

Socio-economic factors affecting parents' involvement in homework: Practices and perceptions from eight Johannesburg public primary schools

Misheck Ndebele

This paper examines socio-economic factors influencing parental involvement in homework at the Foundation Phase in eight Johannesburg public primary schools. The research was conducted among over 600 parents from schools in different geographical and socio-economic areas such as the inner city, suburban and township. Two primary schools were chosen from each of these settings. This research offers a form of classification of parents, with the view to analyse the relationship between the types of parental involvement in homework and different categories of parents. In this study, I argue that the socio-economic status of parents has a major influence on participation in their children's homework. Findings suggest that the higher the income and socio-economic status, the more parents are likely to become involved, whereas parents from a poorer socio-economic background are less likely to be involved in their children's homework.

Keywords: homework, parents, literacy, numeracy, socio-economic status, classification of parents, suburban, township, inner city

Introduction and background to the study

The level of numeracy and literacy in South Africa has been an issue of concern and debate in the educational domain. Annual National Assessment (ANA) for Grades 3 and 6 learners have found low levels of literacy and numeracy for South African learners, with only 35% of learners able to read (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Apart from numerous government-initiated intervention strategies, such as the GPLMS intervention, which included coaching for teachers and scripted lessons, schools' communities of practice, clusters and workshops, parental participation in

Misheck Ndebele

University of the Witwatersrand, School of Education, Studies in Education Division

Telephone: 011-7173098 or 0726699500

E-mail: misheck.ndebele@wits.ac.za

education has been recognised as a necessary strategy in addressing the numeracy and literacy challenges in South African schools.

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to clarify who the 'parents' are in the South African context. In their synopsis of the South African family structures, Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane & Rama (2004) identify nuclear families, extended families, child-headed households, single-parent families and multigenerational families, as constituting the main family classifications in the South African context. The concept of 'parents' in South Africa is, therefore, increasingly complex as the South African society becomes more multicultural, multiracial and modernized (Amoateng & Richter, 2007).

It has been established that parental involvement in primary school education contributes to children's development of literacy and numeracy. It is argued that, when parents are involved in reading-related activities outside of school, children's reading performance is likely to improve, along with literacy and language skills, and a general love for reading (Nye, Turner & Schwartz, 2006; Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss, 2004).

In the South African context, parental involvement has been guided by the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, which focuses mainly on parents' participation in school governance and representation. As such, South African researchers have been encouraging parents to participate in activities generally associated with active participation in school governance (Mncube, 2009; Mestry & Grobler, 2007; Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2004; Heystek, 2003).

Recent research suggests that the majority of the parents in South African schools do not participate meaningfully in their children's education (Mestry, 2004; Mmotlane, Winnaar & Kivilu, 2009). Mestry (2004) further provides evidence of parental non-involvement by citing, among other

things, poor attendance of parents' meetings, limited involvement in fundraising projects, low attendance at parent-teacher meetings, and lack of interest in learners' schoolwork and homework. The finding that the majority of the parents do not participate in their children's education needs more explanation as to what factors influence parental participation or lack thereof.

Socio-economic status: A leading factor

Earlier research by Dwyer & Hecht (1992) identified lack of experience in involvement, negativity towards involvement, lack of time to be involved, as well as a belief that only schools are responsible for the education of their children, as the main reasons for poor parental involvement.

However, a different group of researchers argue that the socio-economic status of families is a leading factor in explaining parental involvement and that it has more

influence on parental participation than other variables such as age, gender, and marital status (Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers, 1987; Epstein, 1986; Heystek, 2003; Georgiou, 2007; Mmotlane et al., 2009; Schmitt & Kleine, 2010; Lareau 2011). Despite the benefits of parental involvement, low-income parents participate less in schools than high-income parents (Machen, Wilson & Notar, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009; Lareau, 2011).

