

Teachers' perspectives on setting primary school homework: insights from an independent school in West Yorkshire

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore teachers' perspectives on primary school homework, a topic that is highly contested, yet considerably under-researched in England. Whilst it is both small scale and context specific, with a sample of only three primary school teachers, in an independent primary school located in West Yorkshire, it is still a valuable contribution to a body of research in need of attention. It seeks to present an insight into how teachers assign primary school homework, and which factors impact upon their decisions in this area. Semi-structured interviews were the method of choice in capturing the teachers' thoughts on primary school homework. The literature presents the complex nature of primary school homework, highlighting its perceived benefits and potential implications. The teachers' beliefs seemed to mirror the literature, with academic achievement and study skills touched upon, and parental expectation, teacher identity and teacher expectation becoming central lines of discussion. Parental expectation (what teachers believe parents expect) seemed to be the driving influence in shaping the teachers' homework practice, not least because it takes place in the home and may require supervision, but also due to the fact parents pay for their children to attend this school and consequently may expect high quality homework. In light of this, there appeared to be a triangular relationship amongst the factors- parental expectation, teachers, in relation to teacher identity and teacher expectation, and children. The chief conclusion drawn from the research is that the most influential factor in the way teachers assign primary school homework is parental expectations. Following this, the key recommendation would be to further investigate whether this triangular relationship is exclusive to this setting, and therefore explore teachers' perspectives on primary school homework in alternative settings, including primary schools both in the independent and mainstream sector.

Introduction

This research aims to explore teachers' perspectives on primary school homework, and in doing so, seeks to gain answers to the proposed research questions:

1. What are teachers doing in practice to assign primary school homework?
2. What factors influence the way teachers assign primary school homework in practice?

To focus research on homework, it is fundamental to understand what is meant by the term.

Homework is defined as activities which are to be completed outside of school by children (Costa et al, 2016), designed with extending academic learning into other environments beyond the classroom (Emami et al, 2014).

Literature Review

The topic of primary school homework is seemingly complex (Flunger et al, 2015), reflected in the tension which appears present in England's educational policy surrounding homework; teachers have a professional duty to assign homework if they are to practice in line with Teacher Standards (2013) yet, on the other hand, have a degree of freedom which seems to be rooted in the subjective nature of England's homework policy, granting individual schools autonomy in their interpretation of it. The complex nature of primary school homework is reflected in existing literature which highlights central themes associated with homework. These include both the perceived benefits of primary school homework (academic achievement, study skills and parental expectation) and its potential negative implications (educational inequalities and teacher expectation), notably from a variety of sources, which scarcely include England due to the lack of research in this area, particularly in the context of primary school homework.

Perceived Benefits

Academic Achievement:

More specifically, in relation to the idea that primary school homework is beneficial, much of this literature portrays the line of argument that primary school homework plays a crucial role in promoting academic achievement (Medwell & Wray, 2019, Buyukalan & Altinay, 2018, Valle et al, 2016, Costa et al, 2016 & Matei & Ciascai, 2015), despite contrasting research which claims homework has little impact on academic achievement (DeNisco, 2013, Hattie, 2008 & Cooper et al, 2006).

Study Skills:

Complementary to academic achievement, primary

school homework is also regarded by some teachers as beneficial for the acquisition of study skills (Costa et al, 2016), such as developing awareness of time management and acting as a platform for instilling a sense of responsibility (Buyukalan & Altinay, 2018 & Gollner et al, 2017). However, there are also concerns around parental over-involvement – while primary school homework is beneficial, parental expectation is a key feature in the primary education literature, with many of the texts suggesting that parental expectation is a positive tool for strengthening home-school relationships (Madjar et al, 2016). Yet, this could also be deemed problematic insofar as teachers sometimes form expectations of the parents more so than of the children, often suggesting that supporting children with primary school homework is a signifier of good parenting (Medwell & Wray, 2019 & Matei & Ciascai, 2015).

Potential Implications

Educational Inequalities:

Conversely, there are potential negative implications associated with primary school homework. Research suggests that primary school homework contributes to perpetuating educational inequalities, in which access to resources and suitable learning environments at home will not be the same for all children, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to their more privileged peers (Costa et al, 2016 & Buyukalan & Altinay, 2018). Conversely, from an optimistic lens, Emami et al (2016) claims homework can be helpful in reducing educational inequalities, allowing children who may be absent or have difficulties with learning to catch up.

