

Parental involvement in homework completion for primary school students at the second level of the curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Homework is the fundamental form of pupils' work at home. Commonly, homework is considered all types of learning and work done by the pupils when they are not in school which is related to school learning. In today's age, parents' help with homework and their involvement in the educational process is necessary and welcome.

The methodology used in the study is a mixed method, concretely, the qualitative and quantitative method. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of parental involvement in homework completion, and the increase of quality of learning of primary school pupils, belonging to the second level of curriculum. The main research question is: How does parental involvement in homework completion affect the performance of second grade curriculum of primary school pupils. While, in order to help find answers on the main study question, these sub-questions were used: What is the parents' role in homework completion of primary school pupils? How does parent-teacher cooperation regarding homework affect pupils' achievement? Study hypotheses are: Parental involvement in homework is an important factor in quality increase of the learning process and Teacher-parent cooperation regarding homework affects positively pupils' achievement. The study has taken place in six public schools, four of which are part of the Vushtrri municipality and two of Prishtina. The study includes the third, fourth, and fifth grade. Schools from the municipality of Vushtrri are "Andon Zako Çajupi", "Naim Frashëri", "Ali Kelmendi" and "Mustafë Venhari". While those from Prishtina are "Azemi e Salihu" and "Dëshmorët e 1921". The data was obtained with the use of a questionnaire for parents, and one for pupils, as well as the interview with teachers.

The study results show that parents' involvement in the homework completion process is a significant factor for improving learning quality, which also has a direct impact on producing better results, reinforcing knowledge levels, and achieving desired results in teaching.

Key words: homework, parents, school-family cooperation, pupils, primary school

Introduction

Homework creates an opportunity for important interactions between school, family, students, and other parties who may help and take care of the child.

Teachers being the center of the homework process play a critical role in helping kids with homework, while parents are effectively involved in the completion of students' homework. With the goal of gaining knowledge and important life habits, it is mandatory to apply systematic work at home in accordance with the homework given by the teacher. This study analyzes some of the aspects and characteristics that are evidenced in the experience of parents so far in cooperation with their kids, in understanding, and helping complete their homework successfully.

Successful student's work at home depends on how the class went, in what ways and to what extent were the students charged with homework. (Cunha et.al, 2015). The purpose of studying this specific topic derives from the above mentioned facts, considering there are many different opinions and a good amount of skepticism whether parental involvement in homework helps or hinders their progress or even affects the excessive dependence of the child on the parent. In order to find the answers to these questions we have made a detailed literature review and have conducted a questionnaire with parents and students, as well as in person interviews with teachers in regards to this topic. The final part of this study, after seeing the conclusions from the data analysis, recommendations will emerge which may help parents offer the most optimal help for their kids. That being said, this study contributes to further development of this field of study while providing a different view and detailed research.

Literature review

Homework and its pedagogical value

Homework proves to be the most problematic activity for teachers, parents, but also the students themselves (Montalvo & Torres, 2004) . There are thoughts that deny their effectiveness in student results and, on the other hand, those that affirm their positive impact on learning and formation of students. According to Rooney, if for students they are taking advantage of their free time and for parents a source of anxiety and unbearable responsibility, why should homework be given to students at home even if it is useful; in that case how should it be given and how should it be managed in order to successfully perform their role and fulfill the purpose of their delivery (Rooney, 2008) . Harry Cooper, in his book "Battle over Homework" defines homework as tasks given to students by teachers to be completed after school at home or in another environment (Patton, 2002) . During the school year, parents of primary school children see homework as the aspect where they can observe and become familiar with their child's progress. Teachers think that they are decisive in the results of children in lessons, therefore they make sure that their completion is performed as best as possible (Hoover-Dempsey et.al, 1995) .Teachers can also support parents' awareness after school because of direct teaching strategies that can be useful in helping students with homework. Parents can also benefit from knowing that direct teaching strategies are often more appropriate for students who are younger, struggling with work, or need help. Suggestions for the amount of direct instruction that is appropriate for students at different developmental and grade levels can be especially helpful, as are suggestions for learning activities that meet the individual needs of students (Cunha et.al, 2015)

“With or without homework?”

