

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK IN MONGOLIA

Ariunaa Dashtseren

Educational Research Team, School of Educational Studies,
Mongolian National University of Education, Ulaanbaatar,
MONGOLIA

dashariun@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This descriptive research aims at defining the level of parent involvement in Mongolia, and to lesser extent, to study its differentials. The convenient sampling was adopted and 295 parents (or persons who look after the child) were selected from Grades 6-11 of secondary schools in Ulaanbaatar. Qualitative and (descriptive) quantitative methods were used in data analysis. Among others, research finding suggests that although almost all parents do believe that they are involved in education of their children, merely 58 percent of parents do involve in education of the child helping with homework.

Keywords: Parent involvement, homework, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

INTRODUCTION

Parent involvement is essential in children's educational process and outcomes (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Parent involvement refers to parents roles in educating their children at home and in school (Christenson and Sheridan, 2001). Traditionally, parent involvement include attending parent-teacher conferences, supervising fieldtrips, volunteering in the classroom, supervising their children's homework, reading to their children, and discussing school and general academic aspirations with their children. Thus parent involvement has been defined as the ways in which parents support their children's education at home and in school.

Epstein's (2001) parental involvement framework is a widely-accepted conceptual model of parental involvement. It has six sub-constructs, namely parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the Community. Parenting refers to parents' actions that foster the children's learning and cognitive development, not necessarily tied to school, and parenting includes among others parent involvement in homework.

In Mongolia, after the socialist type of training, child centered approach was encouraged in education. Since then, both teacher's and parent's roles in educating children have been changing. More strikingly, it has been observed that parents tend to less likely to reinforce children's homework efforts. Also very limited research has been conducted and published in the area of parent involvement in Mongolia. This research aims at finding out the level of parent involvement, in terms of involvement in homework, and its differentials by selected demographic and family characteristics of selected students in secondary schools in Ulaanbaatar-UB, the capital city of Mongolia.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHOD

The level of parent involvement, in almost all studies, has been measured in terms of concrete parent involvement behaviors, like attending parent-teacher conferences and helping the child with his or her homework (Joep and Eddie, 2007). Parent involvement in this research is measured in terms of different forms of parent involvement, but helping the child with homework was the main variable to study the level of parent involvement and its differentials.

Based on various research on parent involvement, the survey questionnaire was prepared by the author, mainly asking questions about parent involvement behaviors with 'yes/no' answers. Following the 'yes/no' answer, 'why' and 'how' questions were formulated to obtain in-depth understanding of the issue under question. The student achievement, the outcome variable of parent involvement behaviors, is measured in terms of general assessment score.

Data collection was held with the help of master students recruited during the academic year 2015-16 at the Mongolian National University of Education-MNUE. In the class of research methodology, as part of training, students were asked to collect information from parents of secondary schools in UB. The convenient sampling was adopted as some master students were working as teachers at secondary schools. The judgment was made to cover both the city center and the suburb of UB. As a total, 295 questionnaires were filled in from Grades 6-11. During the training, two separate teams were composed in each of three classes, and each team worked on data of single grades, to study all steps involved in conducting small scale survey. Later, the author combined all data sets into one, and conducted analysis. After combining all data sets, all open ended questions were analyzed by the author only. The information about the survey are given in Appendix: demographic and household characteristics of students (Table 1), student achievement (Table 2), persons who responded to the questions and persons who mostly work with the child (Table 3), and parent's education and employment characteristics (Table 4).

Descriptive statistics were employed in data analysis. To test statistical significance for the tabulation, Chi square of independence of cross tab between two variables were employed. In the case of student achievement, F test, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, and t test for Equality of Means were employed. Also qualitative methods were employed to study responses to the open ended questions, and for developing codes for tabulation.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN MONGOLIA

Forms and level of parent involvement

Parent involvement takes different forms, including discussions about school, help with homework, and attending the teacher-parent conferences. The different forms of parent involvement suggest the different levels of parent involvement and the different understanding of their roles. In our survey, the majority of parents (96.6%) claimed that they do involve in child's education, by meeting all needs for education of the child (Figure 1).

The teacher-parent conference can be regarded as the major well known type of parent involvement in Mongolia. However, less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of parents do attend the teacher-parent conferences.

