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**Original
scientific paper**


Paper received: Jan 31 2025
Paper accepted: Feb 27 2025
Article Published: Apr 15 2025

Changes caused by fatherhood as a source of needs for lifelong learning²

Extended summary

The responsibility of the researchers in educational sciences lies both in the research of the upbringing context of family life, as well as in understanding the power of educational interventions in the family system that can change this context in order to develop the family and its members. Observing it from both sides, we have chosen in this research to focus our attention on the parent, who, by fulfilling his parental, marital and family roles, makes family life an upbringing context in which children grow up and, on the other hand, the parent is an open resource, a capacity for change and enrichment of family functioning that can also be developed through education. When it comes to the study of parenting in the social sciences, fatherhood is not a much-studied phenomenon. Usually, parenting is discussed in general or parenting research focuses on mothers. The beginning and development of education for parenting and parenting educational programs are primarily associated with mothers, their role in the functioning of the family and the upbringing of children. For a long time, it has been perceived that fathers do not have a major, direct impact on the early development of a child and that their effect is reflected primarily in the economic provision for the family and support for the child's mother. Two research streams are responsible for changing this picture – the first relates to the research into the consequences of the fathers' absence on child development, while the second

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² The research was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovations of the Republic of Serbia within the framework of financing research at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy (Contract 451-03-137/2025-03/200163). The paper represents a revised and supplemented master's thesis The needs of fathers of young children for educational support, defended on December 13, 2022 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade (under the mentorship of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zorica B. Milošević)

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stream of research relates to studying the influence of fathers on child development. The conclusions of the researchers are unanimous – the role of the father in the child development is of crucial importance. In educational sciences, different approaches are possible to studying both the upbringing context of the family and the creation of educational intervention in the family system that is aimed at supporting the development of its educational context. In our research we opted for the systematic and development approach to the family, for several reasons. The family-developmental approach to the family, with its two basic concepts – the family life cycle and the family's developmental tasks – points to the necessity of considering family functioning in its developmental dimension. The systematic approach to the family in educational sciences opens an area for education as a most powerful tool of upbringing and a form of support to the family from the metasystem, to an impact on the guidance of the direction of that support, towards advancement and family and the growth of its members (at any stage of the family system development). Understood as a living system which has specific developmental dynamics, the family can be considered a developing community. We believe that the systematic and family-developmental approach to the family is so immanent to the family studying in educational sciences and that omitting these approaches is almost impossible, in understanding the educational context of the family, as is in the conceptualization and application of educational interventions in the family system. The systematic and family-developmental approach to understanding the changes caused by fatherhood as the sources of the fathers' lifelong learning needs has opened up the possibility of understanding these changes in the context of three planes on which they are observed: individual development plan for fathers, a plan for partner functioning (development of a partnership relationship with the mother) and a broader social behavior (a plan for developing functional relationships with extended family members, friends, relatives). We consider these changes as potential sources of the father's needs for lifelong learning. That is why, in research, we sought for the answer to the question how fathers experience changes that are brought into their lives by the birth of a child, and in this paper, we will present the results regarding their experienced changes on the personal, individual development plan. Our objective was to determine the perceptions of the fathers of children at an early age about these changes as possible sources of the fathers' needs for lifelong learning. In research we used survey method and the technique of the semi-structured (in-depth) interview. The most significant results of the research indicate that changes that the birth of a child brings to the lives of fathers, are the source of the fathers' needs for lifelong learning.

Keywords: family, fatherhood, changes, lifelong learning

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