The researcher is aware that people of different socio-economic levels may be found in any locality in South Africa. However, the general trend in Johannesburg and other big cities of South Africa is that more people of a lower socio-economic status are found in townships, the inner city and the peri-urban areas. People of a higher socio-economic status are generally found in the upmarket suburbs of the city.

With that assumption, this study classifies parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg public primary schools into two socio-economic groupings: parents from the low socio-economic and those from the high socio-economic backgrounds. Parents from the former are those from the inner-city schools, the peri-urban areas, as well as the townships. Parents from the high socio-economic backgrounds are those from the suburban schools. This study compares and contrasts the levels of parental involvement in these socio-economic groupings.

Theoretical framework

This study identifies some of the theorists associated with different aspects of parental involvement in their children's education, namely Bourdieu (1977), Bandura (1977), Bronfenbrenner (1979), and Epstein (1995).

Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'Cultural Capital' highlights the importance of class and class cultures, implying that class-related factors shape parents' compliance with teachers' requests for participating in schooling (Lareau, 1987). Teachers must consider what cultural norms and values influence the responses of parents when it comes to involvement in their children's education, such as homework activities.

Bandura's theory of Social Learning demonstrates parents' important role of modelling positive attitudes and behaviours towards school. According to this theory, people tend to display behaviours that are learned either intentionally or advertently, through the influence of example. Therefore, parents have the potential to model positive attitudes and behaviours towards school. In the context of this study, when parents show an interest in their children's schoolwork, and are willing to assist them with homework, and hold them accountable for the completion of homework assignments, children are more likely to apply themselves and perform better in school.

The school and the family are the most important settings in a child's life, which must partner for the development of the child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) espouses that child development occurs in different, overlapping contexts that affect each other, giving an ecological nature to his theory. According to Bronfenbrenner, communication between the different settings could benefit the child, making the parent-teacher relationship most significant in child development. Bronfenbrenner's theory is of much relevance in this study, as it justifies parental involvement in the schooling of children, thus strengthening school-family ties.

Among the theories chosen as a framework for this study, Epstein's theory seems to be the most direct and articulate on parental involvement in their children's education. This theory emphasises that schools, families and communities must collaborate to ensure the academic success and socio-emotional well-being of all learners (Epstein, 1992). The theory sums up the role of parents in six categories of the typology of parental involvement as follows: basic parenting; facilitating learning at home; volunteering at school; communicating with the school; participating in school decision-making, and collaborating with the community.

Of particular relevance and importance to this study in the above typology is the role played by parents in facilitating learning at home (Altschul, 2012; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

Methodology

This qualitative study investigated the involvement of Foundation Phase parents in eight public primary schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng province.

Description of participating schools

Participating primary schools were drawn from different geographical and socio-economic settings of Johannesburg – inner city, peri-urban, suburban and township. In this study, two public primary schools were chosen from each of these settings. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used to identify the schools (Schools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). For the purposes of this study, schools have been paired as follows: Schools 1 and 5; 2 and 7; 3 and 8, and 4 and 6. In terms of the categorization used by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), these schools belong to the Johannesburg East District. Table 1 summarises the socio-economic profiles of the participating schools.

Table 1: Schools and socio-economic profiles

Schools	Description
1 and 5	Low socio-economic status schools in suburbs adjacent to the city centre in Johannesburg. Parents are part of communities that include, to a large extent, foreign nationals from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and other African countries.

2 and 7	Low socio-economic status schools in the eastern suburbs of Johannesburg. Parents are mainly from Johannesburg inner city and townships.
3 and 8	Low socio-economic schools located in Alexandra Township.
4 and 6	High socio-economic status schools in the affluent suburbs north-east of Johannesburg city centre.

Participants

The main participants in this study were parents of learners in the Foundation Phase in each school. Participants in this study were chosen using purposive sampling, where sampling is done with a purpose in mind and subjects are selected because of some characteristic, with human rather than random choice (Trochim, 2002). In this study, they were chosen as parents of Grade One learners.

