

Analysis of Parent Involvement in Homework

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Abstract. As an auxiliary education, homework has become an indispensable way for students to increase learning and mastery in all countries in the world. Parent involvement in homework plays an important role in the education system composed of teachers, students, and parents. Many studies have been conducted on parent participation in homework. In the era of paying increasing attention to talent training and education quality, how we should treat parent involvement? Specifically, how to operationalize and measure the degree of parent involvement, and how to effectively improve the effect of parent involvement have become crucial issues. This paper will review research on three aspects of homework: the typical effects of homework, the effect of parent involvement on homework and the outcomes of homework, and the evaluation of different aspects of parent involvement.

Key Words: Parent Involvement; Communication; Education

1. Introduction

From basic education to higher education, homework has always been a good auxiliary means of education. Reviewing and checking students' academic performance in school through homework can help students find their shortcomings and deficiencies in the learning process, so as to solve problems and obtain knowledge and experience. Homework provides a continuous opportunity to acquire subject knowledge and experience, acquire and practice academic skills (Nunez et al., 2019). In a broad sense, homework can be understood as any task completed by teachers in non school time (Cooper, 1989). Educators often look to homework to increase student achievement. For middle and high school students, research indicates a positive relationship between more time on homework and improved grades and achievement scores (Cooper, 1989). In the elementary grades, however, more time spent on homework often correlates with lower school grades and achievement, a negative or null relationship (Cooper, 1989). For primary school students, they are still in the early stage of cognition, and too much external pressure and assistance may not produce good results. For middle school students, the improvement of knowledge difficulty and the change of growth environment also mean that they may need more family participation, although it is normative for young adolescents to begin to want more independence, at least as far as direct parental assistance in homework completion is considered.

Parental participation has positive and negative effects, but the positive effects are the main. In addition, the original intention of parents' participation is also positive, but different results are reflected due to different ways of participation. It also has a different impact on students' academic performance.

Parental participation can make children's homework more efficient, reduce the negative impact of heavy homework, and achieve better parent-child communication. Therefore, it is very important to explore the efficient ways and positive effects of parental participation and how to improve students' academic performance.

2. Parent Involvement

2.1 Definitions and classifications of Parent Involvement

The so-called "parent involvement" means parent involvement in students' learning activities directly or indirectly (Dumont et al., 2014; Nunez et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2019). As identified in

educational theory and research, there are two main kinds of parental involvement (Bloom, 1980). The first centers on the family environment, in which parents create a good learning environment, encourage positive attitudes, and aid help children work through and finish their homework (Dumont et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2019). The second is based on parental involvement in school education, with parents appearing as teachers' assistants and participating in children's school activities. The research I review below focuses on the first type of involvement, parental educational involvement within the family environment.

2.2 Classifications of Parent Involvement

According to the study on parent involvement by Sui Chu and Willms (1996), we can evaluate the degree of parent involvement from two dimensions: family participation and family supervision.

Family Participation. Whether parents participate in their children's learning and life is an intuitive evaluation standard. Overall, it is whether parents maintain cordial and close communication with their children. In terms of details, for example, parents, as listeners, listen to their children talk about what happened in school. Parents may also discuss the development of learning plans, goals, and learning contents and subjects of interest to the child. Such features reflect a positive communication process. Parent involvement and understanding of the above aspects can intuitively reflect the degree of parental participation. (Sui Chu & Willms, 1996).

Family Supervision. We can divide children's time into two categories: learning time and extracurricular time. The role of supervision is to supervise and guide children to correctly use and plan extracurricular time, including children's extracurricular recreational activities, the content and duration of entertainment, and so on. The most important aspect of supervision on academics is the supervision of homework, including the supervision of the progress and completion of homework.

