



Family learning – Intergenerational learning: an inclusive and cohesive policy

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Maria Toia, Romanian Institute for Adult Education



Calea Bogdăneștilor, nr. 32 A, cam. 206
300389 Timișoara, Timiș, România

Tel.: 0040 256 592960
Fax: 0040 356 816532

E-mail: irea@irea.uvt.ro
www.irea.uvt.ro



EBSN BtB on family literacy - a draft

The missing link: Family learning for
cohesive lifelong literacy policies

- ✓ *Provide sound evidence that clearly speaks of the need for concrete action - gather reliable research results that can be translated into policy recommendations*



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An overview...

- * Literacy is an intergenerational phenomenon: poor parental literacy increases the likelihood of poor childhood literacy.
- * Parental involvement has a greater impact on children's literacy than any other factor, including school quality.
- * The earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy development, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects.



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An overview...

- * Attention to family literacy is a recognition that literacy development begins from birth, within the home environment and continues to be significantly informed by the home and family
- * 'Family Literacy' - informal development of literacy with the home or family/ 'the development of provision, projects or 'interventions' to support or develop this learning.
- * Family literacy programmes have been shown to improve children's literacy skills, and the literacy support skills of their parents.



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What does research say?



- * An enjoyment of reading, and literacy development more generally, is born in very early childhood: the first four years of a child's life are of crucial importance in building strong lifelong literacy skills and practices
- * Parental involvement in a child's reading has been shown to be the most important determinant of language abilities and emergent literacy



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What does research say?



- * A range of socio-economic factors (including poverty, parental educational levels, minority ethnic status, number of parents in the family home and migrant status) can have negative effects on children's literacy
- * 'Poor' literacy is often an intergenerational phenomenon



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What does research say?



- * Socially disadvantaged parents are less likely to model reading practices, read with children or stimulate children with the same amount of talk and questioning as social privileged parents. There may also be less space or time for reading in socially disadvantaged families.
- * Socially disadvantaged parents are more likely to see literacy as the role of the school.



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Some example of family literacy practices....



- * The Dutch Opstap Opnieuw (Step-Up Anew) family literacy programme aimed to help migrant parents support their children's literacy development and motivation
- * The Turkish Early Enrichment Programme (TEEP) and its successor, the Mother-Child Education Programme (MOCEP) have provided parents with training in parenting practices to develop children's literacy as part of wider cognitive, social and emotion development



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Some example of family literacy practices....



- * Book gifting initiatives like Britain's *Bookstart* and Germany's *Lesestart*, distribute free books through health and other social infrastructure, encouraging parents to read with young children
 - * 'Dual track' programmes in England and Ireland aim to improve parents' literacy skills while helping parents help their children
- Etc.....



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Examples from practice show that...



Family literacy initiatives are very diverse:

- ✓ Support within and outside the family home
- ✓ Working both with children and parents/Exclusively support parents
- ✓ Aiming to develop parents' literacy alongside children's/exclusively children's literacy
- ✓ Sharp focus on literacy (love of reading)/develop literacy within wider work on 'good parenting practices'.



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Therefore, what we know so far is that...



- * Compared with most educational interventions, family literacy initiatives are an effective and cost efficient way of tackling the literacy (and wider educational) achievement gap between more and less privileged families
- * Longer term gains (including performance in secondary school, employment and higher education) are produced by programmes which pay attention to children's wider cognitive, social and emotional development)



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Therefore, what we know so far is that...



- * Bookstart, Every Czech Reads to Kids and All of Poland demonstrate that programmes can achieve wider societal gains or 'culture shifts' around reading for pleasure
- * Family literacy initiatives can improve the motivation and confidence of socially disadvantaged parents (including socially disadvantaged migrants) to become more involved not only in their children's home literacy development, but their children's education more broadly



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Then, what are the messages to bring forward?



- * Family literacy initiatives require ‘joined-up’ working between different government departments (including education, health and library services)
- * Evidence so far suggests that home-based initiatives are of crucial importance in tackling the earliest production of social inequalities.



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Then, what are the messages to bring forward?



- * More longitudinal research is required for a better understanding of which types of initiatives ‘work,’ for whom and why
- * Initial evidence suggests that it may be worth investigating the value of programmes that teach parents to teach their children to read



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Then, what are the messages to bring forward?



- * Greater links with school system are more important than relationships with particular schools
- * Just because a project works in one context doesn't mean it will work in another. Programme transfer requires attention to the '4: participant characteristic, pilots, partnerships and project teams
- * All national child literacy strategies should include family literacy strategies



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Then, what are the messages to bring forward?



- * There is a need for focussed thinking on the needs of migrant families, while remembering that different migrant communities have different needs
- * We recommend the forming of forums/structures to sharing good practice across nations
- * Future research needed, including research with a focus on writing (and the modelling and development of writing practices) as the majoring of existing work has a focus on reading



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Where is missing link?



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