

Parental involvement in the schooling of their children in Caño Negro, Costa Rica.

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Date: 20- 06- 2010

Abstract

This study examined how fathers and mothers in Caño Negro, Costa Rica, are involved in the schooling of their children at primary school. It was examined in which way parents take care of their children, interact academically with their children and have contact with the school. Differences between fathers and mothers were explored as well as the influence of the different variables: level of education, working conditions and gender roles. The results show mothers are more involved than fathers, for which the task divisions between fathers and mothers are highly responsible. Further, level of education was positively correlated with the level of academic interaction at home. Working conditions are also important but are not always significant related with the involvement of the parents. Findings are discussed with regard to former research and with regard to influences of gender role differences on the involvement of parents.

Introduction

The educational system of Costa Rica has got to deal with many different problems. Among these problems are things like high percentages of pupils dropping out of school, rejection of the education among pupils and teachers who teach without being authorized (Sandoval, 2006). These problems concerning education are the reason why the government and other people involved focus on the improvement of the quality of the educational system in Costa Rica. In his book 'La educación costarricense', Sandoval (2006) describes different strategies which are used to improve the quality of education. One of these strategies is the enlargement and improvement of the involvement and participation of parents with the education of their children. A strong commitment and involvement of parents to the schooling of their children is considered to be one of the features of the education of the future of Costa Rica (Sandoval, 2006). The participation and involvement of parents are a way to construct a better connection between the curriculum and methods used at school and the social economic and cultural world of children's everyday life. Especially in rural areas this connection is missing. The reason for this failing connection is that the knowledge which is taught to the children at school, focuses on the lifestyle of children in urban settings. Because of this, the knowledge does not fit to the perception of children living in rural areas. If parents participate in the educational system this could lead to an integration of the way in which children learn in informal settings and the topics relevant to them, within the formal education. Consequently, the gap between school and everyday life will become smaller. The improvement of this connection will enlarge the relevance of formal education to the children

which will improve their motivation, decrease their rejection of the education and decrease the amount of pupils dropping out of school. Parent participation thus, can be used to solve certain problems regarding education (Ooijens, 2006).

Participation of parents at school is a part of parental involvement in their children's schooling (Hossain & Shipman, 2009). Parental involvement is much more comprehensive than just the participation of parents at school. Other parts of parental involvement are for example the way in which parents stimulate their children at home to do well at school and the way in which they help their children and talk to their children about things related to school (Hossain & Shipman, 2009). Research shows that parental involvement with the schooling of their children is positively related to the achievement, motivation and behavior of children at school (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasproy & Fendrich, 1999; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000, Harris & Goodall, 2008; Arends-Kuenning & Duryea, 2006; Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991). However, there is lack of research about the way in which parents in Costa Rica are involved in the schooling of their children. Since parental involvement is a subject with great emphasize in Costa Rica, and besides, the positive relation found between parental involvement in the schooling of their children and the improvement of children's achievement, motivation and behavior at school, it is of great importance that the way in which parents in Costa Rica are involved in their children's schooling becomes clear. Only when this is clear, it is possible to intervene in a way that fits the situation. This is the subject of the present study. The aim of this present study is to describe the way in which parents are involved in de schooling of their children in Caño Negro, Costa Rica. This study will provide more information about parental involvement. Not only for this specific situation, but it will also enlarge the intelligibility about parental involvement in Hispanic cultures in general and the influence of different factors on parental involvement, such as task divisions between fathers and mothers.

Theoretical background

Parental involvement: a definition

Parental involvement is a concept which is commonly used. During many years of research this concept has been used in many different ways and with many different definitions (Georgiou, 1997). Because of this, it is important to give a clear definition of this concept, which will be used in this present study.

A model which is commonly used as a conceptual framework to assess parents' involvement with children is Lamb's three-prong model of involvement (Lamb, Pleck,

Charnov, & Levine, 1987). The three parts of the model are engagement, accessibility and responsibility. Engagement points to the direct interaction between parents and their child by means of taking care of the child and join in shared activities. Accessibility is very closely related to engagement and means that it must be possible for a parent to engage with their child to make this interaction happen. If a parent does not have the time to play with his or her child, it will not happen, because the parent is not accessible. Responsibility means that it is a parents duty to make sure that his or her child is been taking care of. It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that all resources needed for the child are available, like a dentist or a nanny (Lamb et al., 1987). Based on this conceptual framework Hossain and Shipmen (2009) constructed four categories which can be used to describe parental involvement in the schooling of their children. These four categories are: 1. basis care, 2. care on demand, 3. academic interaction at home and 4. school-related parental involvement. These categories will each be further explained.

