

Home-School Relationships: The Communication and Engagement Practices of Schools and the Role of the Community Educational Psychologist

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Signature:

Suzanne Bevington

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Paper One: Home-school relationships: A community view on parental support for children's learning and development

2.1. Abstract:

Developing positive relationships between schools and families has become an increasing priority within education in order to best support children and young people's learning and development. Despite an increasing focus on seeking the parental 'voice', the views and experiences of school staff, parents and children appear to have limited prominence within the literature. This paper presents a piece of illuminative Community Psychology research that explored home-school relationships from the perspectives of school staff, parents and children from four Primary schools in a local community. A mixed-methods approach to data collection involved twenty-eight staff and sixty-four parent questionnaires, a focus group with eight children, and semi-structured research interviews with six staff and five parents. The importance of effective communication to encourage home and school to 'work together' is highlighted along with the need to provide support tailored to local needs focused around developing parental knowledge and skills to support children's learning. The findings offer valuable insights into the views and experiences of parents, school staff and children around the current communication and engagement practices of schools in a local community. There are also implications for educational practice, including within Educational Psychology, in developing more effective home-school relationships in the future.

Paper Two: Home-school relationships: The role of the Community Educational Psychologist in school staff support

3.1. Abstract:

With an increasing focus on supporting parental involvement within education, the development of effective 'partnerships' between schools and families is widening. Despite the wealth of information and advice around engaging parents in education (DfE, 2011), there appears limited training and ongoing support for school staff on how to foster and maintain these positive interactions and how to tackle 'real life' issues faced within home-school relationships. This research explored the role of a Community Educational Psychologist working with school staff to develop and maintain positive home-school relationships. Through support and facilitation from a Trainee Community Educational Psychologist, a series of education and supervision sessions were developed with a group of school staff to increase knowledge and confidence around the applications of psychology within education and the influential factors in home-school interactions. A model of reflection was introduced through the supervision sessions to assist the creation of a sustainable support network for staff within school concerning their work with families. The findings highlighted a 'need to' and 'desire for' developing school staff knowledge and confidence and the significant impacts of the education/supervision sessions in achieving this. Factors enabling and preventing progress through these sessions were noted along with the value of 'sharing' within supervision. The necessity of continued practice in order to embed supervision into teaching practice was acknowledged, and the positive impact of a Community Educational Psychologist facilitating these groups was found. Implications for educational practice, including within Educational Psychology, in supporting school staff with home-school relationships are discussed.