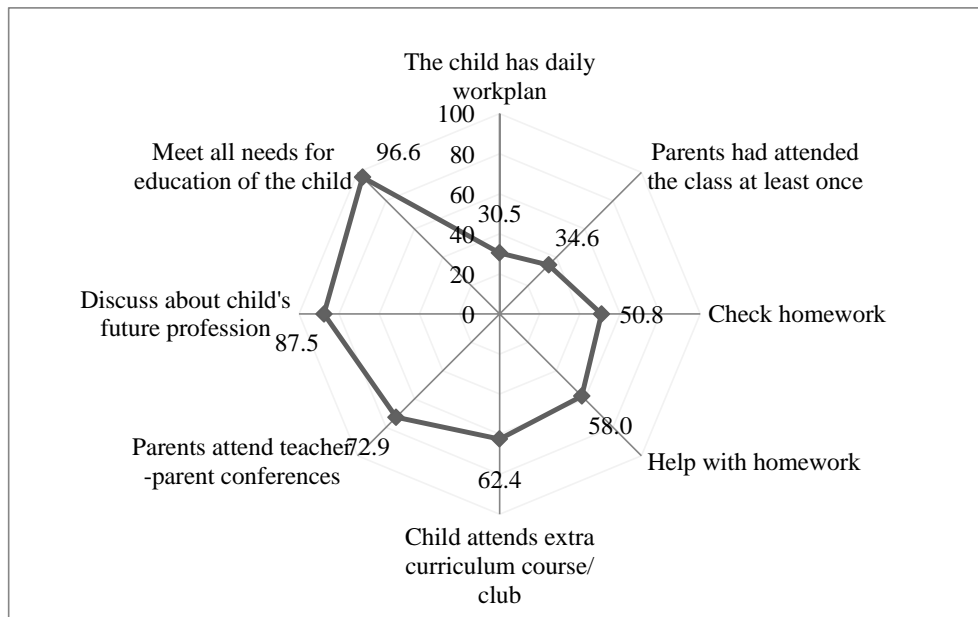


Figure 1. Forms of parent involvement, Mongolia, 2015-2016

Furthermore, it was found that merely 58 percent of parents fulfill their essential role in educating their children, by helping the child with homework.

Parent involvement in homework

The creation of comfortable environment for the child to do the homework is one of the ways of involvement in education of the child. In our survey, 201 parents (or 68.1% of all parents) stated that they do create comfortable environment for the child to do the homework while the remaining 31.9% of parents stated that they fail to do so. Further, from those who do create the comfortable environment, the open ended question was asked on the ways in which how they create the comfortable environment for the child to do the homework (Table 1).

Table 1. The ways of creating comfortable environment for the child to do homework, Mongolia, 2015-2016

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Buy everything what the child needs for schooling	87	43.3
Give time to do homework: the child does not engage in any household work	62	30.8
Create quite environment: turn off TV, self phone, etc. and no talking	19	9.5
The child has a separate room	18	9.0
Bought computer, internet and printer	11	5.5
The child creates his/her environment to do homework	4	2.0

The majority of parents create comfortable environment for the child to do the homework in two ways: buying everything what the child needs for schooling (43.3%) and giving time to do the homework via freeing them from household chore (30.8%). In other words, 1/5 of all parents covered in our survey stated that their children do not engage in any household work. Also parents create quite environment, turning off TV, self phone etc., and also by not talking (9.5%).

When parents involve in children’s homework, among others, they check, review and correct students homework, and reinforce student’s homework efforts, completion and correctness (Hoover-Dempsey et.al., 2001). In our survey, out of 171 parents who claimed that they help the child with homework (58.0% of all parents covered in the survey), only 143 parents did respond to open ended question on ‘how they help for the child with homework’ (Table 2).

Table 2. The ways of helping with homework, Mongolia, 2015-2016

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
When the child asks, tell everything what I know.	83	58.0
Parent and child work together, parents do the homework.	24	16.8
When the child asks, explain the ways how she/he can do the homework.	18	12.6
Parents request the child to show homework after doing it on their own.	8	5.6
Parents ask how he/she can help the child to do the homework.	1	0.7
The child does not like to having help from parents to do homework.	4	2.8
Use internet.	2	1.4
Ask other people who know the subject.	3	2.1

Parents do employ different strategies to help for the child to do the homework: the majority directly tell the child what they know (58.0%), some explain the ways in which how he/she can do the homework (12.6%), and some others check the homework performance after the child does the homework on their own (5.6%). More interestingly, some parents do involve in homework wrongly, as parents themselves do the child’s homework on his/her behalf (16.8%).