- Basic care: this points to the daily interaction between the parents and the child. It means parents assist their child with daily hygiene and appearance. Another thing which belongs to basic care is that parents and their children join in shared activities and that parents give attention to their child. Basic care is a necessary condition for the child to be able to go to school and perform (Hossain & Shipman, 2009).

- Care on demand: whereas basic care is assumed to be extended on a daily basis, care on demand is only provided when necessary. It means the parents buy clothes and other materials for their children, go with them to the dentist and doctor when the situation asks for it and other similar situations (Hossain & Shipman, 2009).

- Academic interaction at home: this kind of interaction arises when parents become involved in things of school at home. It means that the parents help their children with homework, buy school materials for the child, discuss the school progress with the child and arrange a tutor for the child (Hossain & Shipman, 2009).

- School-related parental involvement: this means that parents get into contact with the school for purposes like communicating about the child's academic progress. Another part of this involvement is the actual participation of the parents in activities at school (Hossain & Shipman, 2009).

The categories mentioned above show a clear relationship with the three-prong model of Lamb and colleagues (1987). All three parts can be recognized in the four categories. In this present study these four categories will be used as guidelines to describe parental involvement with the schooling of their children. However the emphasis is on the different

ways in which parents give meaning to this categories. The question is how they conduct at this different levels of parental involvement.

The importance of parental involvement

There are many studies which focus on the relationship between parental involvement and the achievement, motivation and behavior of children at school. Almost all of these studies show a clear relationship between parental involvement in the schooling of their child and a better achievement, motivation and behavior of the child. It turns out to be that the part of parental involvement with the most significant positive influence on performance at school is the involvement of parents with educational activities at home. This part of involvement is of greater influence than any other part (Izzo et al., 1999).

The pupils themselves also report that they notice this relation in their daily life (Harris & Goodall, 2008). They report being aware of the positive influence of the interest and involvement of their parents to their school performance and behavior. The pupils describe that when parents communicate with the teachers about their behavior and performance in school this is of positive influence on the way they behave at school and their thoughts about the importance of education. Pupils report that when parents are not involved and do not care about the way in which their children behave these children more often behave in an inappropriate way. The parents of these children do not encourage them to behave well, and do not punish when their children are acting bad. Pupils report that the knowing of being punished by their parents in cases of bad behavior at school is a reason for them to behave in a proper way. When parents are not involved, pupils report skipping classes to be a lot easier (Harris & Goodall, 2008). When parents are involved pupils also report more concentration and attention and a higher perceived competence. Furthermore, the involvement of parents seems to be positively related to the perceived control, self-regulation and a mastery goal orientation of the child. Pupils are more willing to learn, take more responsibility for their learning, are willing to challenge difficult assignments and are more satisfied with their schoolwork (Gonzales-DeHass, Willems & Doan Holbein, 2005).

However, despite all this great and promising results about the relationship between parental involvement and children's performance at school, there is also research which shows a different relation. Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) discovered that in some cases, parental involvement is of bad influence to children's performance at school. When parents are over controlling with the schoolwork of their children, this resulted in a greater dependency of the children to external resources. This was connected to lower marks and a

bad performance at school. Teachers report that these children are less autonomous, are less curious and interested in schoolwork, show less motivation and persistence and do not feel satisfied with their schoolwork: they work to please the teacher. The parents of these children sometimes even teach their children some kind of helplessness, as if the child himself/herself does not have any influence on their own performance (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993). It is also showed that when parents put a lot of pressure on their child, by way of trying to improve the results, most of the time the opposite effect can be expected (Georgiou, 1997). The explanation of this negative relationship will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Explanations of the relationship between parental involvement with their children's schooling and the school performance of the child.