Teacher Expectation:

Another potential implication of primary school homework is the way in which teachers believe it should be assigned, especially as there appears to be no consensus amongst professionals surrounding its implementation (Rudman, 2014). This may be a consequence of the apparent conflict between England's homework policy and Teacher Standards (2013), as noted earlier. More specifically,

characteristics of exemplary primary school homework seem to be a reoccurring theme in the literature, most notably with the Education Endowment Foundation (2018) recommending that homework should be meaningful, stimulating, necessary and most importantly, clearly explained. Moreover, the negative feelings children often experience towards primary school homework are mentioned in the literature (Costa et al, 2016), which subsequently suggests that the assignment of primary school homework is an area of practice crucial for teachers to reflect on. Keeping children's interests in mind, the research proposes that a shift from pencil and paper focused homework may be needed, with a focus instead on more creative tasks which inspire children's agency (Holte, 2016), thus giving them the opportunity to have their voices heard in informing the homework they receive (Scott & Glaze, 2017).

Previous research draws upon factors which affect how teachers assign primary school homework effectively, one of which is the current educational climate of driving standards, in which teachers often use homework as a tool in meeting the demands of an overcrowded curriculum (Matei & Ciascai, 2015). Additionally, it is believed to provide unnecessary workload and pressure (Medwell & Wray, 2019). Teacher identity is another critical component of this discussion, and is shaped by a combination of agentic personal values and unique experiences, along with structural/political factors in society (Mockler, 2011 & Kreber, 2010). In light of this, Tam & Chan (2016) argue that the type of homework teachers assign tends to relate to their teacher identity; in which those who are confident in their teaching tend to set homework encouraging creativity, compared to those who appear incompetent, using homework as a means to compensate for their poor teaching. Similarly, there seems to be tension in upholding policy in educational practice and teacher identity (Buchanan, 2015). For example, a teacher who holds homework in high regard may be more likely to assign it effectively, whereas another may disagree with primary school homework on a personal level, yet as a professional promotes it in accordance with the culture of their practice. Due to the depth of

research existing in this area, the literature base offers a sturdy foundation for this study. Interestingly, the literature which shines a light on the discrepancies in teachers' assignment of primary school homework, which is often underpinned by their teacher identity and homework policy, played the main role in inspiring this research- exploring teachers' perspectives on primary school homework.

Methodology

The empirical research undertaken adopts a qualitative approach, beneficial for capturing people's unique experiences (Hammond & Wellington, 2013) and therefore aligned with the aims of the study.. For context, the research was conducted in an independent primary school, located in West Yorkshire. Due to the short time frame, the strategy adopted was that of a case study. To recruit the participants, opportunity sampling, alongside an element of snowball sampling, was employed, in which I had an established rapport with one of the teachers, who then recruited two more teachers (Neuman, 2014). These three teachers in particular were useful for providing varied insights into teachers' perspectives on primary school homework, as they practice in different age ranges within the school, including early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Conversely, as the teachers are from an independent school, the sample could be criticised as exclusive, particularly as the role of parental expectations could heavily influence the teachers' expectations and importance of primary school homework, compared to teachers who practice in mainstream schools. Additionally, the concern of exclusivity could also limit the generalisability of the research to alternative educational settings, which as mentioned earlier could be due to the fee-paying status of the school. Finally, the sample could be criticised as gender biased, as all the teachers were female. Nevertheless, as the primary school education workforce is predominantly female (de Salis et al, 2019), it could be considered broadly representative.

According to Sultana (2007), an awareness of positionality in research is imperative, and fundamentally involves a reflection on personal values (Dockett & Perry, 2007), which is especially important in qualitative research due to its subjective underpinnings. In response to this, I aimed to be a reflexive researcher, which involved considering how I could influence the research, as well as the how the research could affect me (Attia & Edge, 2017). Consequently, an awareness of positionality informed my reflection throughout the research process. I identified and challenged my personal views on primary school homework, (teachers' appear to put little thought into primary school homework, reflected in the emphasis on worksheets and the lack of creativity) in an endeavour to eliminate researcher bias, and in turn uphold validity. Furthermore, in striving for honest data, I adopted a neutral, yet friendly approach, whereby talking points discussed were informed by literature as opposed to my personal beliefs, to ensure the teachers' voices were truly heard (Dunne et al, 2005).

The data collection method employed was the use of semi-structured interviews. Though an informal setting would have been favourable in encouraging genuine thoughts on homework, as opposed to an institutional setting (Cohen et al, 2018), this was only possible for one of the interviews. One potentially problematic feature of interviews in general is the 'interviewer effect', whereby participants' responses could be influenced by the researcher (Guthrie, 2010). As previously touched upon, the measures taken to be a reflexive researcher contributed to eliminating the immediate concerns of the 'interviewer effect'.