Research instrument: The questionnaire for parents

Participating parents of learners in the Foundation Phase completed a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained items for which parents stated whether they had time to assist their children when doing homework, specific ways in which they assisted their children, such as reading aloud to them, listening to them read, assisting them with numeracy, as well as supervising, checking and signing their children's homework. The questionnaire established whether their homes provided adequate resources as well as appropriate home learning environments for homework activities.

Procedure

Having been cleared by both the Department of Education and the University, the researcher visited the eight participating schools to explain the nature and purpose of the project, as well as request their support for the project. With the help of Foundation Phase teachers, information sheets and informed consent forms, as well as parents' questionnaires (see Appendix A) were sent to parents through their children. After reading the information sheets, all prospective participants signed informed consent forms to indicate their willingness to participate.

Completed questionnaires from teachers and parents, as well as signed informed consent forms were returned to the researcher, who sent them for coding. After the coding, data was sent to the statistician for analysis.

For data analysis, responses to questionnaires were converted from categorical data to numerical data for statistical analysis. Data were analysed using the SPSS 18 (SPSS, Inc. Chicago, Ill). Descriptive statistics were used to examine the overall views of parents from eight primary schools in Johannesburg regarding homework. To illustrate the distribution of responses, respective percentages of the observed perceptions were calculated and represented as tables and bar graphs.

Results

Findings from the survey on parents of Foundation Phase learners at the eight participating schools reveal that the majority of the parents across the socio-economic spectrum perceived homework as important to their children's learning. In their view, homework was to be given priority over all other activities of the child, and was not regarded as interfering with the child's free time. Parents from all participating schools believed that homework was a useful learning instrument for their children, and that the amount of homework that the children were given by their teachers was adequate and not excessive. Furthermore, parents believed that they were able to help their children even when the homework was challenging. Findings also show that the majority of the parents in all participating schools believed their children completed homework on time.

Influence of the socio-economic status

Results in this study also indicate a marked influence of the socio-economic environment on parental involvement in children's homework. This section describes findings on Tables 1 to 4 and Figures 2A to 2C, which illustrate the influence of socio-economic factors in parents' involvement in their children's homework at the Foundation Phase in public primary schools in Johannesburg.

Table 2: Number of times parents read aloud to their children per week

		Q1					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
<i>School 1</i>	<i>Count</i>	30	23	16	10	6	85
	<i>% within schools</i>	35.3	27.1	18.8	11.8	7.1	100.0
<i>School 2</i>	<i>Count</i>	19	18	14	15	5	71
	<i>% within schools</i>	26.8	25.4	19.7	21.1	7.0	100.0
<i>School 3</i>	<i>Count</i>	17	26	24	13	10	90
	<i>% within schools</i>	18.9	28.9	26.7	14.4	11.1	100.0
<i>School 4</i>	<i>Count</i>	35	19	22	14	5	95
	<i>% within schools</i>	36.8	20.0	23.2	14.7	5.3	100.0
<i>School 5</i>	<i>Count</i>	38	27	18	12	11	106
	<i>% within schools</i>	35.8	25.5	17.0	11.3	10.4	100.0
<i>School 6</i>	<i>Count</i>	48	20	14	6	10	98
	<i>% within schools</i>	49.0	20.4	14.3	6.1	10.2	100.0
<i>School 7</i>	<i>Count</i>	47	18	17	12	15	109
	<i>% within schools</i>	43.1	16.5	15.6	11.0	13.8	100.0
<i>School 8</i>	<i>Count</i>	5	6	5	5	1	22

	% within schools	22.7	27.3	22.7	22.7	4.5	100.0
Total	Count	239	157	130	87	63	676
	% within schools	35.4	23.2	19.2	12.9	9.3	100.0

Key:

4/5 times a week

3 times a week

2 times a week

Once a week

Table 2 indicates the number of times parents of Foundation Phase learners read aloud to their children in a week, for their Literacy homework. The table shows that, of the 676 parents who responded, 35.4% read aloud to their children 4 to 5 times a week. The highest percentage of parents who read aloud to their children was in the upmarket suburban School 6 (49%). Township Schools 3 and 8 had the lowest percentages, with 18.9% and 22.7%, respectively.

