

DEVELOPMENTAL TIMETABLES OF URBAN AND RURAL PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND TEACHERS IN BOTSWANA

Abstract

Children's early development is sustained through multiple social contexts (Britto et al. (2017) that involve parents, teachers, grandparents, and other people who interact with children and their families (Larner, Berman, Young & Reich, 2001). Studies have shown that caregivers differ in the goals and the expectations they have for young children. In Botswana, raising children was customarily a communal effort shared by the child's parents and the extended family members in a kinship system. The kinship living arrangements promoted interconnectedness and assured support and security to all members (Malinga and Tshitswana, 2011). Children were raised by relatives who shared common child development beliefs, values and practices. However, the economic and social transformations that are taking place in Botswana have altered the traditional child upbringing to involve paid caregivers unrelated to the children or their families. This new model of raising children in Botswana brings in new questions about possible inconsistencies among various child caregivers – including parents, grandparents, and preschool teachers – with regard to expectations for young children's development, and practices used to encourage attainment of developmental goals. This dissertation explores this issue through three related manuscripts focused on “developmental timetables,” or expectations about ages by which young children should achieve a variety of competencies. Using mixed methods (a questionnaire and focus groups), the first paper explores relationships between parents' education, age, and type of setting (urban or rural) on one hand, and on the other, expectations they have for their preschool-attending children and how they promote the development of these skills. The second paper, also using mixed methods, compares parents' and preschool teachers' developmental expectations for children at the ages of 3 to 5 years, and how each group of caregivers promotes the development of the expected skills. The third paper compares developmental expectations of urban and rural grandparents of preschoolers, based on focus groups only. The results suggest general agreement among these groups in many respects, but some distinctive patterns of difference among them. Implications for policy, practice and research are discussed.