FOLIA 273

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia ad Didacticam Mathematicae Pertinentia 10(2018)

ISSN 2080-9751
DOI 10.24917/20809751.10.7

Gosia Marschall, Judy M. Sayers, Paul Andrews

English and Swedish year one teachers' perspectives on the role of homework in young children's learning of number*

Abstract. This paper draws on data from semi-structured interviews undertaken with year one teachers in England and Sweden. The broad aim was to explore how teachers construe their own and parents' roles in supporting year one children's learning of early number. The role of homework within those efforts, surfaced as a key theme. The two data sets were analysed independently by means of a constant comparison process and yielded perspectives that were, cross culturally, both similar and different. The similarities related to the importance teachers placed on the role of homework in supporting children who struggle academically. The differences were several and included teachers' views on the necessity, or even the desirability, of homework, the purpose of homework, the role of parents in the completion of homework and the nature of the tasks set. The results, which are discussed against the literature, highlight the extent to which teachers' perceptions of the role of homework in support of young children's learning of number are culturally determined.

1. Introduction

The use of homework to support children's learning, despite being both culturally ubiquitous and exploited even with year one children, remains a contested topic internationally (Cooper, 1989; Corno, 1996; Desforges, Abouchaar, 2003; Palardy, 1995; Walker et al., 2004). Its use, typically driven by societal beliefs that good teachers give homework regularly, more homework is better than less, homework supports what students learn in school and fosters discipline and personal responsibility (Corno, 1996), has not been unequivocally supported by research (Cooper et al., 2006). Moreover, the extent to which homework and its deployment are

*2010 Mathematics Subject Classification: Primary: 97C70; Secondary: 97D40
Keywords and phrases: early number, early mathematics, homework, year one, comparative education

culturally determined is not well understood, something that this paper aims to address.

While previous research has addressed various aspects of both students' responses to homework (Bennett, Kalish, 2006; Dettmers et al., 2011; Xu, Wu, 2013) and parents' involvement in homework (Dumont et al., 2014; Patall, Cooper, Robinson, 2008), teachers' views on homework have rarely been addressed (Epstein, Van Voorhis, 2012). This is of particular interest in light of research indicating that homework may negatively impact students' achievement in the lower grades (Brock et al., 2007; Cooper et al., 2006). Hence this study is a first pass at addressing this important issue by reporting on how a group of English and Swedish teachers perceive homework and its function in support of year one children's learning of number.

2. Background

Homework, which has a long and controversial history (Desforges, Abouchaar, 2003), is broadly construed as any task set by a teacher for students to undertake outside school (Cooper, 1989) and typically focused on curriculum-related learning (Epstein et al., 1995). Key in this definition is the role of the teacher in initiating the activity. The purposes of homework are varied, although they are typically construed by researchers as instructional, communicative or political (Van Voorhis, 2004). However, each of these three purposes is made problematic by the involvement of the different actors, students, parents, teachers, administrators and politicians, all of whom are likely to have different goals (Cooper et al., 2006; Núñez et al., 2015).

From the perspective of homework as instruction, Cooper et al.'s (2006) review of the literature found that the primary purpose of homework is to practise previously learnt material, whether this is seen through the eyes of teachers (Van Voorhis, 2004) or the system (Farrow et al., 1999). In addition, teachers view homework as a means of preparing for the next lesson and developing productive work patterns (Van Voorhis, 2004), making students more responsible and, from the perspective of primary students, preparing them for secondary school (Farrow et al., 1999). Such practices are clearly located in beliefs that homework improves students' academic achievement (Cooper, 1989; Farrow et al., 1999; Núñez et al., 2015), motivation and ability to self-regulate their learning processes (Bempechat, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Farrow et al., 1999; Rosario et al., 2009; Warton, 2001; Núñez et al., 2015). However, research on instructional homework is not unequivocal. For example, parents and teachers believe that homework improves students' achievement (Van Voorhis, 2004), while evidence suggests, at least with respect to English primary students, that the more frequently homework is given for a particular core subject the lower students' ultimate attainment (Farrow et al., 1999).