There are many different explanations about the positive relationship between parental involvement and the school performance of children. A first explanation is that through their involvement, parents communicate strategies for effectively dealing with school to their children. Because of this, children will feel more competent about dealing with school. This enlarges their motivation and pleasure to do their school tasks (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

An other possible explanation is that the involvement of parents offers a sense of security and connectedness to the child. Because of this, children are able to survive in the unpredictable world of the school, which brings new challenges every day (Trusty & Lampe, 1997). The involvement of the parents helps the children to cope with these challenges, by way of parents setting limits and provide encouragement and support (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

A third explanation is that through their involvement, parents show their children how important education is to them. Children internalize these values, which enlarge their motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

However, although there are different possibilities to explain why there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and school performance, the negative relationship, which was found in the study of Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) should also be explained. Georgiou (1997) states that it is possible that parental pressure creates a kind of anxiety and stress within the child which decrease their possibilities to perform well. Besides the negative relationship between parental involvement and school performance found in the study of Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993), this study also showed that when parents encourage, support and praise their children with their schoolwork this is related to a better school performance.

It seems to be that when parents are over controlling and over involved this involvement is of negative influence. On the other hand, when parents are supportive and when they encourage their children, this involvement is related to better school performance.

There is one other explanation for the relationship between parental involvement and school performance which also should get attention. The different studies concerning the relationship between involvement and performance were all correlational. Because of this, it is possible that the relationship should be explained the other way around. It is possible that the motivation, behavior and performance of the child influence the way in which their parents are involved. This means for example that it is possible that the over involvement of parents is a reaction to children's low performance, instead of that it is the cause. Although it seems more plausible that parents influence their children, it is probably best to state that there is a bidirectional relation in which children and parents influence each other (Ginsburg and Bronstein, 1993).

Differences in parental involvement between cultures and between fathers and mothers.

Around the world there are many different ways in which people are involved in the education of their children. Different cultures show different ways of involvement. Harkness and Super (2006) state people everywhere around the world have different implicit ideas about what is good and right and about what is the best way to behave. This implicit ideas are called parental ethno theories. In this present study it is important to keep these ethno theories in mind. People from different cultures will show different behaviors, but in the minds of the people concerned, these are the best ways to handle. Research shows that there are many differences between people from different cultures in the way they are involved in their children's education (Hofferth, 2003). Besides, it even appears to be that there are many differences between fathers and mothers from the same family (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006; Tam, 2008; Hoffert, 2003; Hossain & Shipman, 2009; Hossain & Anziano, 2008).

Every found research which focuses on differences between fathers and mothers and their way of involvement with the education of their children shows that mothers are more involved than fathers (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006; Tam, 2008; Hoffert, 2003; Hossain & Shipman, 2009; Hossain & Anziano, 2008). To explain these differences it is probably best to look at the different roles mothers and fathers have within their culture. In almost every culture fathers are the ones who work and provide resources for the family, the mothers are responsible for the care-taking of their children (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006). Because of this mothers have much more accessibilities to interact with their children. As noted, this is one of

the three components of the three-prong model of Lamb and colleagues (1987) concerning parental involvement. It also appears to be that, when fathers participate in school-related activities, these are activities which are in line with stereotypes which state what is male and what is female. When fathers participate in activities, these activities most of the time have something to do with sport or security (Fletcher and Silverberg, 2006).

The way in which fathers are involved also differs between cultures. Hofferth (2003) shows that fathers from Latin America are less controlling than fathers from White families. It also appears to be that the fathers from Latin families as well as the fathers from Black families, show more responsibility than fathers from White families. On the other side, fathers from White, Black and Latin families do not differ in their warmth shown to their children (Hofferth, 2003). It appears to be that some cultures are more similar in the way and level of parental involvement than others (Hossain & Anziano, 2008).

Because of the differences between fathers and mothers found in previous research, this present study will focus on both the involvement of fathers and mothers separately.

Variables influencing parental involvement with the schooling of their children.

There are many factors which are of influence to parental involvement in the schooling of their children. The most important ones are education, working conditions and, with the eye on the Costa Rican situation of the present study, gender roles (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006).

Research shows there is a positive relation between the education of parents and the education of their children. The education of the parent has a positive impact on the enrollment and attainment on school of their children. The relation between mothers' level of education and school attainment is stronger than the relation of fathers' level of education (Arends-Kuening & Duryea, 2006). More specifically, parents with a higher level of education are more involved in school related activities (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). However, other than the study of Hossain and Shipman (2009), the study of Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs (2000) does not show a relation between the level of education of the parents and academic interaction at home. The reason for this difference might be explained because different instruments were used to measure parental involvement. However, besides the differences from different studies, there is a lot of data which support the relation between the level of parents' education and their level of involvement in children's schooling.