2.3 Influencing Factors of Parent Involvement

Descriptive and correlational studies indicate that parental direct assistance with homework does typically decline from elementary to middle-school, and then again from middle- to high-school (e.g., Wei et al., 2019). Lower parental direct involvement with advancing grade level appears to be developmentally appropriate, as older students desire greater independence. Furthermore, beyond elementary school, parental direct assistance is not consistently associated with greater student achievement (Wei et al., 2019), and might show an inverse relation, as older students who struggle academically may be the ones who want or need parent help. In addition, socio-economic status will also have an impact on parents' participation. The higher the economic status, the greater the parental participation (Van Voorhis, 2011). Despite the relevant differences in objective resources, the degree of parent involvement is more related to their educational ideas including their viewpoints about the importance of parental involvement. Of course, this does not mean that all parents who show relatively low direct involvement in homework do not pay enough attention to their children's learning. Although the objective conditions are different, the degree of parental participation is more related to educational ideas. Family economic conditions determine what kind of educational environment parents can provide their children, and indirectly affect the time of parents' participation. But this is an objective condition after all. If parents have a strong desire and concept of participation, they will try their best to create conditions and better drive the process of parents' participation. Some parents pay more attention to their children's self-management and independent completion ability, which will reduce parental participation accordingly; in these cases, direct parent involvement in homework completion is not needed, as children can perform the work independently. In some cases, even if not really needed, parents may prefer to accompany their children as they complete their homework, which not only makes their children happy, but also improves communication with their children about academics and wellbeing in general. Some parents regard homework as an opportunity to communicate with their children. Parents share this view equally in primary and secondary schools (Van Voorhis, 2011). However, there are still some parents who fail to correct their attitude towards parental participation, fail to attract their own high attention, and ignore the opportunities to exchange

academic and learning with their children. Although it is appropriate for parents to help their children learn less directly with their children's age, it is still important for parents to be interested in their children's academic investment and achievement. Appropriate intervention should be given to promote this kind of parental involvement. Van Voorhis (2011) conducted a study of an intervention intended to help primary school students' parents participate more in homework help. The results show that parents are more directly involved in homework. Interventions for middle school students and their parents may pay special attention to parents' more participation and support in their children's learning, which may be broader or more common than homework help. It is worth noting that increasing parents' direct participation or help in homework may help primary school students, but not necessarily middle school and high school students. On the contrary, parents of middle school and high school students may be more concerned about universal participation and support for their children's learning (Wei et al., 2019). Interventions reported by van Voorhis (2011) suggest that both direct parental participation and more distal parental support may be affected.

Parents' role construction and self-efficacy are the key factors affecting parents' participation (Wei et al., 2019). First, the construction of the parental role is a process of taking responsibility. If parents can realize that they should bear the responsibility and obligation for their children's education, they will actively participate in it and realize the positive impact of parent involvement. Secondly, parental self-efficacy should be viewed from two aspects. The first aspect is consciousness and belief. Only when parents are aware of something and keep it in mind as a belief, can they have the prerequisite for taking appropriate action. The second aspect of self-efficacy is practice and ability. What is valuable is understanding, and what is more valuable is practice. Parents should have the corresponding ability to participate, fulfill their promises and take responsibility in order to achieve efficient parent involvement which is suited to their child's age and learning needs.

Different ways of participation are doomed to different effects of participation. However, in order to pursue better ways and effects of parental participation, scholars have also explored strategies of parental intervention to promote parental participation. Only by finding a way of participation suitable for each parent and each student can we really give full play to the positive role of parental participation.

3. Ways and effects of parental participation

The first way to participate is to give children autonomy and mastery. Parents who advocate their children's autonomy and mastery have a good effect on homework performance (Ye, 2010). In this case, homework has a good effect. This is a very visionary approach. From a long-term perspective, the growth of students is the improvement of a personal quality. Cultivating a good sense of self-control is undoubtedly a good choice to cultivate children's habits of self-control, self-analysis, and self-planning. In this way, students can have more sense of autonomy, feel that they are the "master" of homework and need to complete homework from the master. Such students do not regard homework as a burden, but as a process of improving oneself, set learning goals, and learn to use homework to adjust and test oneself. In other words, I control my homework, my homework does not control me.