These results indicate a variation in literacy practices experienced by Foundation Phase learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. Parents from lower socio-economic environments (such as townships) tend to be less active in promoting literacy and reading skills among their children, compared to parents in higher socio-economic settings in upmarket suburban environments.

Table 3: Number of times parents listen to their children read per week

		Q2					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
School 1	Count	36	19	15	9	6	85
	% within schools	42.4	22.4	17.6	10.6	7.1	100.0
School 2	Count	29	21	11	8	5	74
	% within schools	39.2	28.4	14.9	10.8	6.8	100.0
School 3	Count	29	27	16	11	9	92
	% within schools	31.5	29.3	17.4	12.0	9.8	100.0
School 4	Count	44	20	18	10	5	97
	% within schools	45.4	20.6	18.6	10.3	5.2	100.0
School 5	Count	44	24	10	18	10	106
	% within schools	41.5	22.6	9.4	17.0	9.4	100.0
School 6	Count	75	13	5	3	2	98
	% within schools	76.5	13.3	5.1	3.1	2.0	100.0
School 7	Count	57	18	17	7	14	113

	% within schools	50.4	15.9	15.0	6.2	12.4	100.0
School 8	Count	6	6	6	3	0	21
	% within schools	28.6	28.6	28.6	14.3	0	100.0
Total	Count	320	148	98	69	51	686
	% within schools	46.6	21.6	14.3	10.1	7.4	100.0

Key:4/5 times a week

3 times a week

2 times a week

Once a week

Table 3 indicates the number of times parents of Foundation Phase learners listen to their children read for their Literacy homework in a week. The table shows that, out of 686 parents who responded, 46.6% listened to their children read 4 to 5 times a week. The highest percentage of parents who listened to their children read was at School 6, with 76.5%. Township Schools 3 and 8 had the lowest percentages, with 31.5% and 28.6%, respectively. Other peri-urban schools with growing numbers of township learners also had low percentages of parents who listened to their children read 4 to 5 times a week.

These results show that the socio-economic environment has an influence on the level of reading support given by parents of Foundation Phase learners from different socio-economic backgrounds in Johannesburg. In other words, Foundation Phase learners from high-income families are likely to receive more parental support for their reading than their counterparts from low-income homes.

Key:

4/5 times a week

3 times a week

2 times a week

Once a week

Table 4: Number of times parents assist their children with Maths problems per week

		Q3						Total
		1	2	3	4	5	8	
School 1	Count	34	23	14	7	8	0	86
	% within schools	39.5	26.7	16.3	8.1	9.3	.0	100.0
School 2	Count	35	17	10	5	6	1	74
	% within schools	47.3	23.0	13.5	6.8	8.1	1.4	100.0

School 3	Count	17	20	26	17	9	0	89
	% within schools	19.1	22.5	29.2	19.1	10.1	.0	100.0
School 4	Count	39	21	9	17	10	0	96
	% within schools	40.6	21.9	9.4	17.7	10.4	.0	100.0
School 5	Count	55	25	8	8	10	0	106
	% within schools	51.9	23.6	7.5	7.5	9.4	.0	100.0
School 6	Count	37	22	10	11	17	0	97
	% within schools	38.1	22.7	10.3	11.3	17.5	.0	100.0
School 7	Count	57	22	15	6	13	0	113
	% within schools	50.4	19.5	13.3	5.3	11.5	.0	100.0
School 8	Count	6	5	6	3	1	0	21
	% within schools	28.6	23.8	28.6	14.3	4.8	.0	100.0
Total	Count	280	155	98	74	74	1	682
	% within schools	41.1	22.7	14.4	10.9	10.9	.1	100.0

Table 4 shows the number of times parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg assist their children with Maths problems in a week. Out of 682 parents who participated, 41.1% assisted their children with Maths problems 4 to 5 times a week. However, it is worth noting that the two township schools, Schools 3 and 8, had the highest number of parents assisting their children in Maths only twice a week, with School 3 having 29.2% and School 8 having 28.6%.