This is the question that is trumpeted at the international level and that has stimulated debate and hundreds of attempts to provide arguments against possible answers, throughout different periods of time everywhere in educational systems that aim to improve quality. Initiatives to change the content of homework or even to offer as little homework as possible have been welcomed by children, as well as by parents, who in many cases cannot assist their children at home, while doing homework. Engagement in homework has been seen from a multifaceted perspective over time, highlighting the importance of homework in engaging parents and informing them about the child's progress as well as the work done at school.

There are numerous studies (Eccles, J.S; Harold, R.D, 1993) , (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006) , (Coutts, 2004) , (Deslandes, 2009) , (Warton, 2001), (Valle et.al, 2016) that try to highlight the impact homework has on learning, making arguments about how homework helps students achieve better results. Some other educational research. (Kohn, 2007) shows that homework has little impact and that it can cause stress for children which is not always appreciated.

When it comes to the teachers, the method of compilation as well as the purpose of delegating homework is seen as very important (Epstein&Voorhis, 2001), (Cooper & Valentine, 2001) . While from the existing literature it is clear that the perception of students themselves regarding homework and their effectiveness is determined by their teachers, depending on whether the selection of tasks they delegate is in accordance with the needs and interest of the students in the class. According to the Kosovo Curriculum Framework (MASHT, 2016) on the competence of creative thinking, homework helps the student during independent work both in the classroom and at home, bringing as many examples as possible from everyday life, using imagination by connecting it with the material given by the teacher.

The level of parental involvement in homework completion

Scientific research but also school practices show that effective schools are those that communicate with parents on a continuous basis. In those schools, parents are seen as part of the teaching process. Teachers inform them about class activities through mutual communication methods. Cooperation with parents in strengthening the educational role of the school, as well as in raising the full efficiency of teaching work, plays an important role in this direction. Programs that help parents engage in this involvement can provide demonstrations of developmentally appropriate learning activities, opportunities for practice of different strategies and information about the assessment of students' progress (Starkey & Klein, 2000) . Positive and negative effects appear simultaneously, inseparable and intertwined with each other. In this way, if homework can improve habits of learning, at the same time it deprives the child of other activities that they could develop during their free time (MASHT, 2016) . (Eccles & Harold, 1993) also defined parents' efficacy beliefs as composed of three variables: "Parents' belief that they can help their children with school work" (p. 572), parents' views of the competencies of their and parents' beliefs that they can influence the school through the help they can provide in school management.

Parental involvement in children's homework appears to influence student outcomes because it provides models, reinforcement, and guidance that support the development of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors associated with successful school performance (Hoover et. al, 1995) . According to (Haliti, 2007) the help of the parents must not consist in the performance of the tasks. According to him, the help should reflect in them providing necessary conditions such as a special work room, work table and chair, showcase, work tools, texts, children's press and so on. Then, to control, supervise, guide them as well as assign them a deadline within the day for the performance of tasks.

According to a study done by (Pupovci & Tafarshiku, 2008) about the participation of parents in school life in Kosovo, where 41.5% of elementary schools in Kosovo are involved, where 44.6% of students learn and 42.2% of teachers work, it shows that individual communication with parents is the key to their involvement in school life. According to the results of the survey, this communication mainly takes place in the "school-parent" direction, where the parent has more opportunities to listen than to express their opinion.

Methodology

Mixed method - specifically, qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods used in this study serve the purpose of research conduction.

Through the qualitative method, teachers' qualitative data were collected, utilizing semi-structured interviews. In order to understand on a deeper level teachers' perspective in regards to parental involvement in homework in the second level of the curriculum.

Quantitative data were gathered through the quantitative method, utilizing a questionnaire for parents and students. Quantitative data has allowed us to recognize the level of parental involvement in homework of primary school students.

The population of this study includes all parents, teachers, and students of the Republic of Kosovo. Considering that this number is very large and indefinite, a study group was selected which is made of the parents, teachers, and students of two schools from Prishtina and four schools from Vushtrri. The sample was selected through *simple random sampling*. This is a technique that ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected into the sample.