Validity in research work is essentially concerned with whether or not the research achieves what it intended to (Kumar, 2019), in this instance, exploring teachers' perspectives on primary school homework. In response to this, the aim of the research was to answer the proposed research questions, which were informed by literature. Similarly, the data collection methods of semi-structured interviews were inspired by previous

successful research (Medwell & Wray, 2019 & Aziah, 2018 & Buyukalan & Altinay, 2018 & Holte, 2016). To ensure accuracy, the interviews were audio recorded, alongside contemporaneously writing field notes (Walliman, 2018). Whilst my intention was to audio record all of the interviews, due to a technical issue one of the audio recordings failed. In response to this realisation I made notes, though this involved retrospective thinking, which can often be problematic for yielding valid data. Recognising positionality was helpful in ensuring my role in the co- construction of the findings was mitigated. Moreover, to ensure the data was documented as accurately as possible, the notes were made immediately whilst the data was still fresh (Silverman, 2017).

Institutional bias was a concern; whereby two out of three interviews were conducted in the school itself, in which the thoughts could reflect the school's ethos as opposed to unearthing personal perspectives on primary school homework. Nonetheless, the setting of the interviews appeared insignificant in influencing the teachers' responses, as all three teachers' perspectives seemed congruent to one another, regardless of the setting. As mentioned earlier, having an established rapport with one of the teachers prior to the research highlighted researcher bias as a complicating factor, however it could be argued that the familiarity was positive for prompting authentic thoughts.

To interpret the data a thematic analysis was applied, which involved reading and identifying recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) following Bryman's four stages. Bryman's four stages commenced with reading the text generally to gain a broad sense of what was happening.

Next, the text was read again and involved highlighting sections of importance as a way of recognising emerging themes. To establish common themes, the text was read a third time, but with a specific focus on highlighting and grouping ideas together. Finally, the last stage involved relating themes and findings to existing literature. To add to the interpretation of the data, an inductive

approach was adopted, in which the theoretical underpinning was derived after the research had been conducted and was dependent on what the data revealed (Taylor et al, 2016).

To ensure ethical compliance within the research, I adhered to the British Educational Research Association guidelines (2018). In particular, I gained informed consent from the participants and maintained privacy and confidentiality throughout the research, in addition to adhering to General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act (2018). In doing so, pseudonyms were applied to conceal the identity of the participating teachers, in which Louisa is an early years practitioner, Rosie is a Key Stage 1 teacher and Hazel is a Key Stage 2 teacher.

Findings & Discussion

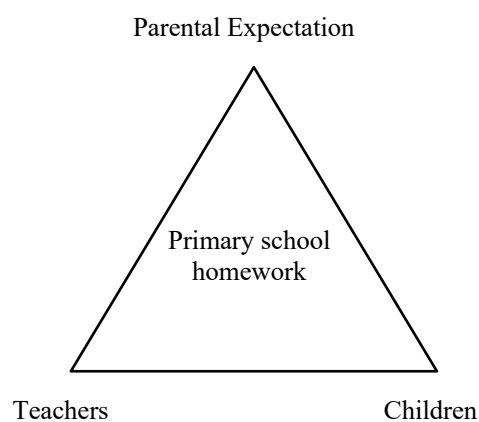
From the data, it appeared that many of the feelings the teachers expressed were consistent with the themes and areas of research previously exemplified in the literature review, yet some talking points provided more nuance. More specifically, academic achievement and study skills were mentioned as being potential benefits of primary school homework, albeit not in great depth; whereas teacher expectation, parental expectation, and teacher identity were central areas of discussion, and in turn will be the focal points in this article.

- ‘Teacher expectation’ refers to which factors influence the way teachers assign primary school homework.
- ‘Parental expectation’ refers to what teachers’ believe parents’ expect of them when assigning primary school homework.
- ‘Teacher identity’ refers to how the teachers’ homework practice is shaped by their personal experiences, as well as political/structure factors, such as homework policy/ setting.

The findings suggest an almost triangular relationship between three factors which influence the assignment of primary school homework,

including parental expectation, teachers and children, as can be seen in the diagram below. Parental expectation is at the highest point to signify its driving influence on primary school homework practice, particularly due the dual role the teachers in the research had as parents of children within the school themselves. At both base points are teachers and children. Whilst the teachers’ in this research do consider the children’s needs when assigning primary school homework, the great emphasis placed on parents could perhaps suggest that primary school homework is designed with parents’ wishes in mind more so than the children. Moreover, parents’ appearing as an instrumental factor in how the teachers’ assign primary school homework could be related to the fee paying status of the school, which draws on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System’s theory (1979).