These results reveal that lack of assistance in Maths was more pronounced among parents in the two township schools (Schools 3 and 8), compared to those in peri-urban and upmarket areas of Johannesburg. In other words, the socio-economic environment in the townships has a negative influence on how often parents assist their children with Maths problems on a weekly basis.

		Q4					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
School 1	Count	55	27	3	1	86	86
	% within schools	64.0	31.4	3.5	1.2	100.0	100.0
School 2	Count	47	23	1	0	71	74
	% within schools	66.2	32.4	1.4	.0	100.0	100.0
School 3	Count	49	34	5	1	89	89
	% within schools	55.1	38.2	5.6	1.1	100.0	100.0
School 4	Count	78	14	0	0	92	96
	% within schools	84.8	15.2	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
School 5	Count	85	19	1	0	105	106
	% within schools	81.0	18.1	1.0	.0	100.0	100.0

School 6	Count	79	18	0	0	97	97
	% within schools	81.4	18.6	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
School 7	Count	87	19	1	0	107	113
	% within schools	81.3	17.8	.9	.0	100.0	100.0
School 8	Count	18	5	0	0	23	21
	% within schools	78.3	21.7	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Total	Count	498	159	11	2	670	682
	% within schools	74.3	23.7	1.6	.3	100.0	100.0

Key:

Always

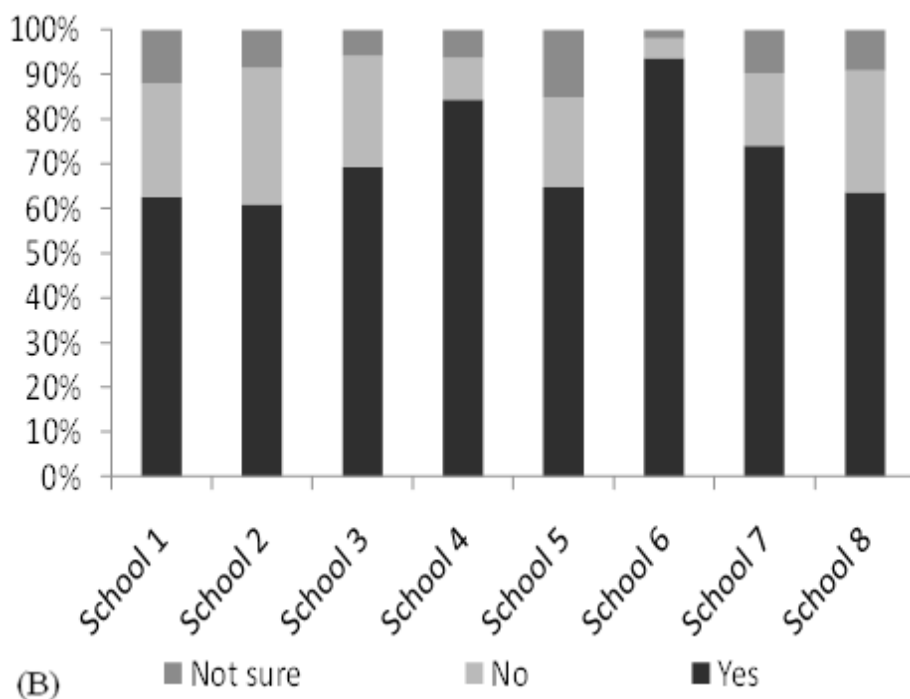
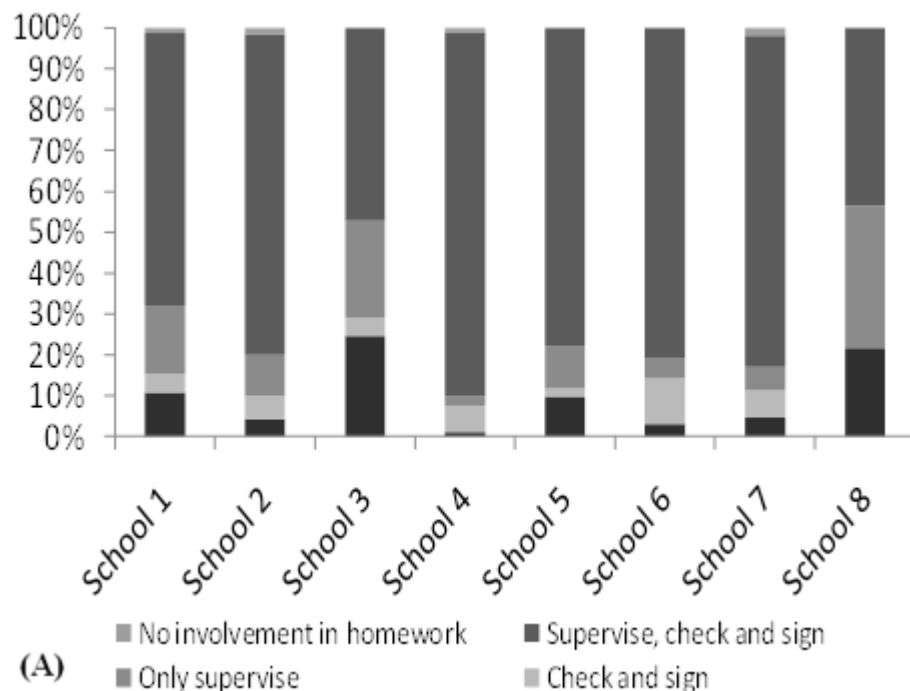
Sometimes