Parents are not being involved in education of the child due to different reasons, like conflicting schedules and having a young child or baby in the home (Lamb-Parker et al., 2001). In our survey, out of 124 parents who claimed that they are not able to help the child with homework (42.0% of all parents covered in the survey) only 85 parents did respond to the open ended question on ‘reasons for not helping the child with homework’ (Table 3).

Table 3. Reasons for not helping the child with homework, Mongolia, 2015-2016

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage %</i>
Parents have no time due to their work	27	31.8
Parents have no time due to infant/ younger children	2	2.4
Parents can not help because do not know the subject	24	28.2
Parents can not help because of poor health	1	1.2
Parents believe that the child does not need help anymore	6	7.1
Other people help (older siblings)	2	2.4
The child does not ask for help	20	23.5
The child does not like to having help from parents	2	2.4
The child does not like to do the homework	1	1.2

In line with the most cited reasons, the majority of parents do not help the child with homework because they have no time (31.8%) and do not know the subject (28.2%). Also to lesser extent, parents reported that they have health problem, the problem which can be associated with parent's workload and time.

Apart from above mentioned *real reasons*, parents do not help the child with homework because of their wrong *believe and assumption*. The third major reason was that parents do not help with homework because the child does not ask for help (23.5%). In this case, parents might be wrongly believing that the child is doing well with homework and schooling.

More strikingly, reasons for not helping the child with homework suggest that some parents *loose control over child's education*, as parents accept that the child does not like to do the homework as well as they 'trust' others, mainly siblings.

DIFFERENTIALS IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HOMEWORK

Parent involvement tends to differ by grade level of the child (see for e.g. Jordan et al., 2001), and parent involvement decreases as children move into secondary school (Epstein, 2001). In Mongolia, it has been observed that parent involvement in education is reasonably good during the basic (1st-5th) grades, and from the 6th grade it decreases, but parents come back to the education of the child when he/she approaches the graduation, say the 9th grade, to prepare the child for enrollment in further educational institutions. In our survey, the level of parent involvement (in terms of involvement in homework) declines with increase in the grade level, despite slight increase for the 9th grade (Figure 2)ⁱ. These correlations are statistically significant for both checking homework ($\rho=0.295$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed) and helping with homework ($\rho=0.280$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed).

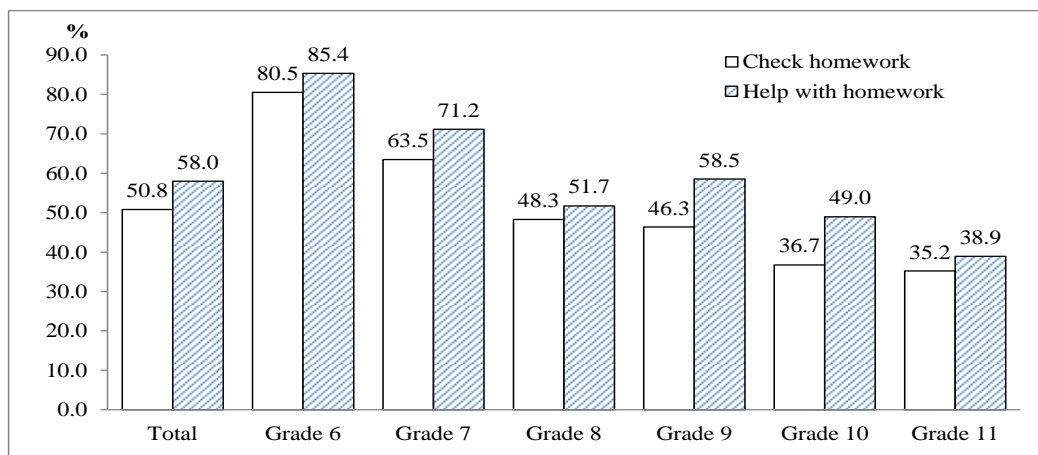


Figure 2. Parent involvement in homework, by child's grade level, Mongolia, 2015-2016