The second way of participation is only superficial participation. Cooper et al. (2000) studied various aspects of parental autonomy promotion in academics. In this study, about 700 parents of students in grades 2 to 12 were surveyed to find out their participation in their children's academics. Results indicated that although parents often used appropriate parenting methods in their homework help, two-thirds of parents said that some forms of help they provided were negative or inappropriate, such as helping children complete tasks faster or helping students too much, although they know that work is only effective if students are engaged, and they know that their children's work needs to be completed independently. Like other studies (such as Wei et al., 2019), parents of older students tend to report less direct participation in homework. The "less direct participation" here can be understood

as not directly playing a positive role or having no effect, but only superficial participation, that is, telling children to do their work.

4. Related intervention studies

In all grades, autonomous support is a positive parenting strategy. At the same time, another strategy, parental intervention, is found among the parents of older college students, which shows that with the increase of age, students are more sensitive to parental over-control or over-participation (Van Voorhis, 2011). Over-controlling parents who exert pressure on their children may have a negative impact on homework, which may not help much in this case. Family participation is much like a spring. Moderate pressure can achieve good results, but excessive pressure will have the opposite effect. It is impossible for children to obtain knowledge and happiness in a high-intensity and high-pressure environment. Therefore, the participation of parents also directly affects children's learning and academic performance.

Although many studies on parental involvement in homework are relevant, van Voorhis (2011) conducted an intervention study to assess the impact of increased parental involvement in homework on students and family outcomes. In this study, the parents of primary school students were assigned to a treatment group, a teacher led project designed to involve parents in math homework, or a control group without guiding parents to participate. The treatment plan includes special homework instructions, discussions, meetings, and strengthening communication between students' family members, parents and teachers. The results of more than two years showed that parents in the treatment group increased their participation in homework, while parents in the control group did not. In this way, the intervention seems to have produced a normative model, that is, parental involvement in primary school children's studies is relatively high (see Wei et al., 2019). The results also showed that compared with the parents and children in the control group, the parents in the treatment group had more positive feelings and attitudes towards mathematics homework, while their children showed higher standardized mathematics scores. Overall, the experimental results show that family participation in homework planning and parents' attitude towards homework may have a far-reaching impact on students' performance, and the increase of parental involvement will have a positive impact on children. However, it should be noted that at the beginning of the intervention, the students in the van Voorhis study were in grade 3. Interventions for middle school students and their parents may pay special attention to parents' greater participation and support in their children's learning, which may be broader or more common than homework help. It is worth noting that increasing parents' direct participation or help in homework may help primary school students, but not necessarily middle school and high school students. On the contrary, parents of middle school and high school students may be more concerned about universal participation and support for their children's learning (Wei et al., 2019). Interventions reported by van Voorhis (2011) suggest that both direct parental involvement and more distal parental support may be affected.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the concept of parent involvement is constantly enriched with the renewal of the homework model. Homework has more obvious positive and negative effects in modern society. With the different participation of parents, different students also have different academic achievements. Parents should maintain communication with the school and teachers, consciously assume corresponding responsibilities, complete the task of family supervision, and actively participate in various activities of the school. The process of parent involvement is to establish the sense of protagonist and help children learn to think independently and control themselves. Schools should encourage parents to actively participate in students' study and life and create a benign interaction between schools, student and parents.

As an important environment for children's education, schools should shoulder more responsibilities of guidance and encouragement and actively intervene in the process of parent involvement. First of all, we should vigorously support parent involvement in students' learning, strengthen home school cooperation, combine more school teaching tasks with parents, and create a sense of importance and a good atmosphere. The second is to strengthen communication with students' parents, which can provide more information to parents and help students' parents adjust their participation methods. Parents can also feedback more information about their children to teachers to realize two-way communication. Properly set up parent-child courses and parent-child tasks to improve parents' ability and confidence in educating their children.

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