Never

Not sure

Table 5 shows whether parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg have time to supervise, check and sign their children's homework. Of the 670 parents who responded, 74.3% always supervised, checked and signed their children's homework. School 4 had the highest percentage of 84.8%, followed by Schools 5, 6 and 7, whose percentages were in the 80s. Some township, city-centre and peri-urban schools reflect the highest number of parents who did not always supervise, check and sign their children's homework, as demonstrated in School 3 (38.2%), School 2 (32.4%), School 1 (31.4%) and School 8 (21.7%). It is also disturbing that there were parents at Schools 1 (3.5%) and 3 (5.6%) who never supervised, checked and signed their children's homework.

While these results show that the majority of the parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg have time to supervise, check and sign their children's homework, there are still some parents, mostly in the city-centre, peri-urban and township areas, who do not always supervise, check and sign their children's homework. The results also reveal that some parents in the lower socio-economic environments never supervise, check and sign their children's homework.



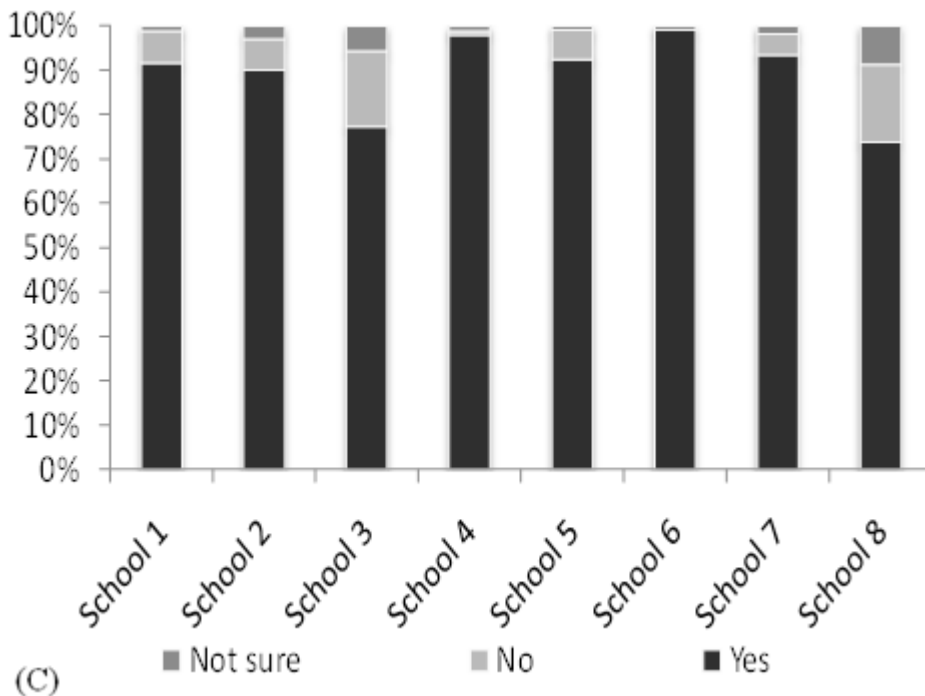


Figure 2: How parents help children do their homework (A) providing adequate resources (B) and providing a good home learning environment (C)

Figure 2 (A) indicates responses of parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg on how they help their children do their homework. Of the 666 parents who responded, 73.7% reported that they supervise, check and sign their children's homework. The majority of the participating schools reported percentages ranging between 43% and 95%. Schools 4 and 6 reported that over 90% of the participating parents supervise, check and sign their children's homework. However, the lowest percentages were recorded for parents at township Schools 3 and 8, with 47.2% and 43.5%, respectively. The majority of the parents who said that they only supervise their children's homework came from poorer communities around Johannesburg.

These results show that, while the majority of the parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg involve themselves in their children's education by supervising, checking and signing their children's homework, fewer parents from poorer socio-economic settings than in upmarket environments, actually supervise, check and sign their children's homework.