From the perspective of homework as instruction, Cooper et al., (2006) review of the literature found that the primary purpose of homework is to practise previously learnt material, whether this is seen through the eyes of teachers (Van Voorhis, 2004) or the system (Farrow et al., 1999). In addition, teachers view

homework as a means of preparing for the next lesson and developing productive work patterns (Van Voorhis, 2004), making students more responsible and, from the perspective of primary students, preparing them for secondary school (Farrow et al., 1999). Such practices are clearly located in beliefs that homework improves students' academic achievement (Cooper, 1989; Farrow et al., 1999; Núñez et al., 2015), motivation and ability to self-regulate their learning processes (Bempechat, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Farrow et al., 1999; Rosario et al., 2009; Warton, 2001; Núñez et al., 2015). However, research on instructional homework is not unequivocal. For example, parents and teachers believe that homework improves students' achievement (Van Voorhis, 2004), while evidence suggests, at least with respect to English primary students, that the more frequently homework is given for a particular core subject the lower students' ultimate attainment (Farrow et al., 1999).

With respect to communication, homework is broadly viewed as a means of creating partnerships between parents and their children, particularly with respect to younger children, and the establishment of productive work patterns (Farrow et al., 1999). In this respect, teachers assign homework because they see it as a way of establishing positive relationships between school and family (Hill, Taylor, 2004; Núñez et al., 2015). However, the benefits cited by parents and teachers are rarely recognised by young students, with the former taking a long-term view and the latter a short-term (Coutts, 2004), thus indicating a need for clearer communication between participants.

From the political perspective, homework is foregrounded when systems respond to perceived failings of achievement, at which time curricula and their related activities come under scrutiny (Gustafsson, 2013). However, the realisation of policy means that homework can be used to both constrain and liberate teachers, an issue of importance with regard to this paper. Indeed, reflecting external pressures, many teachers set homework because they fear being judged negatively if they do not (Coutts, 2004). Moreover, the systemic introduction of homework has a tendency to become a source of stress and burnout for both children and their parents (Clark, 2015; Corno, Xu, 2004). Thus, homework becomes part of a cycle in which, prompted by concerns over achievement, its use is increased prior, prompted by concerns over the pressures it places on participants, to its use being discouraged (Gustafsson, 2013).

2.1. Homework in England and Sweden

In both England and Sweden the situation with respect to homework is ambivalent, albeit in different ways. In England, there is no legally stated expectation that schools should set homework but guidelines introduced in 1998 implied that homework for all children would be the expectation (Department for Education and Employment, 1998). This tacit expectation, despite changes in those guidelines, remains embedded in the English school inspectorate's framework, which examines the coherence and manifestation of a school's homework policy (Ofs, 2016). In Sweden, as in England, there is no legally established expectation of homework. Indeed, recent curriculum guidelines leave the responsibility for such decisions to individual schools and teachers (Sko, 2014). However, earlier curricula

clearly stated that homework should not be set, which explains why homework, particularly its use in the younger years, has been a recurring public debate in Sweden (Grönholm, 2015, November 26). This situation has been further obscured by legislation allowing parents to receive tax deductions on homework support material (MoF, 2012).

The consequences of these legislative decisions manifest themselves differently in the two countries. In England, homework has become normalised for all children, with parents becoming more widely involved in their children's learning, particularly in the primary years (Desforges, Abouchaar, 2003). In Sweden, homework remains a rarity for young children, not least because an equal educational opportunity commitment warrants teachers' reluctance to leave learning support to the different resources, time or inclinations of parents (Svensson, Meaney, Norén, 2014). Thus, while teachers in neither country are expected to set homework, the guidelines available to them draw on tacit expectations and earlier traditions that homework should be set in England but not in Sweden. These differences, as we show below, can be clearly seen in how teachers view homework.

3. Methods

This paper presents results of an interview study of 39 English and Swedish teachers' perspectives on number-related learning of year one pupils. Funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), the Foundational Number Sense (FoNS) project is a comparative study, undertaken in England and Sweden, of the role of parents and teachers in the support of year one children's acquisition of the number-related competences necessary for later mathematical success (Andrews, Sayers, 2015).