Diagram: Triangular Relationship



Teacher Expectation

Teacher expectation, appeared to be one of the main themes discussed by the three teachers and was evidenced in teachers discussion of homework policy, which for ‘early years’ involved reading each night; for Key Stage 1 included spellings, reading, alongside a literacy and a maths task; and for Key Stage 2, consisted of reading, maths, English, as

well as optional homework. During the discussion of the homework policy, all teachers placed significant emphasis on the time frame for primary school homework, insisting it should be no more than 20 minutes. Rosie justified this, explaining that she aims for primary school homework to be an enjoyable experience, and the last thing they want is for children to be struggling for long periods of time doing homework, especially when they are young. This is consistent with Costa et al's (2016) research, highlighting emotional fatigue as a potential shortcoming of primary school homework; which it seems the teachers acknowledge. In ensuring that primary school homework is a positive experience, the teachers stressed that planning is crucial. Such planning enables the children to have the best chance of being successful, and involves removing barriers to learning. The teachers suggested that if those barriers are present, it is more likely that the children will not enjoy it, a concept which is supported by Fernandez et al's (2017) research.

A further way in which teacher expectation was brought to focus was around the autonomy the teachers strived to offer in the primary school homework they assigned, reflected in Louisa's thoughts that primary school homework should ultimately be "*empowering*", providing children the opportunity to make decisions as much as possible. This element of choice was reiterated by both Rosie and Hazel, and evidenced in their homework practice which involves assignments in the style of a "*menu*", allowing the children to select what homework they would like to do. Moreover, the strong focus on autonomy is congruent with Holte's (2016) claim that primary school homework should inspire agency, in which the children should have the opportunity to voice their interests and inform the homework they receive (Buyukalan & Altinay, 2018 & Scott & Glaze, 2017). In response to this, the fact the children have a sense of independence and a voice in some of the homework they receive is consistent with Vatterot's (2010) principles of 'good homework'.

Similarly, attention was directed to homework which is interactive and applicable to real life as a positive feature of the primary school homework they assign, a concept which is consistent with Pressman et al's (2015) research. Rosie articulated this through the example of outdoor homework, which encourages children to get outside and learn from nature, such as observing the differences of a tree in autumn and spring. Moreover, in keeping the notion of primary school homework which includes both an element of autonomy, and is applicable to real life, Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory (1985) which specifically covered the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, offers a theoretical foundation for the way the teachers assign homework. For example, it is argued autonomy underpins intrinsic motivations - therefore when children have a vested interest in their learning, it promotes a deeper understanding, compared to homework which does not consider children's interests or abilities (Wan et al, 2019, Jarvela et al, 2006 & Vansteenkiste et al, 2006).

Teachers stressed that creative and innovative methods could only be adopted for particular tasks with some homework, such as times tables and reading comprehension necessarily remaining quite prescriptive. For example, both Rosie and Hazel placed great emphasis on the importance of times tables and reading, which appear to be standard practice when assigning primary school homework, effectively constituting an unwritten rule, which resonates with arguments put forward by the Education Endowment Foundation (2018).

Parental Expectation

There appears to be a consensus amongst the teachers that parents are an important factor in assigning homework, not least because it takes place in the home and may require supervision, but also due to the fact parents pay for their children to attend this school, and therefore often expect high levels of homework. More specifically, the teachers discussed how parental expectations play a significant role in shaping the teachers' homework practice and secondly, how parental expectation in

primary school homework offers an insight into their children's learning at school.

In relation to parental expectation being a significant factor in the assignment of primary school homework, both Louisa and Rosie highlighted the complex nature of assigning homework which meets the demands of both parents and children, as the former hold the role of facilitators, ensuring the homework is completed. The two teachers expressed that it is a *“hard balance between providing homework to meet parents' expectations as well as meeting the children's needs.”* The teachers' reported that they had experienced a tension in meeting parental expectations, as some parents had positive attitudes towards homework, whilst other do not. To add to this, the teachers recognised the practical barriers associated with homework, with parents being busy working, or children engaging in clubs outside of school, which leaves little time to unwind and do primary school homework. What's more, the teachers expressed that due to the fee-paying status of the school, some parents expect high levels of homework, yet the teachers are mindful of the children's age, mentioning that homework tends to build up further as the children get older and that it is *“nice to let them be little, whilst they are little”*. Moreover, the attention placed on parental expectations as a strongly influential factor is reflected in the homework practice within the school being amended in response to a parents' survey, in which Hazel voiced that the amount of primary school homework was *“reigned in a little bit”*.