Parent involvement tends to differ by family's socioeconomic status. The low levels of parent involvement was found among low income parents (see for e.g., Cooper, 2010). Location in UB can serve as an approximate indicator for the household socioeconomic status. UB is divided into two locations: UB center and Ger district. Households in Ger district in UB live in ger (traditional tent) as well as in small houses which are not connected with centralized

ⁱ 'Check homework' refers to parents who check and help with homework without being asked ($\chi^2(5, 295) = 27.4$, $p=0.000$ for grade and check homework), and 'help with homework' refers to parents who check and help with homework without being asked plus parents who help the child when he/she asks for help ($\chi^2(5, 295) = 26.9$, $p=0.000$ for grade and help with homework).

sewage system. In UB, 29.0 percent of households live in Ger district (NSO & UNFPA, 2011a:236). In our survey, 56.3 percent of parents live in UB city center and the remaining 43.7 percent of parents live in Ger district (Table 1 in Appendix). In Mongolia, the level of parent involvement in homework is lower among parents who live in Ger district (48.4%) than those who live in UB center (65.1%) (Figure 3)ⁱⁱ.

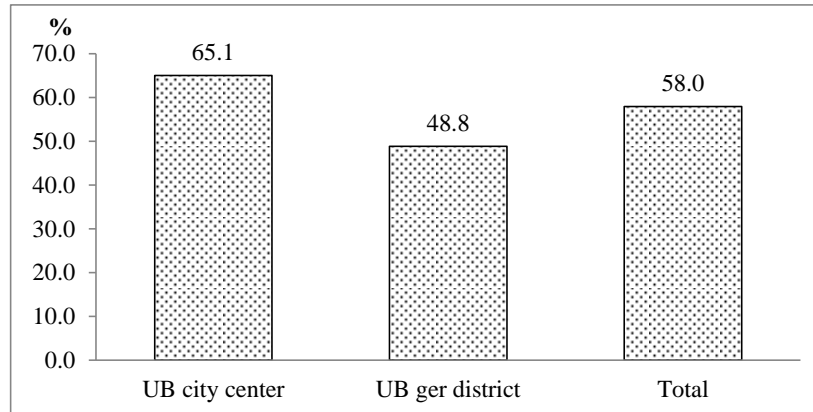


Figure 3. Parent involvement in homework by location in UB, Mongolia, 2015-2016

The educational level of parents is positively related with the parent involvement in education (Deslandes et al., 1999; Caspe, 2003; Dauber and Epstein, 1993). In our survey, this correlation was found (Figure 4)ⁱⁱⁱ, except for parents with non- and basic education^{iv}. In the case of basic education, mother's involvement in homework was higher by 10 percentage points than that of father's. Mothers are more involved in homework than are fathers (Deslandes and Cloutier (2000) quoted in Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). In our survey, mothers (62.7%) are much more likely to work with the child than fathers (11.9%) (Table 1 in Appendix). However, in the case of complete secondary, technical and vocational, and master degree and above, father's involvement is greater than mother's involvement.

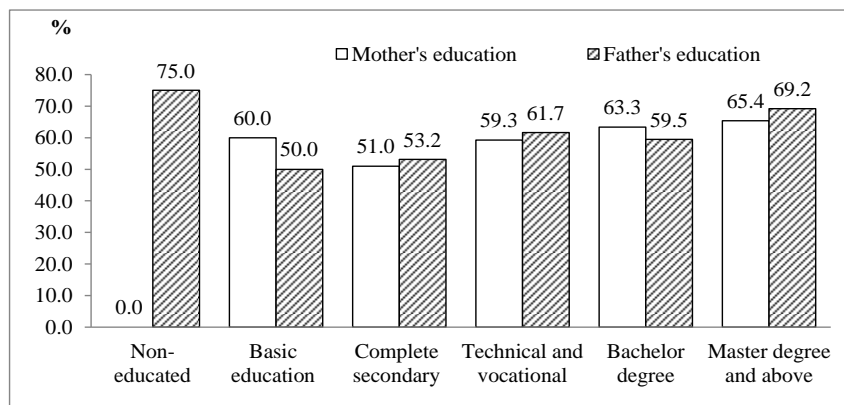


Figure 4. Parent involvement in homework, by education level of parents, Mongolia, 2015-2016