The semi-structured, exploratory interviews, 20 in Sweden and 19 in England, had two broad aims. Firstly, to yield constructs appropriate for inclusion in a later survey and, secondly, to uncover in-depth a representative selection of teachers' views on the teaching and learning of number to year one children. Participants were contacted in various ways, including teacher electronic bulletin boards, emails and calls to randomly selected schools across the two countries. As a result, teachers were drawn from a range of geographical locations and represented different genders, ages, training and teaching experience. Acknowledging that the teachers were located in different schools in many different towns we make no claims can be made concerning their representation of teachers in with Sweden or England. However, in studies such as these, in any field, questions about the number of interviews are often highlighted for two reasons. The first, if too few interviews made, thematic saturation would not be possible, in terms of no new ideas are generated by their analyses after a certain point (O'Reilly, Parker, 2013). Second, if too many interviews made, ethical considerations in which informants' interviews were used in the analysis, opens researchers up to bias, conflict and abuse of informants' goodwill. Consequently, various interview studies in different disciplines were reviewed to generate effective thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Johnston, Carroll, 1998). Essentially, where a study of common perceptions and experiences are to be examined, the results suggest that 12 interviews should suf-

fice (Guest et al., 2006, p. 79). We therefore arranged to conduct 20 interviews in each country, one of which failed to materialise in England, leaving 39 interviews reported here. As we illustrate below, proved to be sufficient for thematic saturation.

The Interviews, comprised of a number of open questions intended to elicit colleagues' perspectives on the teaching of number to year children, were conducted in teachers' first language, in their own schools and video-recorded directly onto laptops. Transcripts were made by the interviewers and analysed by the team. In accordance with the aim of identifying constructs for inclusion in a later survey, a constant comparison analytical process was adopted (Strauss, Corbin, 1998). Thus, a transcript would be read and codes of response identified. With each new code, previously read transcripts would be re-read to determine whether the new codes applied to them also. Data from each country were analysed separately and then brought together for cultural comparison. Homework emerged as an important theme throughout the interviews and it is on this that we report.

4. Results

4.1. The English teachers' perspectives

While all of the English teachers commented on the importance of homework in children's early learning of number, two broad categories were identified, informal and formal homework activities. Informal homework we construe as non-compulsory activities not explicitly tied to curriculum goals, while formal homework we construe as compulsory activities tied explicitly to curriculum goals.

From the perspective of informal homework, teachers' comments indicated an awareness, as confirmed by Charlie that, a "parent has more influence over a child than we can ever have in five hours of their education a day". Broadly speaking, teachers believed that parent initiated informal homework was manifested in several ways:

- Playing games to facilitate general counting through "keeping the score" (*Michael*) or using dice to supporting the development of skills like subitising.
- Every-day counting opportunities such as "singing counting songs" (*Sarah*), counting "the trees as you walk down the road" (*Anna*) or "how many presents did you get for your birthday?" (*Peter*)
- Activities that expose children to "the fact that numbers exist" (*Peter*) and looking for numbers in the environment like "house numbers" (*Anna*), "number plates (and) speed signs" (*Sarah*).
- General home activities such as cooking, that involved different proportions in recipes or "pairing up the socks in two and counting them" (*Anna*).
- How shopping can support the learning of different aspects of number such as "adding things up when they go shopping" (*Kate*) or revisiting the "concept of money" (*Anna*).

However, several teachers, due to a perception that not all parents were able to initiate such learning activities, spoke of how they might support parents. For example, Anna spoke of giving parents "specific suggestions of things to do", Carol

spoke of "little reminders" in the form of notes being sent home, while Lola spoke of the importance of the school website, saying that "We always, sort of, suggest things... there's things on the website that they (*parents*) can look at". Occasionally teachers indicated that such informal arrangements may take a more focused form, particularly when they felt that extra support was needed on particular curricular matters. For example, when describing her conversations with parents, Carol commented that

> *We're working on this. If you would like to help at home, you could do this, this and this'* and I give them some ideas. And it does make a big difference. It helps me.

In similar vein, Charlie explained that without such parental support, meeting government targets, although not "unachievable", becomes not only difficult but an "uphill struggle". In sum, teachers had clear views that informal homework activities were not only desirable, from both the cognitive and the affective perspectives, but that they would intervene to ensure that parents were able to provide appropriate informal activities for their children.

With respect to formal homework, four forms were identified. Firstly, discussed by most teachers, were homeworks that were designed to encourage individual exploration. Presented in the form of open-ended 'menu-type' tasks that addressed different subjects, including mathematics, they offered suggestions as to how parents and children could decide not only which tasks they might attempt but also how difficult they wish their work to be. In this respect, Amanda's description was typical of others. Her children receive an open-ended homework thing. They have a sheet with homework tasks and they can just take the one that they want... They always have maths ones on there and they're a bit open-ended... So, if they want to make it more complicated... they can. If they just want to stick to (*an easier version*), they can. So, parents can do something the child is comfortable with and they're comfortable doing with them.