According to research of Harris and Goodall (2008) one of the most important reasons why parents cannot be involved in the schooling of their children is their lack of time because

of working conditions. Parents say their work takes up a lot of their time and availability (Harris & Goodall, 2008). However it is possible that this factor of working conditions is closely related to another factor, namely gender roles. In almost all families, one parent has the role of being the primary care giver. Mothers tend to take the role of the educator and fathers those of the provider. This could be explained by the social pressure for mothers, to confirm to expected roles of how a mother should behave. Society makes very clear what is the appropriate behavior for mothers. For fathers this pressure is much less, because there are no clear prescriptions about the appropriate behavior for fathers towards their children. However there are indications that this is changing (Fletcher & Silverberg, 1997). This factor of social pressure on gender roles might be of great importance in the situation of Costa Rica. In Hispanic cultures, males tend to interact according to the machismo tradition of being emotionally detached, masculine and dominating within the family. Whereas females tend to be the exclusive caretaker of children and are passively obedient (Penalosa, 1986, as cited by DeRosier & Kupersmidt, 1991).

The present study

The present study focuses on parental involvement with the schooling of their children in Caño Negro, Costa Rica. To describe parental involvement the four categories of Hossain and Shipmen (2009) based on the conceptual framework of Lamp and colleagues (1987) earlier explained will be used. The focus is on the way in which parents conduct within this different levels of parental involvement. The main question is not if parents are involved at this four different levels, but how.

Family is very important in Costa Rica, and parents are viewed as the most important providers for all positive qualities (DeRosier & Kupersmidt, 1991). Based on this, it is expected that parents will be very involved in the care-taking part of being involved in the children's live. This will mean, parents work to provide all basic care to their children. Besides parents are responsible for the child in case he or she is ill or injured or in the need of special things. The focus in this study will be on the typical actions parents show in the case of being involved in the caretaking part.

Parents' involvement on the level of academic interaction at home is expected to contain motivating the child, helping with homework, and socially supporting the child. This study will focus on this different conceptions, to see in what ways parents are involved in academic interactions at home.

In general it is expected that there will be very low to zero interaction between parents

and the school. This can be expected based on former research among Latino immigrants in the United States (Nicolau and Ramos, 1990, as cited by De Gaetano, 2007). This study showed there was very little interaction between parents and school. Since Costa Rica has a culture related to that of the participants in the study of Nicolau and Ramos (1990), it is expected that similar results will be found. This expectation is supported by Alpizar, Van Kampen and Barquero (2003) who describe in their book 'El docente rural en Costa Rica' that teachers in the rural areas in Costa Rica report a great diversity about the way in which parents are involved at school. These teachers estimate that almost eighty percent of the parents participate only a little of not at all in the school. Ways in which parents are possibly involved in the school are school related activities such as parent meetings. Also, it could be that parents talk to the teacher about the schooling of their children. This study will investigate the different ways of involvement of the parents with the school in Caño Negro, Costa Rica.

Furthermore, it is expected that mothers on the whole will be more involved in the schooling of their children than fathers (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006; Hossain & Shipman, 2009; Hossain & Anziano, 2008) Therefore this study will not only look at the different ways in which mothers and fathers are involved, but also at the factors that might explain this differences. Factors that will be taken into account are: level of education, working conditions and gender roles. It is expected that there will be a task division between mothers and fathers which will state that mothers are the primary caregiver to the children, whereas fathers are working and do not have a prescribed role towards their children (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006). This study will examine how this gender roles are reflected in this situation.

In short, the present study will investigate in which ways parents are involved in the schooling of their children. Next the differences between the involvement of fathers and mothers will be investigated. What is more, the influence of level of education, working conditions and gender roles will be investigated to explain possible differences within or between the sexes. Data will be conceived by way of interviewing the parents.

Method

Participants

This study was carried out in Caño Negro. This is a small village in the north of Costa Rica, close to the Nicaraguan border. There live approximately 50 families. People live from agriculture, livestock and tourism. Socioeconomic status is low, not all families have facilities of running water, electricity and gas. This place was chosen by an employee of the Ministry of Education, because of the housing facilities for the researchers and not because of the place itself.

