CultureCase

How parents shape the reading habits of their children

This research was conducted by **Sabine Wollscheid** at the **Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services, Norway**

Summary

This paper explored the impact of parents' reading patterns on their children's reading habits. Drawing on a sample of 757 school-aged children living in two-parent households in Germany, the research demonstrated that parents' reading had a strong impact on how much their children read, and particularly on how much their daughters read. These findings have consequences for reading policy.

Mothers (in particular) make a difference to younger children

The relationship between younger children's reading and mothers' reading habits can be explained by the fact that women often undertake the main care-giving role at this stage in children's lives. However, this may change as the child-care and paid work roles become more equally apportioned between men and women. Fathers have a stronger influence of the reading habits of older children, and on sons more than daughters.

Children may also influence parents

The association between the reading behaviour of parents and children is because parents provide a model for their children. However this influence may also be reciprocal – with parents reading more because their children do.

Policy should look beyond the family to influence the reading behaviour of boys

Many reading programmes focus on the family as a key place for reading development, and this may mean that these interventions are less successful for sons. Youth clubs might be a better alternative setting for successful programmes focusing on male reading development.

This summary was written by **Ruth Craggs, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

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