Secondly, was a structured form of homework focused on consolidating work covered in school. Here, teachers give students specific tasks that allow them to "practise the skill" (*Lola*). Such tasks, as indicated by Louise, should not to be too difficult and children should be able to complete them unaccompanied. She said that

> When we set the activities to try at home, we try to make them something that isn't too onerous. But something that always reinforces the learning that we're doing that week. So, the child can be the expert.

Thirdly, and discussed by two-thirds of all teachers, were homeworks focused on the mastery of particular numeracy skills, which children are expected to be able to recall without hesitation or thinking. Sets of these skills, referred to as Key Instant Recall Facts (KIRFs), are given to children at the beginning of each half term (6 times a year) and are additional to any of other homework. Mary's description of KIRFs is representative of others. She said that

> We have what are called KIRFs... Key Instant Recall Facts,... things that children should be able to, to know off by heart. So, it is that rote learning that they need to do so that they're not having to think about (*it*).

Teachers expect KIRFs to be practised regularly, even as frequently as "10 minutes a day" (*Rachel*), and in the company of parents, who "are very much encouraged to practise that at home" (Jo). The focus is on "progress" (Christina), through a hierarchy of facts that is closely monitored by the school. Moreover, children are rewarded for their mastery of particular KIRFs before they move on to the next level. In this respect, Rachel's comments were typical of others. She said that

> We tick off as and when children can do them (*the KIRFs*) instantly... So, that goes home backwards and forwards every day with children and we look at those and we tick them in and they can move on to the next one and they get a certificate for that particular one.

Fourthly, teachers spoke of paying specific attention to students who struggle and need to improve either particular skills or performance in general. In such situations, teachers spoke of providing parents with clear instructions on how they can help their children at home. For example, Carol, observed that during these

> ...last two weeks ...I've sent home some of my PowerPoints ...and said... 'This is what we've been working on in class. Your child has struggled a little bit with some aspects of this. Can you reinforce it at home?'.

In sum, all of the English teachers saw homework as a key part of children's education in general and year one children's learning of mathematics in particular. Homework takes various forms and, while all teachers emphasised the significance of informal homework and the ways in which they support parents, a key element of all their efforts was on the provision and assessment of KIRFs and children' rote acquisition of routine number-related skills and facts.

5. The Swedish teachers' perspectives

Unlike those of English participants, the Swedish interviews yielded not unanimity but a dichotomisation between those teachers who believe in the value of homework and those who do not. In this latter respect, ten teachers claimed not to set homework, either because they work in homework-free schools or because they have principled objections to it. Their objections were typically based on the argument that differences in children's home environments influence learning in ways that make it difficult for schools to compensate. In this respect, Ellinor's comment was typical. She said, "It should not matter what you do at home, but it does. And we can never, within the school's context, weigh up for what children get at home". Consequently, many teachers make a conscious and, as emphasised by Wilma, "deliberate" decision to limit learning at home and keep it in school. In other words, as noted by Julia, education "is supposed to be equal, we should all be given the same opportunities, and therefore we cannot put the learning responsibility on homes".

Two other teachers mentioned different but principled reasons for their rejection of homework. Firstly, Pauline believed that there should be a balance between school and home, whereby children have time both for and time away from schoolwork. In speaking about preventing children develop negative attitudes towards the school, she said

> ...some think school is a little bit difficult... so they have to work a bit extra, and parents want (*them to do at*) home what they have missed. But I think that will be a little too much. Then it will be: *'Well, school is boring. Now it is bad at home too, never to get away from it. I can imagine, work ...now I'm going home, then it's time to work around the clock!'*

Secondly, Kerstin said, quite simply, that she knew of no convincing research showing that homework is beneficial to students' learning, commenting that "there is nothing that shows that you do better at home than you do at school". Consequently, she avoids setting homework to her students. In contrast, Marianne, who worked in a homework-free school, thought that having no homework was a missed opportunity to communicate with the parents. She complained, "I think that home has a large role" to play, "I believe in the consolidation (of learning) very basic stuff like that" before adding that "I'm not 100% behind it I have to say".