The study participants consisted of 23 Costarican families. All families lived in Caño Negro and were contacted if they had at least one child in primary school. Families were identified and contacted through school and personal contact. Of the 25 mothers which were contacted, 23 participated in the study, which means that there was a response rate of 92%. In one case a grandmother participated in the study, because she was the one responsible for the child. In two cases mothers were not the biological mother of the child and in one case the father was not the biological father, but they did had the responsibility for the child. In two cases the fathers participated in the study, in the other cases, mothers were asked about the involvement of the fathers. Eighteen mothers were married, 1 mother had a partner and 4 mothers lived alone. It is remarkable that in three families, fathers did not live in the same house as the mother and the children because of working circumstances. This father only came home during the weekends and/ or holidays. Five fathers worked with the police, which means they work ten days and nights continuously, and ten days and nights they are free. This is of great influence for their time they are at home. One mother lived in another town because of her work and only visited her daughter during the holidays. The mean level of education was similar for the participating mothers and fathers (5,9 years vs. 6 years). Of the mothers 22% noted that they were not able to read very good or at all. For the fathers this percentage was 35%. Forty-eight percent of the mothers and 100% of the fathers worked outside home. All fathers worked in tourism, agriculture, at the police and one father worked as a teacher on secondary school. All working mothers cleaned houses, or worked in a store or tourism. Almost all families had the housing facilities of running water, electricity and gas. The facility of having a telephone lacked in many families. There were 33 targeted children, of a school of 54 children. Twelve children were female, 21 children were male. All children went to primary school in Caño Negro, the targeted children were almost equally spread

through all the classes. The mean size of children per family was 2.3 (SD 1.3) and the average family size was 4.2 (SD 1,2).

The chance that the present sample is selective is expected to be low. The parents who were interviewed have a very spread level of education. Some parents who were interviewed lived very close to the school, like just a few meters, others lived far away from the school, like more than a few kilometers. Besides, almost all people in town worked in agriculture, and the level of socio-economic status was very similar to all people. It is expected that this sample will be representative for all rural communities in the north or Costa Rica. This, because level of education, type of job and socio-economic status are almost the same for all this people. Therefore it is expected this people to be very much alike.

Procedures

All families with children going to the school in Caño Negro were contacted by way of a letter. The letter explained the subject of the study and informed the parents about the possibility that families would be asked to participate in the study. All parents were asked in personal if they wanted to participate in the interview. All parents were interviewed in their houses, at their work and in two cases in the house of the researcher. First the subject of the study was a second time explained and parents were asked if they agreed with it that the interview was recorded. All families were instructed that they had to respond to the questions in reference to the targeted child or children. Prior to the interview some personal questions were asked to be used as background information. The interview itself was semi-structured, and all interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Instruments

For this study a semi-structured interview was used. Prior to the interview a few personal questions were asked. This questions asked for years of education of father and mother, number of children, number of children going to primary school, size of the family and working hours and working circumstances of father and mother.

The interview itself was semi-structured, to make sure important aspects would not be forgotten. The interview was prepared with the use of the questionnaire “Vragenlijst project ‘School as Socializing Agent’ 2008” (De Haan & Wissink, 2008). This is a large questionnaire which is normally used to investigate parental involvement in school as well as daily life among immigrant parents in the Netherlands. Of this questionnaire, the questions concerning involvement of parents with the schooling of their children were used in the

present study. The other parts of this existing questionnaire was not of direct relevance for the present study, therefore this questions were not used.

Furthermore the Parent Involvement Questionnaire was used to formulate more specific questions about parental involvement. The Parental Involvement Questionnaire is based on the four categories of parental involvement of Hossain and Shipman (2009), earlier explained. These four categories were also used in this present study to formulate interview questions. The formulated questions were used as guidelines through the interviews to make sure all the important information was conceived. The questions used for the interviews can be found appendix 1. To check the relevance and clarity of the developed questionnaire a pilot was conducted with one family. The pilot showed that some questions needed some clarification and one question had to be reformulated. Furthermore the family was comfortable with the questions.

Analyses

For the analyses of the interviews, all interviews were written out and the program MAXQDA was used to analyze the data. This analyses was used to get clarity in the different ways and behaviors of parents in their involvement with the schooling of their children.