Parents who do not work outside the home are more likely to be involved in education of the child (Eccles and Harold 1996). Also mothers who work part time are more likely to be

ⁱⁱ $\chi^2 (1, 295) = 7.841, p = 0.005$ for UB location

ⁱⁱⁱ $\chi^2 (5, 288) = 5.512, p = 0.357$ for helping with homework and mother's education, $\chi^2 (5, 274) = 2.910, p = 0.714$ for helping with homework and father's education

^{iv} In Mongolia, due to universal coverage of basic education during socialism, the share of non-educated persons are small. According to 2010 census of Mongolia, in UB, 3.7 percent of persons aged 10 years and above was non-educated, 19.9 percent have basic education, 40.8 percent complete secondary, 8.5 percent technical vocational, 27.1 percent bachelor and above (NSO & UNFPA, 2011b:34).

involved than full time working mothers (Miller 1995). In our survey, 17.6 percent of fathers and 20.4 percent of mothers were not employed^v (Table 4 in Appendix). Unlike what was found elsewhere, in our survey, both employed fathers (58.9%) and mothers (59.0%) are more likely to be involved in homework of the child than those who are not employed (Figure 5)^{vi}.

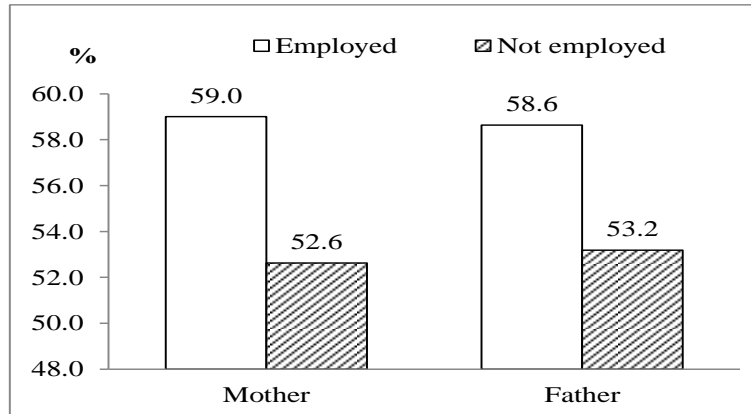


Figure 5. Parent involvement in homework, by employment of parents, Mongolia, 2015-2016

Furthermore, not employed mothers (52.6%) are slightly less likely to be involved in homework than not employed fathers (53.2%). Mothers might have different reasons to keep them busy, like responsibility for younger siblings, and household chore. The poor involvement in homework of child of not employed parents, who presumably do not spend time for earning money, suggest that it can be associated with overall poor socioeconomic status of parents, poor education, poor role construction, etc. In our survey, there was a case that the teacher found number of unemployed adults, including parents, staying at home when she once visited the home of the child whose parents never come to the teacher-parent conferences due to ‘no time’.

In order to have a deeper look at socioeconomic status of parents, questions on industry and occupation were asked from employed parents. In Mongolia, livestock rearing is the major and the traditional type of agriculture^{vii}. In UB, people who engage in livestock rearing keep their livestock outside the UB, and therefore, they are likely to be separated from their families. In rural areas, households which engage in livestock rearing are splitted into two: some part live in some centers to keep the child in school, and the rest live in rural areas to engage in livestock rearing (NSO & ADB, 2004). Due to the household separation, parent involvement in schooling among livestock breeders are likely to be weak, mostly leaving the child with relatives and siblings. The level of parent involvement in homework was the lowest among both fathers (20.0%) and mothers (14.3%) who work in agriculture (Table 4). On the other hand, the highest level of parent involvement was found among parents who engage in electricity, gas and water supply as well as in education.

^v According to 2010 census, in UB, 37.0 percent of all persons aged 15 and above were unemployed (NSO & UNFPA, 2011c:53).

^{vi} $\chi^2(1, 267) = 0.47, p = 0.493$ for helping with homework and father’s employment, $\chi^2(1, 279) = 0.756, p = 0.385$ for helping with homework and mother’s employment.

