising practices are forthcoming, such as government policies that allow fathers to have unpaid leave from work (up to two years when a child is born) and corporations or schools that provide daycare centers. Overall, parent involvement used to be seen as an intrusion; thus, this is a novel practice in Taiwanese culture.

Latino fathers in the United States and their involvement in their children's schooling were discussed in Chapter 4. Based on previous research, these fathers many times were thought of as not participating in their children's lives or as abusive and/or chauvinistic. More recent research has provided a more optimistic light, including Latino fathers being thought of as providing financial support, as loving, and as caregivers. In addition, they have been shown to value their role as a teacher and believe they are accountable for their children's education.

In Chapter 5, fathers' and teachers' perceptions about their partnership in secondary schools in Spain was reviewed. It was a good chapter to follow and compare to Chapter 4, since these were Latino fathers in Europe. Fathers in Spain are expected to help in raising children, including with school-related matters. Yet, work schedules that conflict with school schedules can make it difficult for fathers to participate in school activities, a barrier which was noted in previous chapters as well.

A cross-cultural perspective on father involvement in early childhood education in Turkey and the United States was provided in Chapter 6. More specifically, it provided an overview about what kindergarten teachers perceive father involvement as, the forms and rates of communication between fathers and teachers, and the roles of fathers in their young children's education. Overall, it appeared that low father involvement was an issue that needs to be addressed through professional development in both countries.

Chapter 7 moves to father and parent involvement across Africa. While acknowledging the diversity of Africa, the authors reported that, in general, African fathers value education, knowing it can help make for a better life. However, many children across Africa do not have fathers as a result of HIV, AIDS, famine, or war, or if they do have fathers, being able to feed the children comes as a first priority: “You don’t eat school” (p. 122). Fortunately, the chapter ends with a section called “Hope for the Future” in which the authors discuss the African Fathers’ Initiative: Room to Read, as well as other programs to help engage fathers in their children’s education.

Chapter 8 goes over education and fatherhood in Argentina. It begins by sharing how fathers used to have the dominant role in the family, but as time has passed, there has been more of a balance between men’s and women’s roles, not just in their involvement in children’s education, but overall. As a result, some of the programs or initiatives discussed involved fathers and mothers.

Father involvement in South Korea varies, as discussed in Chapter 9, from fathers who see their roles solely as financial supporters to fathers that want to be an important part of their children’s lives. In addition, more women are working and going to school. As a result, it is believed that couples are having fewer children. To counteract this situation, grassroots movements are in place to aid with father involvement, such as father schools where fathers get to participate in a course that teaches them how to become involved.

The last chapter of the book was dedicated to predicting delinquency and academic outcomes for ethnic minority adolescents in the United States. It described how, when fathers are not present in their children’s lives, the chances of the children living in poverty increase. Yet, if fathers spend quality time with their children, they can help prevent future criminal conduct in teenagers. Furthermore, positive relationships between fathers and their children had a positive influence on their scholastic results.

Interestingly, themes emerged showing similarities across the chapters and locales. For example, fathers believed they needed to support their children financially. Fathers also set expectations for their children, such as the importance of school attendance, getting good grades, and preparing for future professions. Fathers were beginning to help more with homework. Plus, they were collaborating with teachers to share challenges they faced. Conversely, some teachers commented that fathers did not regularly attend school functions, including parent–teacher conferences. As a result, even if the fathers were involved with their children’s education, it was perceived by the teachers that they were not.

Programs for fathers are still developing, and the authors of these chapters urge them to continue expanding. The authors also noted that more research in this area is needed, such as more mixed method studies with immigrant

fathers, fathers in prison, or fathers in the military. Something to consider when planning research projects involving immigrant fathers is that, for example, Latino or African families come from various countries; when the groups are discussed as a whole it is impossible to differentiate their countries of origin and corresponding cultures. More specificity would be beneficial when conducting studies and reporting them.

Overall, this book was written in a very clear manner, with each chapter bringing in a different perspective from a different country or continent from a variety of authors, making it a thought-provoking read. This book would be a great fit for a workshop or book club to help teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other educators learn various ways that are in place to help promote father involvement and why fathers might respond (or not respond) to certain methods.

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