Figure 2 (B) shows the responses of parents of Foundation Phase learners in public primary schools in Johannesburg to whether their children had adequate resources to help them do homework on their own. Of the 660 parents who responded, 73.2% claimed that they have adequate resources to help their children do homework on their own. While percentages of parents with adequate resources at all participating

schools were generally high, parents from the upmarket Schools 4 and 6 reported the highest percentages, with 84.4% and 93.8%, respectively. The lowest percentages of parents with adequate resources were in the low-income communities, with School 1 (62.7%), School 2 (60.9%), School 3 (69.4%), School 5 (64.8%), and School 8 (63.6%).

These results reveal that, while the majority of the parents of Foundation Phase learners in Johannesburg have adequate resources to help their children do their homework on their own, parents in low-income environmental settings tend to have less homework resources for their children than those in higher income environments.

Figure 2 (C) shows whether the homes of parents of Foundation Phase learners in public primary schools in Johannesburg provide good environments for their children to do homework. Of a total of 670 parents who reported that their homes provided a good homework environment, upmarket Schools 4 and 6 reported the highest percentages of 97.9% and 99%, respectively, while the two township Schools 3 and 8 had the highest percentages of parents whose homes did not provide good environments for their children to do homework, with 17% and 17.4%, respectively.

The figure shows that percentages in six of the eight schools were all in their 90s, with the two township Schools 3 and 8 just lagging behind with 77.3% and 73.9%, respectively.

These results indicate that good home environments for their children to do homework are provided in higher socio-economic conditions found in upmarket suburbs, compared to those in poorer settings such as townships.

Discussion

This paper investigated the influence of the socio-economic environment of parents of Foundation Phase learners in selected public primary schools in Johannesburg on their involvement in children's homework.

Socio-economic differences among participating parents

Findings in this study also suggest that the socio-economic environment had an influence on parental involvement in Foundation Phase learners' homework. Emerging from these findings are issues regarding homework environment, homework supervision and support for learner literacy, in different socio-economic settings.