The interaction between parents and teaching practice which ultimately affects children, draws upon fundamental principles of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979). More specifically, there are four main structures to this theory, including; the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Maclean, 2017), and in this instance the mesosystem is particularly relevant; suggesting the relationship between parents and school can impact children's development (Green, 2017). In turn, this offers a theoretical underpinning of why the teachers stress

the importance of parents and school rapport in children's homework experiences, as evident in Hazel and Rosie's thoughts related to how teachers should consider the feelings and opinions of parents and consider these when assigning primary school homework. Furthermore, the teachers did not explicitly comment on primary school homework as being beneficial for strengthening home/school relationships, as suggested in previous research by Madjar et al (2016). The finding that teachers report liaising with the parents, particularly as the context for the school means the parents are in a sense consumers of the education service the teachers deliver, it could perhaps be argued that primary school homework could be another means in building connections between the school and parents. Moreover, the importance of parental influence on the homework practice in this school is further substantiated by Rosie, who commented *“if they say jump, I say how high”*, which seems to suggest that the role of teachers in this school is to ultimately meet parental expectations.

Regarding how parental expectation in primary school homework offers an insight into their children's learning at school, both Rosie and Hazel put forward the thoughts that primary school homework provides parents with the opportunity to have an input in their children's learning, echoing Buyukalan & Altinay's (2018) & Scott & Glaze's (2017) research. Conversely, though parental expectation is viewed by these teachers through an optimistic lens, it could also be considered problematic. For example, the teachers touched upon primary school homework as helpful in highlighting gaps in children's learning, yet if parents offer their support through adopting strategies different to the ones taught at school, it could cause confusion or conceal struggles children have with their learning. This point is consistent with Pressman et al's (2016) research.

Parental expectation seems to intertwine with educational inequalities in relation to children's primary school homework experiences, particularly due to barriers in parents supporting their children's learning. For example, the teachers

recognised that parents may be busy with jobs and children may be involved in activities after school and as a result there may be a delay in meeting homework deadlines but *“there is an allowance for that.”* This seemingly understanding stance on primary school homework was reiterated by Rosie and Louisa, who both mentioned they *“would not chase for homework.”* Furthermore, research implies that teachers often believe the home environment is positive for learning, yet some children lack parental support, or alternatively, have too many leisure activities to even care about homework (Holte, 2016). The teachers in this research appeared to be in tune with how the home environment could affect children’s homework experience, which again draws on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory (1979), whereby environmental factors, can impact children, and in this case, suggests that if the teachers are in tune with the children’s home environments they can shape their homework practice accordingly to meet the children’s needs.

Further to this, because all three of the teachers mentioned have children who attend the school they teach at, it could perhaps be argued that these teachers are in fact part of the parental expectation. Consequently, as parental expectation appears to play a strongly influential role in shaping the assignment of primary school homework, it could explain why the teachers adopt such empathetic homework practices, as it will be impacting them both as a teacher but also as a parent, and in turn their own children. From this it seems, with the fee-paying nature of the school in mind, that parental expectation is a prominent factor in the assignment of primary school homework. This is because all of the teachers appeared to hold parental expectations in high regard, perhaps more so because they are amongst the parent population of the school themselves, alongside being teachers too.

Teacher Identity

Another leading talking point was teacher identity, which seemed to be a chief factor in how the teachers assign primary school homework, and

therefore contributed to answering research question 2. According to Mockler (2011) & Kreber (2010), teacher identity is shaped by a combination of both agentic personal values and experiences, along with structural/political factors in society, which expectedly underpin teaching practice. In this instance, the teachers seemed to draw upon their personal experiences as parents and reflected on how homework impacts their own lives and, as previously mentioned, assign homework with this in mind. To illustrate, Hazel explained that as *“as a parent”* she understands both sides to homework, and mentioned her own children’s experiences in primary school, with one child who engages with homework independently, whilst with her other child *“it’s a little bit more of a battle.”* Likewise, Rosie also mentioned that due to her children’s homework experiences throughout the school she is aware as a parent that homework builds up, and explains that the time when the children are little is precious, and that she will therefore *“never chase for homework.”* In response to these candid reflections, it seems that parental experiences are a key factor in shaping teacher identity, highlighting the humanistic side to teachers, evident in their empathetic stance on not chasing for homework.

