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Conference or Workshop Item

Title: Fathers, sons and schools: historical dilemmas and future possibilities

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Fathers, sons and schools: historical dilemmas and future possibilities

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Second International Scientific Conference:
'Parenthood in the face of difficult situations. Disability – Neglect – Disintegration’

Kamień Śląski Castle, 8 & 9 May, 2013
Key areas for discussion

Masculinity
Recollection of schooling
Early nurturing
Fathers as teachers
Fathers as classroom helpers
Non-resident fathers
SEN & disability
School sport
Bereavement
Criminality & delinquency
Young dads
‘Outside the school gates’
Themes from recent research

Change in role
Parenting ‘breakdown’
Boys & men: ‘negative careers’
Mental health needs
Silent sons
Early Nurturing

de-skilling fathers
lack of confidence in their child-rearing skills
importance of emotional closeness, touch
‘anxious’ fathering
the challenge of being a ‘young’ father
sons want physical and emotional closeness
Narrative data
Personalised and partisan
N = 25 fathers (and sons)
Reference Group
Analysis: themes and focal points
Key areas for discussion

Masculinity
Recollection of schooling
Early nurturing
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‘Outside the school gates’
SEN & Disability

emotional attachments: surrogate fathering or ‘thinking like a father’
key individuals and events inform responses
helplessness and frustrations
reluctance to be involved based on personal fears and histories
actualised sons
Delinquency & Criminality

socialised deviance amongst families
subtle or overt isolation of ‘non-normal’ fathers
schools as delinquent playgrounds
paternal approval of inappropriate behaviour in school
‘like father, like son’ responses by professionals
Outside the school gates

feelings of embarrassment (sons), awkwardness (fathers)

strong sense of ‘place’ and identity with fathers by sons

feelings of being marginalised

fathers are conscious of status, linked to employment

competition amongst sons (‘my dad’s better than yours’)

at KS 1 and 2, boys like to be met by their fathers
What father’s say

these Dads lacked information about activities

some Dads indicated that any information sent to the home was invariably addressed to the mother

some Dads indicated an uncertainty about many school activities being only for women

several Fathers indicated that they felt ‘out-of-place’ and ‘uncomfortable’ in the presence of (mainly) women

the employment circumstances of these Fathers, and especially their work-hours, did not allow for participation

these Fathers were very positive about wanting greater involvement in their sons’ education and welcomed suggestions about participating in play-school events, coffee-mornings and so on.
Whole-school issues

Does the school publish/utilise data regarding boy’s progress?
Does the school identify boys specifically in its mission and action statements?
How does the school promote the developmental, social and learning needs of boys in its teaching and assessment?
How does the school cater for the different learning needs of boys (and girls)?
What is the principles and processes of/for staff recruitment?
How are boys involved in decision-making?
How are boys who are shy, overweight, ‘arty’ or ‘middle-band’ recognised and celebrated?
Does the school have an explicit strategy for involving Dads?
Is part of the staff development programme directed towards boys/fathers?
Some more strategies...

- Opening lines of communication directly with fathers
- Actively seeking out input to school activities by fathers whether as classroom helpers, assisting on school journeys, participating in school sports and social activities
- Publicising mentoring and coaching roles which provide opportunity for fathers to present pro-education models
- Promoting social-coaching roles for fathers during break or lunchtimes
- Positively discriminating in the appointment of men as teaching assistants
- Inviting fathers to present at assemblies and other school gatherings
- Providing regular opportunities for fathers particularly to come into their son’s classroom at the start of the school day
- Holding fathers-only events such as a ‘Father’s Day’ in school
- Including a explicit statement valuing the involvement of fathers within the school’s handbook
- Arranging coaching and mentoring sessions for fathers about boys’ learning
A case(-study) in point....*

• Setting & Context
• 10 x fathers, boys , teachers
• Interviews, observation & document analysis
• Preliminary snapshots

* With acknowledgements to Abide Zenenga, Doctoral Candidate, in the School of Education, The University of Northampton
A research & practice agenda

father’s biographies and educational careers
father-friendly schools
fathers as mentors in schools
sons and fathers ‘working together’ in classrooms
excluded pupils and the role of fathers
teacher-shadowing by fathers
fathers-and-boys clubs
‘father-line’ communication
male-orientated curriculum development
father involvement in ‘SEAL’ curricula inputs
greater involvement of men in Parent Partnerships
studies of resilience factors relating to ‘effective fathering’
father-friendly home-school communications