

Positive Fatherhood: A Key Synergy for Functional Early Childhood Education in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper presents findings from an empirical study of fathers' involvement in the preschool education of children in one South African rural community. Both the social capital and the bio-ecosystems theories were employed to elucidate the concept of positive fatherhood, its value in Early Childhood Education (ECE), and some of its inhibitors and enhancers. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from ten fathers. Data was analysed through content analysis method. Key findings reveal that participants define positive fatherhood in relation to being able to provide for their families. The value of positive fatherhood in ECE is perceived in terms of breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring bright futures for children. The main inhibitor of positive fatherhood is the weak relationship between teachers and fathers, whereas the main enhancer is forging strong ties with fathers and the community at large. The implications on research and practice are also discussed.