

Teacher-Parent Collaborative Efforts in Facilitating Students' Homework

Frosyl F. Miguel¹
Ramon Magsaysay High School

Edna Luz R. Abulon*
Philippine Normal University
abulon.elv@pnu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT This study focuses on the essential role of teachers in initiating collaborative efforts with parents in helping the children do their homework. To establish teacher-parents' partnership in this endeavour, four engaging interventions were utilized in this action research. These are focus group discussion (FGD), home visitation, follow up by texting and homework logs. An intact Grade 8 science class in one of the pilot secondary schools in the City of Manila was involved in the study. Results showed that the collaborative efforts between parents and teachers apparently contributed to the improvement of students' class performance. Home visitation was seen as a means of rekindling commitment of the parents to monitor their children's progress in school. In the same way, it was found out that homework logs and texting are strategies that could enhance parental involvement leading to close supervision of their children doing their assignments at home.

Keywords Collaborative efforts, homework, parental involvement, role of teachers, students' achievement

Introduction

Education is really a demanding phase of a child's development, and in reality, not everyone who wants to go to

school would be given this right to experience it. Many of the privileged students should manifest utmost commitment by fulfilling all the requirements in their subjects. Somewhere along the way, our students become lax in their studies and as observed, they commonly disregard some activities like doing their homework. Assigning of some tasks to be done at home is a way of involving the parents in their children's education. Yet, not all parents are convinced of this activity which could foster better academic performance.

The education of the child is indeed rooted at home where the child's parents in particular play a vital role in the child's education. According to Drake (2000), the challenges cannot be solved by the government alone nor can these be solved by parents or families alone. More collaboration between the school and home is needed in dealing with this problem. Here in the Philippines, active participation of parents in their child schooling is often observed through their attendance in Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, joining fieldtrips and or taking part in any school physical facility project. Nevertheless, this research attempted to engage parents most specifically through collaboration with teachers in doing homework as a measure to commit and motivate stakeholders in the schooling of the child.

Framework of the Study

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. The role of the teacher as combined with the role of the parents in helping the children do their homework is explored in the study. The proper students' homework as the focus of the four engaging interventions could lead to the enhancement of academic performance in Science Grade 8.

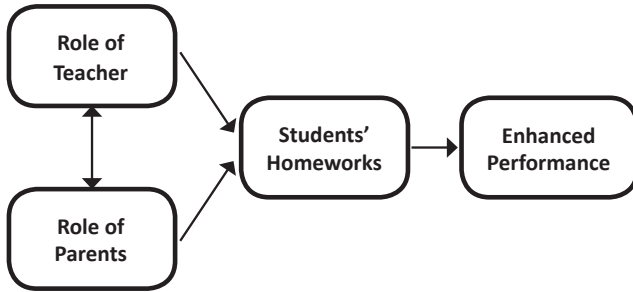


Figure 1. Framework of the Study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this action research is to explore the effectiveness of the collaborative efforts between the teachers and the parents in ensuring that the undertaking of students accomplishes their homeworks thereby contributing to the enhancement of student performance. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- a. How relevant is focus group discussion in fostering parental involvement in assuring that their children do their homeworks?
- b. How effective is home visitation as a follow-up measure for students who missed doing their homeworks?
- c. How effective are homework logs initiated by the teacher in monitoring students in doing their homeworks?
- d. How effective is the exchanging of text messages between the teacher and the parent monitor the undertaking of homeworks?
- e. How did the four interventions combined contribute to the improvement of the students' academic performance in Science 8?

Methodology

The main focus of this study was the collaboration of the teachers and the parents in facilitating student homework and its contribution on student achievement. This study utilized a “*one shot before and after*” research design.

Participants

The use of an intact group was done in the study. The study involved the advisory class of the lead researcher which is composed of 39 learners enrolled in Grade 8 science class. Prior to the conduct of the study, the parents were asked to sign an informed consent form for the participation of the students in the study.

Instruments

There were three instruments used in the study. First is the validated achievement test in Science for Grade 8 for the pre-test and post-testing that yielded the quantitative data. An interview guide for the home visitation and a focus group discussion guide were developed to generate qualitative data.

Homework Logs

The “homework logs” served as the monitoring tool to ensure that the parents were aware of the necessity for their children to accomplish the assigned tasks to be done at home. Moreover, the logs presented the focus of assistance done by the parents to ascertain that the students did better in their assignments. The logs were collected every Monday to record the data generated.