All teachers, irrespective of any principled objections, were aware of at least three potential benefits homework can bring. Firstly, homework can act as a way of communicating with parents, so that, as Julia remarked "parents see what we are doing in school". Secondly, homework can provide children with opportunities to spend time with parents, as emphasised by Lena, who said, "that's why I think homework is important... they (*children*) get a chance to sit down with their parents". Thirdly, homework develops good study habits, as seen in Pauline's comment that "I think homework is good because they (*children*) still think it's great fun. And they will have more of it when they grow older, so it's good to introduce it now".

Of those teachers with favourable perceptions, most saw homework as the responsibility of the child and not the parent. For example, Marianne said that she does not "believe in sending home lots of challenges that father and mother (*have to be*) sitting down and figuring out". Instead, homework should be an opportunity to reinforce learning which has already taken place in school. Indeed, as Anders pointed out, "homework (*should only*) be a repetition of a lesson". In other words, children should not be doing anything "new at home" (*Isabelle*) but should rather focus on practising "something that should be automated" (*Lena*) and something that they are already confident in and can complete without parental support. Representing this widely expressed view, Wilma continued on the theme she introduced earlier:

> We do not send home things that need to be explained at home, it's we who teach – not the parents ...and that is why what we send home are skills and things that we know they (*children*) can handle themselves.

Despite the differences in opinion amongst the teachers, all of the participating Swedish teachers seemed to agree that homework is important for children who are falling behind or struggling academically. In such situations, as highlighted by Lena, "when you have a student who has difficulty with something, then you have to contact the parents and give them things... they can practise at home". Hanna,

however, emphasised that such a situation is indeed considered special and that such homework should support an individual child's specific needs only, as opposed to an extra regular home task. This is why she does not set regular homework for all, explaining,

> Instead of having a lot of homework for all, I (*attend*) only to this girl (*who struggles*), and these parents, and ask them to do something at home. And focus on it. If they had more homework beyond that, then it would be very difficult.

In sum, all of the Swedish teachers acknowledged the potential of the home environment to compromise principles of equality. As a consequence, some teachers warrant their rejection of homework altogether, while others, who see value in homework, justify their rejection of parental involvement in the completion of tasks typically focused on the consolidation of routine skills. That being said, all agreed that children who struggle with their learning of number should be given extra work to be undertaken with their parents. Finally, mirroring aspects of the English interviews, there was limited evidence of teachers believing, irrespective of their views about the role of formal homework, that parents who engage in informal activities at home would facilitate children's learning of number. Ellinor, for example, continuing to acknowledge her concerns about the variable impact of the home environment, described how she and her colleagues advise parents to follow-up some school-based activities. She said,

> Although we can never even up what children get from home, in the meantime, we usually write tips such as: ...today we worked with trees, you are very welcome to go out into the woods and look at these trees ...please play cards, please play dice games.

Such views, although not frequently mentioned, indicated a belief that informal activities can not only support learning but facilitate the development of both good study habits and contact between parents and school.

6. Discussion

In this paper, we set out to examine 39 English and Swedish year one teachers' perspectives on the role of homework in children's learning of number. The analyses yielded both similarities and differences between the two groups. With respect to similarities, two issues emerged. Firstly, in ways not unrelated to homework as instructional (Van Voorhis, 2004), all teachers spoke of using homework to support children who struggle with their learning of number, beliefs resonant with the studies reviewed by Bryan and Burstein (2004). The second, also related to homework as instructional, was that all of the English and half of the participating Swedish teachers spoke of homework as a consolidation of routine skills, practices exploited by teachers internationally (Cooper et al., 2006; Van Voorhis, 2004). However, while superficially similar, the two sets of perspectives were driven by different imperatives; the Swedish teachers frequently spoke of their desire to prevent differences in family background undermining equality of opportunity (Epstein, et al., 1995), while the English teachers located their arguments

against a desire to meet government targets. One interpretation of this is that the Swedish teachers' perspectives were motivated by principles while their English colleagues were motivated by pragmatism, perspectives that have some resonance with earlier findings that too frequently the intrinsic properties of homework are subordinated to the extrinsic (Coutts, 2004).

From the perspective of differences, a number of key distinctions emerged. The first, connected to homework as political (Van Voorhis, 2004), was that all of the participating English teachers seemed to view homework as not only desirable but essential (Desforges, Abouchaar, 2003), a view that half the Swedish teachers rejected (Grönholm, 2015, November 26). In this respect teachers' views seemed to mirror the traditions and curricular statements of their respective systems. For example, the English teachers seemed conditioned by the tacit expectation that homework would be the norm for all children (Department for Education and Employment, 1998), while the Swedish teachers seemed to be responding to equity-driven traditions in which homework should not be set (Grönholm, 2015, November 26).