To say something about the extent of involvement in the four different levels of parental involvement stated before, the qualitative data obtained with the interviews was transformed into quantitative data. This was done by way of making a five point scale ranging from 1- very low involvement till 5- very high involvement for the variables of basic care, special care, academic interaction at home and school-related involvement. Parents were allocated to a different scale on basis of their time spent in a specific level of involvement. This was done for fathers as well as mothers. For example, father 4 did not spend any time in academic interaction at home, therefore he was allocated to a scale 1. This quantitative data was used to get statistical results.

The working conditions of the parents, which are expected to be of influence to the involvement of the parents, were also divided into 5 scales. This variable looks at the extent in which work influence the availability of parents at home, dependent on the hours parents need to work and the distance between work and home. The scales ranged from 1- easy working conditions, into 5- very tough working conditions. Easy working conditions means work does not hinder parents in the availability of doing other things. These parents work short hours and/ or live close to home. Very tough working conditions means parents have to work long

hours, and/ or live far away from home. For the variable of level of education, the amount of years was used as a measure.

Results

The results are presented in four sections. The four sections will show the results of parental involvement at the levels of respectively basic care, care on demand, academic interaction at home and school-related parental involvement. Within each section the differences between fathers and mothers will be presented and the influence of the variables of gender roles, level of education and working conditions on the involvement of the parents will be taken into account.

Parental involvement at the level of basic care.

The data shows that basic care for this sample has to be divided into a part of practical care and financial care. Three fathers did not show any responsibility in the care of their children. In all other cases, the fathers were responsible for the financial income of the family, which made the practical care for the children possible. Although 48% of the mothers had a job, the father had the task of the breadwinner. Of the three single mothers, two mothers were responsible for the financial income themselves, one mother was financially aided by her family.

Practical care can be divided into a nurturing part and a part of giving attention to the child. All mothers mentioned that they were involved in both ways. This means they make breakfast and dinner, make sure the child goes to bed and wake up their children in the morning. Mothers also mentioned to give a lot of attention to their children, which included talking to the children, join in activities and raising them. One mother said her own mother, the grandmother, was more responsible in the nurturing part of her sons than she. The mother said, this was because she had to work all day. One other mother said her older daughter had a large part in giving attention to her younger daughters and raising them. This mother also said this happened because she herself and her husband had to work.

Fathers were very little involved in the nurturing part. Only 6 fathers had a nurturing task. These fathers made breakfast for their children once in a while and made sure their children have all they need. Fathers however do give a lot of attention to their children, except for the three fathers who did not have any attention for their children at all. This attention ranged from talking over the telephone, to join activities and raising the children.

When taken a look at the variables that might influence to level of involvement it turns out to be that the way in which fathers were involved in the practical basic care is highly related to their working hours and conditions such as the distance between their work and home. The correlation between working conditions of the fathers and their involvement in giving attention to the child is $\rho(20) = -.545$, $p < .05$. The correlation between working hours of the fathers and their involvement in nurturing their children is $\rho(20) = -.513$, $p < .05$. Both correlations indicate that the more difficult and of more impact the working conditions are, the lesser the level of involvement. For the mothers, there is no significant correlation between working conditions and giving attention. However the relation between working conditions of the mother and nurturing the children is $\rho(23) = -.595$, $p < .01$. This means that mothers with more difficult working conditions are less involved in nurturing their children. Level of education is not significant related to the practical involvement of either fathers and mothers. Gender roles however, do also seem to play an important role in the involvement of fathers and mothers in the level of basic care. One mother says about this:

“We have different tasks. My task is a lot more difficult and harder, his is much easier. However, he does always show attention to his children. But I have the part much more difficult. Right here the mother has a greater job, always.” (Mother 16).
(“Tenemos partes diferente. Yo tengo la parte mas dificil, mas dura, el es mas suave. Sin embargo tambien el siempre tiene atencion por su hijo. Pero yo tengo la parte mas dificil. Aqui la mama es mas en todos, siempre.)

This quote shows how the tasks are divided between fathers and mothers. Although this separation is not black-white, this quote does shows mothers have a greater task in the daily and basic caretaking of the children.

Parental involvement at the level of care on demand.