Furthermore, as teacher identity encompasses structural/political factors, it could be argued that the government perhaps has a role to play in forming teacher identity. In particular, primary school homework is assigned in accordance with times of heightened focus on testing and examinations, and essentially accountability of children’s learning (Brown & McNamara, 2005). Buchanan (2015) suggests there are often tensions in upholding educational policy and teacher identity, leading to discrepancies in how teachers’ assign primary school homework. Moreover, inconsistencies in homework implementation may stem from the subjectivity of England’s homework policy (Department for Education, 2018). Though autonomy is with individual schools to devise their own homework policy, Teacher Standards (2013) puts forward that homework and other out of class activities should be assigned to extend and consolidate learning. This shines a light on another

potential conflict between teachers' professional duty in assigning homework in accordance with Teacher Standards (2013), and the schools' ethos and stance on primary school homework.

Although, this tension did not seem apparent for the teachers in this research, as they seemed to have had a voice in informing the homework policy at the school, both as practicing teachers, but also as parents. For example, Rosie expressed that the homework policy is her own, and the way that she looks at homework is "*quite reasonable*". This suggests that Rosie has a degree of ownership over her homework practice, perhaps due to her senior role as head of Key Stage 1. Furthermore, whilst Rosie devised the homework policy, the fact she reflects upon her parental experiences indicates that the driving factor in shaping her homework policy, and in turn the primary school homework the children receive, is her teacher identity.

Subsequently, on the surface this suggests that perhaps Rosie has a voice in informing her homework practice more so than the other teachers in the research. However, it could also be argued that both Louisa and Hazel still have a voice in informing the school's homework practice, not as a practitioner, but instead as a parent. For example, as it seems parental expectations are a dominant influence in how teachers' assign primary school homework, the fact that these teachers are part of the parent population of the school means that their expectations will be taken into account when assigning primary school homework. Nonetheless, all three of the teachers appear to have a mutual understanding of what the homework policy is. The reasons for its implementation, such as academic achievement and parental expectation, could perhaps be due to the context of the research. Again, this draws upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979), particularly the microsystem, as it seems that the environment of the school, principally that it is fee-paying, could be influential on the teachers' beliefs about primary school homework, which in turn influences their practice. For example, as all the teachers in this research appear to view primary school homework

through a positive lens, this could perhaps be due to the school environment, as research in mainstream primary schools highlights that some teachers feel resentful of homework practice due to the additional pressure it comes with (Medwell & Wray, 2019) as a consequence of larger class sizes and often overwhelming workload compared to the independent school in this research.

Conclusion

To conclude, though this research focused on exploring teachers' perspectives on primary school homework is on a small scale and context specific, it is still valuable for raising questions and promoting further research surrounding the practice of primary school homework, which appears to be a topic highly contested and considerably under-researched in England.

The key findings suggest a triangular relationship between three factors; parental expectation, teachers and children when assigning primary school homework. At both base points are teachers and children, yet parental expectation is at the highest point to signify its overall driving influence on primary school homework practice. This is particularly accentuated due to the dual role the teachers adopted, holding the parental expectation themselves as they have their own children who attend the school, whilst also being practicing teachers. Moreover, parents appearing as an instrumental factor in how the teachers assign primary school homework could be related to the fee paying status of the school, which draws on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's theory (1979).

Recommendations

In light of this research, it appears that teachers' perspectives will be unique to each individual teacher, particularly as teacher identity emerged as a factor influencing the assignment of primary school homework, alongside the school's ethos on homework. From this, a recommendation would be

to further investigate teachers' perspectives on primary school homework in different settings, such as mainstream schools, to find out if the triangular relationship between parental expectation, children and teachers which emerged in this research is as significant in other schools.

Further to this, it would be interesting to explore if any major discrepancies exist between the perspectives presented here compared with other independently funded schools. For example, due to the challenges faced with workload, coupled with increased class sizes and a heightened focus on standardisation in mainstream education, teachers may view primary school homework through a different lens than that of teachers in independent schools. Moreover, in relation to the validity of the research, a suggestion would be to conduct the research in an informal setting if possible, as it may elicit more candid responses, rather than thoughts that are representative of the institution in which they practice. Ultimately, from this research I would encourage teachers to reflect on their homework practice, considering how they could improve it, not only to meet parental expectations, but to inspire children's agency in their learning.

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