Home environments

According to this study, parents in poorer socio-economic conditions such as townships provided less supportive home environments for homework than those in richer, upmarket suburbs (Sewell & Hauser, 1980; Strauss & Burger, 2000). Parental involvement in early learning has a greater impact on children's well-being and

achievement than any other factor (Gutman & Feinstein, 2007; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). Based on this assertion, Hunt, Virgo, Klett-Davies, Page & Apps (2011) argue that supporting parents to help them provide a positive home learning environment is, therefore, a vital part of improving outcomes for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Homework supervision

This study indicates another important finding regarding the influence of the socio-economic environment on parental involvement in children's homework. The majority of those who did not supervise their children's homework were in the city-centre, peri-urban and township areas. The study also shows that, while fewer parents attended to their children's homework in the evening, more parents in poorer socio-economic environments opted to do so in the evening, compared to parents in higher socio-economic settings.

This finding confirms the view that families from low socio-economic backgrounds are least likely to be involved in their children's education (Turney & Kao, 2009; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007; Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Machen et al., 2005). Studies confirm that such lack of involvement may be because families in low socio-economic settings are often working all the time, travelling for long hours, getting home late, and having no time to participate in the child's homework (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). In addition, even if some parents may be present at their homes, they opt to do other things in the home instead of helping children with homework (Dwyer & Hecht, 1992).

Reading and literacy

The study shows that parents from lower socio-economic environments such as townships and the inner city tend to be less active in promoting reading and literacy skills among their children, compared to parents in higher socio-economic settings in upmarket suburbs. Researchers argue that parents in low-income families do not provide adequate printed materials, which may impair their children's early language and literacy development (Payne, Whitehurst & Angell, 1994). Parental involvement in their children's literacy practices is more powerful than any other family background variables such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins & Weiss, 2006; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004).

Recommendations

While the majority of the participating parents from across socio-economic boundaries perceived homework as important to their children's learning, it is recommended that current parental interest in homework be sustained as well as given more impetus, especially among parents from disadvantaged communities.

Because of the disparities in the socio-economic conditions in which parents live, it is important for schools and educators to reflect more carefully when giving homework tasks to learners in the Foundation Phase. For instance, there is the need to consider that some parents only arrive home late at night after travelling long distances from work, hence being unavailable to assist their children with homework. It is recommended that such schools should make special provisions for learners doing homework under such conditions, such as afternoon homework sessions, supervised homework assistants. At the same time, parents must accept responsibility for their children by making alternative homework arrangements when they know they will not be available to assist.

Parents from poorer home environments need to play a more active role in getting their children to read and write, especially at an early age. They must help their children value reading by reading to their children and listening to them read. They must provide their children with interesting reading material. It is also recommended that schools should ensure that libraries are available and stocked with material that will inspire learners to love reading. Learners should take a book with them for reading at home. All parents must be encouraged to involve themselves in their children's home-learning by supervising, checking and signing their children's homework.

Schools must conduct workshops to promote parental involvement in homework by helping them realize the importance of homework as well as how to be involved in it. It is also recommended that, at such workshops, parents from poorer communities share their experiences and challenges with their children's homework. Other parents may, perhaps, suggest ways of dealing with difficult homework situations.

There is a need for the Department of Education to make it mandatory for every primary school to have a homework policy. It is recommended that the Department should assist schools in designing such a policy. More importantly, Department officials should also check the implementation of the homework policy during their visits to schools.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for parents

Please tick the box that you most agree with after each question.

1. For your child's Literacy homework, how often do you read aloud to your child?

4/5 times a week	
3 times a week	
2 times a week	
Once a week	

2. For your child's Literacy homework, how often do you listen to your child read?

4/5 times a week	
3 times a week	
2 times a week	
Once a week	

3. For your child's Numeracy/Maths homework, how often do you assist him/her with Maths problems?

4/5 times a week	
3 times a week	
2 times a week	
Once a week	

4. Do you have time to supervise, check and sign your child's homework?

Always	
Sometimes	
Never	

5. At what time of the day do you help your child with homework?

In the morning	
In the afternoon	
In the evening	

6. Does your child have enough resources to do his/her schoolwork at home? Please explain. _____