Parents in this sample gave meaning to care on demand by way of taking care of the child when he or she was ill or injured and making sure their children had all they needed. The care consist of going to see a doctor in case necessary, staying home to take care of the child or by administer the stuff the child needs in a particular moment, such as materials for school. Mothers, however, do declare they spend more time taking care of their children in case they are sick or injured. This is for example shown by the fact that mothers take the day off in case this is necessary, fathers do not. This difference might be explained by the gender role division. Mothers report that taking care of the children is primarily the task of the mothers. One mothers says about this subject:

“Here it is always the mother responsible for the children, because the fathers are working and are not able to help. The mother takes care for the child, the mother is running. It is ‘mama here, mama there’, and it is the mother who gives attention to the child in case he/ she is ill or injured.” (Mother 4).

(“Aqui siempre en general la mama esta responsable por los niños, por que los padres trabajan y no pueden ayudar. La mama cuidar la niña, la mama corre es ‘mama aqui, mama alla’ entonces para mi, la mama esta quien prestando atencion a un niño cuando esta enfermo o herido.”)

This quote shows a clear division between the role of the father and the role of the mother.

Another mother says something about it which shows a more equal role between father and mother, she says:

When I am not home, because I did not know my son was sick or something ... however, right here it is always the mothers who knows what to give and what not. So I tell my husband what he can give to my son dependent on what he has, pain or flu. Normally I have something for children, which is green, and so I tell my husband what he needs to give and how much. Because the fathers, they do not know this. But in reality it is a task of both. Always my husband and I.” (Mother 21).

(“Si yo no estoy por que no sabia que el esta enfermo o algo asi ... bueno normalmente las mamas sabemos que lo dar y que no entonces yo lo dijo que el puede dar para lo que tenga, dolor en la cabeza o fiebra. Normalmente tengo algo que es para niños que es verde entonces dijo que tiene que dar y cuantos. Por que los papas no sabemos este pero es un trabajo con junto en realidad. Tanto mi esposo como yo.)

This quote shows a more equal task for fathers and mothers, although it also still shows a greater task for the mother. It is the mother who says and knows what needs to be done. So although both are responsible, the mother still has a greater task. Level of education is not significant related to the involvement in special care, for neither fathers nor mothers.

Some mothers report that other family members also play a role when a child is sick. They say that grandmothers and other siblings sometimes take care of their children when both parents are unable to do so themselves.

Parental involvement in the academic interaction at home.

Parental involvement in the academic interaction at home are divided in the following categories: support, control, motivation and practical help.

Academic interaction by way of support means parents try to be a good example to their children, make sure their children are ready in the morning to go to school, try to make

the situation at home applicable to the school, and offer financial support. All mothers and 87% of the fathers report being involved in this way. The fathers who are not involved in this interaction are the same fathers as those who do not interact at the level of basic and special care.

The control part of academic interaction at home means parents control their children on going to classes and control if their homework is done. Parents also report controlling the behavior of the children at school. One example of how parents try to make sure their children act well at school is by way of little presents. One mother reports giving their son little rewards in case he conducted well at school, and drop the reward in case he did not.

Motivating the child means, parents try to make their children realize school is important and teach them a sense of responsibility. Parents try to make their children aware by way of talking to them and being a good example. Mothers report they feel like their children do become more motivated when they talk to them about the importance of education. Education is seen by the parents as a preparation for a job and necessary for a good life.

Practical help refers to helping children with their homework, explaining the subject material and seeking for extern information to help the child understanding what should be learned. All mothers report being involved in this practical help. However it seems to be that the way in which mothers are able to help their children is closely related to their own level of education. It turns out that there is a high correlation between the level of education of the mother and the level in which they need to search for help with other people to explain the homework of their children ($\rho(23) = -.863, p < .01$). There is no significant correlation between working hours of the mother and asking other people for help. The people who are asked for help are always higher educated than the mothers, or have a better knowledge of the English language. Working conditions of the father as well as the level of education are not significant related to asking other people for help.

One mother reports that sometimes it happens that parents do not help their children. She says:

“It is a great problem that mothers say they never have time. Children need time of their mothers. But it is a horror that the children just play and play and play. Is this normal? No. The mothers are just working and working and working, and the children are just playing, playing, and playing. And this is very bad.” (Mother 16).