Text Messaging

Texting was done to remind, monitor and notify the parents of their duty to check their children’s homework

logs. During the focus group discussion, the parents were informed that they would receive texts from the lead researcher on Fridays. They were required to reply and were given the opportunity to converse further via text messages about the assignments or the progress of the children in science 8. Data retrieved through text were transcribed and content analyzed.

Data Collection

Pre-Intervention

The teacher and parents' collaboration in facilitating the accomplishments of the students' homework was initially done through a permit to conduct a study from the Office of the Principal which was eventually forwarded to the Division Office. Upon approval, parental consent forms were distributed to the parents to get permission for their children to participate in the study. Parents were asked to submit a photocopy of their identification card for signature validation purposes in the homework logs. Letter of invitation for the FGD were sent to the parents through the students.

Intervention and Post Intervention

At the onset of the school year, the parents were invited to a focus group discussion for the purpose of sharing how the parents have been involved in the studies of their children. The discussion was focused on how the parents helped their children in doing their homework. Two sessions of FGD were conducted on June 13 and July 8 of school year 2015-2016.

A class in Grade 8 science is conducted one hour a day and the study lasted for the whole first quarter of the school year (June to August 2015). The pre-test was administered to the class on the second week of June 2015. Instructions were given on a daily and regular basis. Whenever there was

homework, and after the students are done doing it, they are required to have it signed by their parents to monitor that they were indeed doing their homeworks. The parents were asked to list their actions taken to help their children in the “*homework logs*.”

Throughout the duration of the study, the subject teacher texted the parents to ask them how often they helped their children in doing their homework. Parents were required to send back their answers and were encouraged them to ask questions about the homeworks given to the students. This was done consistently for a quarter of a year or three months, on Friday afternoons.

The students with the least number of monitored homework logs, those parents who cannot be reached through text, misbehaving students, occurred absences and truancy, were visited in their home. After the planned period of the conduct of the four interventions, the post-test was administered.

Results and Discussion

All the data gathered were subsequently organized, analyzed and interpreted to answer the questions posed in the study.

FGD with the Parents as a Means of Fostering Parental Involvement in the Accomplishment of their Children’s Homeworks

Table 1 shows the various practices of the parents in assisting or helping their children in doing their homework. About 15 parents said that due to their busy schedules, they resort to assigning older siblings to follow up and do mentoring, providing books, internet access or money for renting computer for research, to their children. There were 11 parents, on the other hand, who expressed that they have

direct interaction with the child and they personally sit or attend to the needs of the child to accomplish their homework, giving ample time to talk about their day in school. Seven parents said during the FGD session that they were prompt to promote independence in their children, meaning they allow their child to work on their schedule and allowances; they set goals and limitation then provide a follow up after the day giving them confidence and trust.

Table 1. Generated themes on the parents practices in helping their children accomplish their home works elicited through the FGD

Generated Themes	Theme Definition	Frequency*
Providing other means to assist the child	This includes providing money for internet access, to ask other siblings to help the child, borrowing books	15
Direct interaction with the child	This pertains to the assistance from parents wherein they make sure they do the work together	11
Promote independence	This refers to the parents' leeway of letting the child discover his/her own strategy/ies to accomplish home works	7

**Multiple response*

The findings shown in Table 1 echo the existing literature that asserts that parental involvement can take many forms, from involvement in the life of a child in school to individual support at home like reading, and/or assistance in homework (The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education, 2008). The support provided by the parents in the Philippine urban city context, nevertheless has become less in term of direct interaction with the children while doing homeworks and more on promoting independence and asking other members of the family to help. It is worthy to note that

the majority of the parents who attended the FGD sessions have to work more than eight hours a day to earn for their living.

The conduct of the focus group discussion at the onset of a school year appears to contribute to the teacher's awareness on how involved the parents are in the academic work of their children. The sessions produced insights for the teacher on how to better assist the students in school and how to connect well with the parents.

Home Visitation as a Follow-up Measure for Students who Missed doing Homeworks

A total of six home visits were undertaken by the lead researcher to the homes of six students who were observed to have missed doing homeworks during the first two months of classes. The parents were interviewed only once to uncover the reason/s for the children not doing the homeworks and to elicit what the parents themselves could commit to address the problems. Table 2 presents the indicators grouped into two major themes that represent the problems encountered by the students and the commitments expressed by the parents so as to address the problem.