^{vii} In 2015, agriculture accounts to 13.1% of GDP of Mongolia. Estimated in September 2016 from table retrieved from <http://www.1212.mn/statHtml/statHtml.do>

Table 4. Parent involvement in homework (%), by industry of parents, Mongolia, 2015-2016

	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	20.0	14.3
Manufacturing	40.9	62.5
Electricity, gas and water supply	72.2	71.4
Whole sale and retail trade	66.7	57.1
Transport, storage and communications	57.9	100.0
Public administration, defense and compulsory social security	66.7	59.1
Education	100.0	68.4
Total	59.3	59.5

Note: Categories with number of observations fewer than 9 are deleted.

χ^2 (14, 189) = 21.1, $p = 0.099$ for helping with homework and father's industry

χ^2 (12, 200) = 14.293, $p = 0.282$ for helping with homework and mother's industry

People who work in higher positions are more likely to be busy, and therefore, they are less likely to have time to work with their children. Similarly, informal workers are more likely to work for longer hours than formal workers, doing moonlighting. In our survey, mothers who work as legislators, senior officials and managers (57.1%) and as informal workers (55.9%) are less likely to help the child with homework than professionals (64.5%) and craft and related workers (62.5%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Parent involvement in homework (%), by occupation of parents, Mongolia, 2015- 2016

	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>
Legislators, senior officials and managers	72.7	57.1
Professionals	57.1	64.5
Service workers and sales workers	57.1	52.6
Craft and related workers	70.0	62.5
Plant and machine operators, assemblers	55.6	100.0
Other, including elementary workers	44.9	56.7
Informal workers	69.5	55.9
Total	59.3	59.5

Note: Categories with number of observations fewer than 10 are deleted.

χ^2 (11, 189) = 11.356, $p = 0.414$ for assist homework and father's occupation

χ^2 (10, 200) = 12.186, $p = 0.273$ for assist homework and mother's occupation

The lowest level of parent involvement in homework was found among mothers who work as service and sales workers (52.6%), and among fathers who work as elementary workers (44.9%). In general, parent involvement in homework by industry and occupation suggest

that parents with the lowest and the highest socioeconomic status are less likely to help the child with homework.

The child achievement is the outcome variable of parent involvement. In general, parent involvement has positive effects on children’s academic outcomes (Dearing et al., 2006; Hayakawa et al., 2013; Marcon, 1999). In other words, parents of high achieving children are more likely to be involved in education than do the parents of low achieving children (Eccles and Harold, 1996). In our survey, children whose parents help with homework have slightly greater score of assessment (mean score=2.3) than the children whose parents do not help with homework (mean score=2.1). (See Table 6 and Figure 6.)

Table 6. Student achievement, by helping with homework, Mongolia, 2015-2016

	<i>Help</i>	<i>Do not help</i>
Mean	2.3	2.1
Median	2	2
Variance	1.3	1.2
Std. Deviation	1.1	1.1
Minimum	0.0	0.0
Maximum	4	4
Interquartile range	1	2

Note: F Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances= 0.216, p= 0.642