A second distinction, connected to homework as communication (Van Voorhis, 2004), concerned the role of parents in the completion of homework. While all teachers, irrespective of nationality and belief about the value of homework, saw homework as one way through which teachers can keep parents up to date with what is happening in school, the Swedish teachers, whether they valued homework or not, believed, with one exception, that there was no role for parents in its completion. Arguing from an equity perspective, the completion of homework, which should be designed to be achievable without additional support, should be the sole responsibility of the child (Strandberg, 2013). This view contrasted with those of the English teachers who, as seen in Carol's comment to parents, *'we're working on this. If you would like to help at home, you could do this...'*, frequently put parents at the centre of homework task completion. Interestingly, earlier research conducted in the US found that parents' involvement influences both the quality and quantity of students' homework completions (Dumont et al., 2014; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2004).

A third difference, linked to homework as instructional (Van Voorhis, 2004), lay in the purpose of homework. While, as discussed above, all of the English and half the Swedish teachers spoke about the role of homework in the consolidation of routine skills, almost all the English but none of the Swedish teachers spoke about homework as exploratory. In such a view, alluding to homework as a means of teaching new material, was a tacit awareness that the school day offers insufficient time for teachers to cover all curricular material. In other words, while the Swedish teachers explicitly rejected such matters, as seen in Ellinor's assertion that she does "not send home things that need to be explained at home", the English teachers seemed pressured, possibly by a highly goal-orientated educational culture (Harris, Gorard, 2015), to enlist the support of parents.

Finally, we began this paper indicating that the literature presents the use of homework as a contested topic internationally. In this paper we have, we argue, confirmed that this is the case. Moreover, in light of evidence that the best teachers give homework regularly (Corno, 1996), we have shown that the use of homework

is too culturally situated for such statements to be accepted independently of an awareness of the affordances and constraints within which teachers work; the Swedish teachers tend to reject homework due to concerns about differences in family circumstances compromising principles of equality of opportunity, while the participating English teachers seem to embrace it because curricular pressures necessitate work being undertaken outside school. In other words, we argue that future research on the use and efficacy of homework should acknowledge more explicitly than has historically been the case the role of culture in the conduct of educational practice.

References

Andrews, P., Sayers, J.: 2015, Identifying opportunities for grade one children to acquire foundational number sense: developing a framework for cross cultural classroom analyses, *Early Childhood Education Journal* **43**(4), 257–267.

Bempechat, J.: 2004, The motivational benefits of homework: A social-cognitive perspective, *Theory Into Practice* **43**(3), 189–196.

Bennett, S., Kalish, N.: 2006, *The case against homework: How homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it*, Three Rivers Press, New York.

Brock, C., Lapp, D., Flood, J., Fisher, D., Keonghee, T.: 2007, Does homework matter? An investigation of teacher perceptions about homework practices for children from nondominant backgrounds, *Urban Education* **42**(4), 349–372.

Bryan, T., Burstein, K.: 2004, Improving homework completion and academic performance: Lessons from special education, *Theory Into Practice* **43**(3), 213–219.

Clark, R.: 2015, *Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed or fail*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Cooper, H.: 1989, *Homework. White Plains*, Longman, New York.

Cooper, H., Robinson, J., Patall, E.: 2006, Does homework improve academic achievement? A synthesis of research, 1987-2003, *Review of Educational Research* **76**(1), 1–62.

Corno, L.: 1996, Homework is a complicated thing, *Educational Researcher* **25**(8), 27–30.

Corno, L., Xu, J.: 2004, Theory Into Practice, *Homework as the job of childhood* **43**(3), 227–233.

Coutts, P. M.: 2004, Meanings of homework and implications for practice, *Theory Into Practice* **43**(3), 182–188.

Department for Education and Employment: 1998, Homework: Guidelines for Primary and Secondary Schools, London.

Desforges, C., Abouchaar, A.: 2003, *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review* (Research Report 433), DfES, Nottingham.

Dettmers, S., Trautwein, U., Ludtke, O., Goetz, T., Frenzel, A., Pekrun, R.: 2011, Students' emotions during homework in mathematics: Testing a theoretical model of antecedents and achievement outcomes, *Contemporary Educational Psychology* **36**(1), 25–35.