The purpose of home visitation was not about the students' grades, it was an attempt to involve stakeholders and the community in the children's schooling, which is one of the goal of this action research. This intervention is a story of hope, understanding the children and realizing they are stressed too. The data generated as presented in Table 2 apparently confirmed that home visitation has not yet been outdated as a means of 'catching up' the students who are at risk of dropping out from school. Considering that the respondents in the study are adolescents who are facing the difficulties of balancing acts of no longer being a "child" and not yet full-pledge "adults, the role of the parents in

collaboration with the teachers is indeed crucial to facilitate better academic performance.

Table 2. Generated themes on the interview with the parents during the conduct of home visitation

Problems Encountered	Commitments by the Parents
- Parents are not in good terms	-build a more positive relationship with the child
-Lack of interest to go to school	-involvement of the other family members
-No one to talk to at home	-collaboration with the classmates for further encouragement
-Separated parents	-follow up through phone call and text
-The child needs to work	-attending meeting and talking to teachers
-Lack of motivation to study	-initiating small talk with the child
-Sickness / stress	-accompanying the child going to school

Homework Logs as a Monitoring Tool in Assuring that the Children do their Homeworks

Table 3 shows the frequency of homework logs of the students by month. The monitoring of homeworks is evidenced by the parents' signature in homework logs. Signature in homework logs are checked in the class. This gives the children a reason to invite their parents and update them and vice versa. Homework logs as an intervention makes a positive motivation for parents to be involved through monitoring. Hover et al. (1997) stressed that one reason why parents involve themselves in their children's homework is when their attention was called by the teachers or that the children would personally ask them to check their work at home.

It is evident in the data presented in Table 3 that the recorded number of signatures of the parents was highest in the month of September and lowest during the month of July 2015. When grouped according to gender of the students, the female students have a higher number of signatures and entries in the homework logs. The most typical assistance provided by the parents as listed in the homework logs is “giving extra time to check if the answers in the workbooks or the tasks in the notebooks were correct.”

Table 3. Frequency of Homework Logs by Month

Month	Frequency		Total	Rank
	M	F		
July	28	60	88	3
August	72	112	184	2
September	93	132	275	1

The “homework logs” as an intervention can be considered a novel contribution of this action research. Nevertheless, such intervention should be combined with others so as to facilitate more active parental involvement.

Texting as a Means of Monitoring the Assistance Provided by the Parents in doing Homeworks

Table 4 shows the data generated through texting on how frequent parents get involved in doing homeworks. Around 30 replies received said that they usually assist their child to do the homework everyday. This assistance ranges from assisting them in completion of a project or assignment or personally coaching them. There were 26 parents who confirmed that they sometimes missed assisting their children in doing homework due to busy schedule at work. Consequently, some of the parents advised their children to consult the internet so as to accomplish their homework. Unfortunately, there were 16 replies that said that for the

past week, they were not able to get involved in doing the homeworks, leaving their children do the tasks or asked other members to check their work.

Table 4. Generated themes on how parents get involved in the doing assignment elicited from texting

Generated Themes	Theme Definition	Frequency*
Frequent Assistance provided everyday of the week	Repeated coaching done by the parent and everyday follow up with the child.	30
Assistance provided sometimes within the week	Parent follows up and coaches the child in few instances within a week.	26
No assistance provided within the week.	Parent not been able to assist in doing assignment within the week	16

**Multiple response*

Based on the study conducted by Peters et al.(2008), on parental involvement in homework and reading, nearly 60% of parents said that they frequently helped their child with their homework (‘every time’ and ‘most of the time’); approximately one third did so occasionally. They also added that parents of younger children helped more frequently than those in the later years. The data of the current research as presented in Table 4 somehow mirrored what Peters et al. (2008) have asserted in their study.

It was observed from this particular intervention that even if they were informed during the focus group discussion that they will receive text every Friday for follow up on their assistance on their child homework, the majority of the parents were still caught with surprise upon receiving texts from the teacher. Some even got anxious about the text due to the possibility of having problems in school. They do have

a tendency not to text back in some weekends because of the repeated question every Friday. Since texting is handy and accessible, there were a number of inquiries such as updates in class suspension, whereabouts of a practice for class performance, excuses of being absent in class, follow ups on school cases etc. These, nevertheless, were proofs of a more active parental involvement in the children's education.