t test for Equality of Means =0.96, df=253, p=0.338

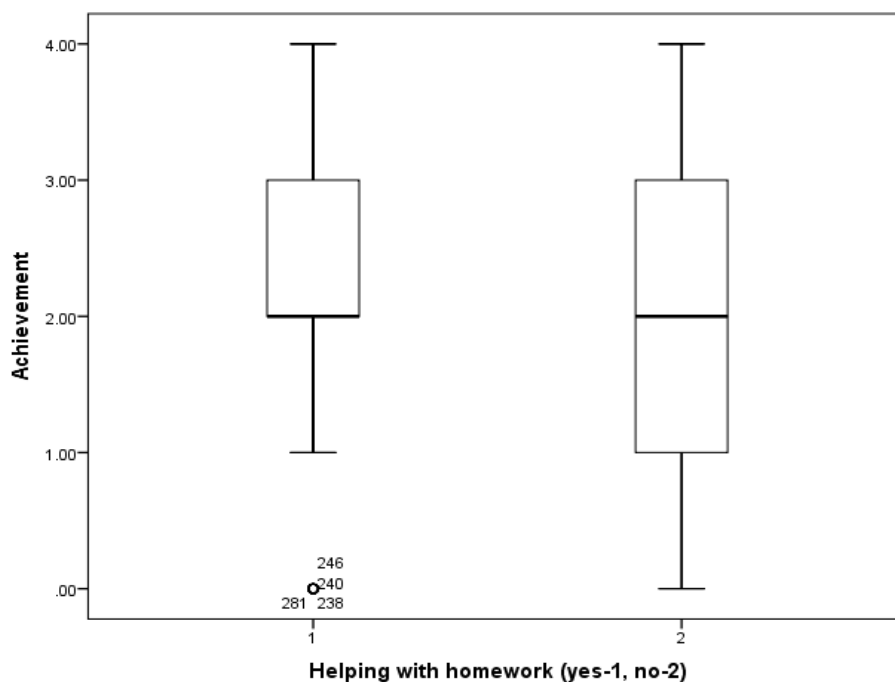


Figure 6. Student achievement, by helping with homework, Mongolia, 2015-2016

However, the shape of box plot and the interquartile ranges suggest that the achievement of children who receive help from parents with homework is much better than those who do not. The interquartile range of achievement of children who receive help from parents is twice

lower than those who do not. The 50 percent of children who receive help from parents have the achievement score of 2.0- 3.0 while the 50 percent of children who do not receive help from parents have the achievement score of 1.0-3.0. Moreover, the longer lower tail of the box plot for children who do not receive help from parents with homework suggests that they are much more likely to have lower achievement score than 1.0.

CONCLUSION

This descriptive research, although covered small population, defined the level of parent involvement in education in Mongolia. The research covered Grades 6-11 of secondary schools in UB, which are selected conveniently. From parents point of view, the level of parent involvement in education of the child is very high in Mongolia, as almost all parents believe that they fulfill their essential role in education by meeting all needs necessary for education (96%). This high level of parent involvement in education declines by almost 40 percentage points if we look at actual behavior of parents. Only 58 percent of parents involve in education of the child, helping the child with homework. This 40 percentage points gap between parent's assumption about and action on involvement in education gives parent's *non involvement in education*. Parents do not involve in education of children because they 'trust' others: the child, the school (especially the private schools with high costs), the siblings and others. Moreover, parents *lose control over the child's education* as parents accept if child does not like to do the homework. Also there is a risk for parents to *mistakenly believe that the child is doing well with education* if he/she does not like having help from parents. These findings call for in-depth study on child school engagement.

Furthermore, in our survey, 1/5 of all parents stated that their children do not engage in any household work, like cleaning and cooking, to have time to the homework. It suggests parent's *wrong involvement in education* of the child. Also parents do involve *wrongly in homework* as parents themselves do the child's homework on his/her behalf.

Parent's *non- and wrong involvement in education* suggest that there is a need to train and promote parents on proper involvement in their children's education. Training for and promotion of parent's involvement in child's education is essential because parents are likely to face a risk to grow up a poor educated but spoiled 'outwith and money' –minded person, by not actually involving in education and not asking them to do any work but meeting all needs, and buying everything what the child asks for.

This research studied differentials in the level of parent involvement in homework of the child by selected characteristics. As elsewhere was found, the level of parent involvement in homework declines with increase in grade level. However, it increased slightly for Grade 9, suggesting parent's awareness of preparation of the child for further education.

Furthermore, parent involvement in homework was poor among population with lowest and highest socioeconomic status in Mongolia. The level of parent involvement in homework is greater in UB center than in the UB suburb. It is lower among poor educated and unemployed parents. Moreover, some employed parents are less likely to involve in homework of the child. The level of parent involvement in homework is low among parents who work in agricultural sector, who are likely to reside outside the UB. It is low among fathers who work as elementary workers, plant and machine operators, and assemblers, and among mothers who work as informal workers, and service and sales workers, who are likely to work for longer hours.

In our survey, about 1/3 of children do not have comfortable environment at home to do the homework. It includes households which have vulnerable, unemployed and alcoholic parents

as well as violent situation. In other words, there is a risk to grow up poor or non- educated person out of each of three children who are attending the schools. Therefore, schools and teachers need to study different types of parents and to develop special programme for different types of parents with special needs to promote parent involvement in education of the child. More importantly, findings of our survey suggest that there is a need to conduct in-depth study on parent involvement in education in Mongolia.

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