Dumont, H., Trautwein, U., Nagy, G., Nagengast, B.: 2014, Quality of parental homework involvement: Predictors and reciprocal relations with academic functioning in the reading domain, *Journal of Educational Psychology* **106**(1), 144.

Epstein, J., Van Voorhis, F.: 2012, The changing debate: From assigning homework to designing homework, in: S. Suggate, E. Reese (ed.), *Contemporary debates in child development and education*, Routledge, London, 263–273.

Epstein, M., Foley, R., Polloway, E.: 1995, Homework problems: A comparison of students identified as behaviorally disordered with nonhandicapped students, *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth* **40**(1), 14–18.

Farrow, S., Tymms, P., Henderson, B.: 1999, Homework and attainment in primary schools, *British Educational Research Journal* **25**(3), 323–341.

Grönholm, F.: 2015, November 26, Forskaren: Läxor är bra, SVT news. Retrieved from: `http://www.svt.senyheter/lokalt/vast/forskaren-laxor-ar-bra`.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., Johnson, L.: 2006, How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability, *Field methods* **18**(1), 59–82.

Gustafsson, J.: 2013, Causal inference in educational effectiveness research: A comparison of three methods to investigate effects of homework on student achievement, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* **24**(3), 275–295.

Harris, N., Gorard, S.: 2015, United Kingdom, in: W. Hörner, H. Döbert, L. Reuter, B. von Kopp (ed.), *The education systems of Europe*, Springer, Cham, 869–908.

Hill, N., Taylor, L.: 2004, Parental school involvement and children's academic achievement: Pragmatics and issues, *Current directions in psychological science* **13**(4), 161–164.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., Battiato, A., Walker, J., Reed, R., DeJong, J., Jones, K.: 2001, Parental involvement in homework. Educational Psychologist, *Educational Psychologist* **36**, 195–209.

Johnston, L. H., Carroll, D.: 1998, The context of emotional responses to athletic injury: a qualitative analysis, *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation* **7**(3), 206–220.

MoF: 2012, Komplettering av HUS-avdraget med läxhjälp, Ministry of Finance, Sweden, Stockholm.

Núñez, J., Suáárez, N., Rosáário, P., Vallejo, G., Cerezo, R., Valle, A.: 2015, Teachers' feedback on homework, homework-related behaviors, and academic achievement, *The Journal of Educational research* **108**(3), 204–216.

Ofs: 2016, School inspection handbook, Ofsted, Manchester.

O'Reilly, M., Parker, N.: 2013, Unsatisfactory Saturation: a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research, *Qualitative research* **13**(2), 190–197.

Palardy, J.: 1995, Another look at homework, *Principal* **74**(5), 32–33.

Patall, E., Cooper, H., Robinson, J.: 2008, Parent involvement in homework: A research synthesis, *Review of educational research* **78**(4), 1039–1101.

Rosario, P., Mourao, R., Baldaque, M., Núñez, T., Núñez, J., Gonzalez-Pienda, J., et al.: 2009, Homework, self-regulated learning and math achievement, *Revista de Psicodidactica* **14**(2), 179–192.

Sko: 2014, Homework in practice: Support material for homework in school, Skolverket, Stockholm.

Strandberg, M.: 2013, Homework – is there a connection with classroom assessment? A review from Sweden, *Educational Research* **55**(4), 325–346.

Strauss, A., Corbin, J.: 1998, *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, Sage, London.

Svensson, P., Meaney, T., Norén, E.: 2014, Immigrant students' perceptions of their possibilities to learn mathematics: The case of homework, *For the Learning of Mathematics* **34**(3), 32–37.

Van Voorhis, F.: 2004, Reflecting on the homework ritual: Assignments and designs, *Theory into practice* **43**(3), 205–212.

Walker, J., Hoover-Dempsey, K., Whetsel, D., Green, C.: 2004, *Parental involvement in homework: A review of current research and its implications for teachers, after school program staff, and parent leaders*, Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, MA.

Warton, P.: 2001, The forgotten voices in homework: Views of students, *Educational Psychologist* **36**(3), 155–165.

Xu, J., Wu, H.: 2013, Self-regulation of homework behavior: Homework management at the secondary school level, *The Journal of Educational Research* **106**(1), 1–13.

Department of Mathematics and Science Education
Stockholm University
e-mail: gosia.marschall@mnd.su.se
e-mail: paul.andrews@mnd.su.se
e-mail: judy.sayers@mnd.su.se