Combined Interventions' Contribution to Academic Performance of the Students in Science 8

The mean difference between the scores in pre-test from the post –test in achievement test in lesson in Science 8 is used to measure knowledge gained. Table 5 shows the mean gain in pre-test and post-test with the computed value of 37.00 and 65.33 respectively. The computed t-value is 22.60 at the p value <0.05. The computed t value means that the combined interventions with the parents and the teachers' active roles in doing homework contributed in a way in the performance of the students in Science 8.

Table 5. T-test results for the performance in science based on pre-test and post test

	Mean	Standard Deviation	T- Value	Level of Significance	Interpretation
Pre-test	37.00	7.8170	22.603	0.005	There is significant difference
Post Test	65.33	9.4321			

Studies conducted for secondary school students showed that there is a positive relationship between time spent on homework and achievement (Sharp, C., Keys, W. & Benefield, P., 2001). Various researches on parental involvement in children's schooling has a positive effect on performance including increase academic achievement (McNeal, 1999; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Trusty, 1998; Yan & Lin, 2002). This also

holds true with parental involvement outside of home, such as participation in extracurricular activities relates to their reading, general knowledge, and mathematics knowledge and skills (Reaney, Denton, and West 2002). The data presented in Table 5 supports the above-mentioned results based on the literature review. It highlighted the importance of partnership between parents and school to support children in their learning process.

Conclusion

This research gives evidence that parental involvement in their children's doing homework contributed to academic achievement of a child. The collaborative efforts between educators and parents such as focus group discussion, follow-ups via texting, homework logs and home visits when simultaneously undertaken are found to be effective in enhancing performance in school. This study also proves that constant monitoring of parents of their children can contribute to better academic performance. At the same time, students tend to perceive the involvement of their parents in doing their assignment. It is further concluded that the teachers can truly influence parents to actively participate in the academic work of the students.

Recommendation

Parental involvement in the education of children, in doing homework in particular, needs continuous effort to further maximize and reach out to students in need. It is further recommended that a "parent portal" in the internet be established in a school, whether it is in a year level or classroom level wherein parents and teachers can update and inquire about the child education. Stakeholders in the school level should develop a program that engages parents in school activities more than the usual parent teacher meeting.

Self monitoring on the part of the parents should be done to qualify the assistance they are giving to their children in doing their homework. There are practices and beliefs that become predictors, likewise with the teachers. Home visitation is an integral part of a job of a teacher but it would be best if it will be conducted on a regular basis in the same way how can texting be utilized. The results of the study can be validated further if replication of this action research in other schools can be done to compare findings.

Personal Statement

In doing an action research, I (the lead researcher) realized that there is nothing to complain about your everyday struggle as a classroom teacher because eventually, application of results of the action research, problems or concerns can be resolved. This experience made me more committed to teaching. As a parent also, I could feel the stress whenever my children have difficulty in their studies. The importance of getting more involved in the accomplishment of their children's homework should be realized by parents.

...

References

- Cooper, H. (2006). The battle over homework: Common grounds for administrators, teachers and parents. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.ph/books?hl=en&lr=&id=oLdyAwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1=harris+cooper+homework>.
- Deforges, C., & Abouchaar, A. (2003), The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment. Retrieved from http://bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/files_uploaded/uploaded_resources/18617/desforges.pdf,

- Drake, D. D. (2000). Parents and families as partners in the education process. Retrieved from <https://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/citations/29.html>.
- Ho, Sui-Chu E., & Willms, D. J. (1996). The effect of parental involvement on eight-grade achievement. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?q=EJ533315&id=EJ533315>.
- Lin, Q. (2003). Parents involvement and early literacy. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/parent-involvement-and-early-literacy>.
- Mc Neal, R. B. Jr. (1999). Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. Retrieved from <http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/78/1/117.Short>.
- Peters, M., Seeds, K., Goldstein, A., & Coleman, N. (2008), Parental involvement in children's education 2007, Research Report DCSF RR034. Retrieved from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8605/1/DCSF-RR034.pdf>.
- Sharp, C., Keys, W. & Benefield, P. (2001). Homework a review of recent research, National Foundation for Educational Research. Retrieved from http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/HWK01/HWK01_home.cfm.
- The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education, Department of Children Schools and Families. (2008). Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/201304011515/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-Parental_Involvement.pdf.