As a research sample, 8 teachers, 50 parents and 50 students of the second level of the primary education curriculum from these municipalities were taken.

In the municipality of Pristina, the research was carried out in the schools: "Azemi e Salihu" and "Deshmoret e 1921", while the partaking schools from the municipality of Vushtrri are: "Andon Zako Çajupi", "Naim Frashëri", "Ali Kelmendi" and "Mustafë Venhari".

The model of the study is representative, where the description of the perceptions of parents, teachers and students was made regarding the involvement of parents in the completion of homework in primary school at the second level of the curriculum.

Data analysis

Data analysis and their interpretation is made based on the questionnaire conducted with parents and students (quantitative data). The results are shown through graphics using SPSS (26th version), expressed in percentage. Quantitative data was presented through thematic analysis, where a few main themes were determined.

Preliminary interpretations emerged from those main themes, which were divided into categories, corresponding to the study.

Results

Teachers explain that parents should be part of the school and they should be involved in homework completion. While analyzing their perceptions, we notice that teachers agree that parents should be involved in homework while providing help. Teachers view parents' involvement in homework equally as important as their cooperation in the pedagogical triangle. Parents become part of their kids' school life with approximately 30-40 minutes of homework involvement per day. Parents also express that they mostly refer to school books when helping their kids with homework. Parents qualify their help with homework as support for their kids. Teacher-parent cooperation by both parties is considered to positively affect learning results.

Pupils also give their opinions regarding the topic. The majority, tell us that teachers provide them with necessary explanations about homework. Teachers consider that homework has a high impact on students' progress in learning, and high quality teaching. These students are dedicated, active, and show high results. These students are an example for others, and motivate them to finish their homework and understand the importance of learning. Teachers confirm that when it comes to the issue of what is the most common form of help with homework, not all students are lucky enough to receive adequate help from their parents depending on the level of education these parents possess.

Parents should get involved in their children's homework, especially when they are at the primary level of education, or the second grade of curriculum. They should build a partnership with teachers, based on mutual communication with common obligations and responsibilities.

Discussions

The discussion of results was made by answering the research questions.

The main research question is:

1. At what length does the involvement of parents in the process of doing homework affect the success of primary school students of the second level of the curriculum?

Based on this study it is evident that parental involvement in homework completion affects quality increase in teaching and learning. Some of the questions prove the truth of these questions: Teacher-parent cooperation about homework affects the achievement of learning results. 84% of parents answered that they "I completely agree", while in the fourteenth question: The involvement of parents in homework affects the quality of the learning process. 86% of parents answered "I completely agree".

This is proven through the questionnaires that were conducted with students participating in the study, where in the eighth question: Homework affects the reinforcement of knowledge. 62% of the students answered "I completely agree".

The supporting research questions are:

1. What role do parents have in the process of doing homework for primary school students?

2. How does parent-teacher cooperation for homework affect student achievement?

Based on the first question, some of the parents say that they have an important role in homework completion and in their involvement in the school life of their child and that they try in different ways to offer help by at least wondering if they are given homework.

While from the results obtained from the second question we see that the level of cooperation between teachers and parents in our schools is at the right level. This is best seen from the perceptions of parents, who with a percentage of 84% say that teacher-parent cooperation about homework affects learning results positively. The same applies to teachers who say that many parents express interest in homework, but there are also many parents who do not apply the same approach, finding their lack of time as an excuse, and that school should be responsible for that part.

Conclusions

From the discussions made above, we can conclude that the involvement of parents in homework completion of lower cycle students is very important and affects the quality of education and their willingness to complete the tasks. Parents and teachers have found ways to get involved in the most suitable form which has a positive effect. This has been achieved by helping the children with their homework, and receiving instructions by teachers, but never completing their homework for them.

We can conclude that the cooperation between parents and teachers is the most effective method to be successful, with great positive effects on their achievements.

Limitations and future studies

A few further research questions are recommended, in order to explore this topic further and contribute to the best form of parental involvement in the homework of students in primary education:

- To study the factors that hinder the involvement of parents in homework;
- To study the factors that help the student to have it easier with homework and not to need much help from others;
- To study the factors that contribute to parent-teacher cooperation in the realization of homework;

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