“Eso es un problema muy serio que aveces ellas dicen no tengo tiempo siempre, pero los niños necesitan tiempo de las madres. Pero es un horror que los niños solo van a jugar, solo van a

jugar. ¿Es normal? No. Las madres solo trabajan, trabajan, trabajan, y los niños jugando, jugando, jugando. Y eso es muy mal.”)

This quote shows working conditions are blamed to interfere with the possibility to interact, also in an academic way, with the children. However, this statement is not supported with a significant correlation between working conditions of the mothers and academic interaction with the children. For fathers this correlation does is significant $\rho(20) = -.518$, $p < .05$, which means that more difficult working conditions lessen the academic interaction at home.

For both fathers and mothers there was found a significant correlation between level of education and academic interaction at home, for fathers: $\rho(23) = .471$, $p < .05$, and for mothers: $\rho(23) = .627$, $p < .01$. This means that a higher level of education is related with more academic interaction at home.

School-related parental involvement.

There is a great difference between fathers and mothers at this level of involvement with the schooling of their children. All mothers report having contact with the school, while 55% of the fathers do not have any contact with the school. Mothers report talking to the teachers (100%), going to meetings for the parents (61%), clean the school (17%) and participate in a parent team which organizes activities for the benefit of the school (17%). The school-related involvement of the fathers consist of having contact with the teacher, in personal or by way of telephone, and two fathers sometimes join in school-related activities. This shows mothers are much more school-related involved than fathers. According to the parents, the reason for this difference is that fathers need to work all day and therefore do not have the possibilities to get involved in school-related activities and contact. After tested this statement it turns out to be that there is no significant correlation between the working hours and conditions of the fathers and their level of contact with the school. On the other hand there is a modest correlation between years of schooling of the fathers and their level of contact with the school $\rho(16) = .516$, $p < .05$. There is no significant relation between level of education and contact with the school for the mothers, also not for the working hours.

Gender roles do seem to play a role in the differences between fathers and mothers in their level of involvement with school related activities. To the question why fathers and mothers differ in their school related activities one mother says:

“I think it is just a bad habituation . I go to the parents meetings. He never has the interest to go there. It is a bad habituation because only the mothers go to the parents

meetings. Yes, here it is a bad habituation. And also, when there are problems, it is also me going. Although he does support me.” (Mother 16).

(“Pienso que es un mal acostumbro. Yo voy a las reuniones ya ... eso es. El nunca tiene la interés para ir a las reuniones. Es un mal acostumbre por que solo las mamás van a las reuniones. Si aquí es una mal acostumbre. Y también, siempre cuando hay problemas siempre voy yo. Pero él siempre apoya.”)

Another mother says about the differences between her husband and she in the involvement in school related activities:

“No, he does not go to the reunions, only I. No, because he has to work from seven till four. Because of this he cannot go to the parent meetings, only I. I have more responsibility, so I go. I am the representative in the school.” (Mother 19).

(“No, él no va a las reuniones, solo yo. No, por que tiene que trabajar desde las siete a cuatro entonces no puede ir a las reuniones, solo es yo, tengo mas responsabilidad entonces yo voy, yo soy la representante en la escuela.”)

Both these quotes show mothers have a bigger role, a greater task, in school related activities than the father. Especially the first quote shows there are some kind of unwritten rules about who goes and who not. The mother in the second quote also says she is one more responsible when it comes to school related activities. These quotes clearly show that there are gender roles concerning this subject, which influence the level of involvement of both father and mother.

Discussion

This study examined how parents in Caño Negro, Costa Rica, were involved in the schooling of their children. Thereby it studied how fathers and mothers differ in their involvement, and the role of the variables of level of education, working conditions. The influence of gender roles was considered. The findings suggest that mothers are more involved than fathers in all different ways of involvement, which is in accordance with former research including Tam (2008) and Hofferth,(2003). Mothers are the ones more responsible when it comes to daily basic care. This is the main task of the mothers. Although fathers do give attention to their children, the nurturing part is the task of the mothers and only very little of the fathers. The most important variable which can explain this difference are probably the gender roles. When it comes to care on demand the task of fathers and mothers are more equal. Both the parents are responsible in this case. They take their child to the doctor, give medicines, and help their child to get well again. Although both fathers and mothers are

responsible, mothers do declare they spent more time nursing the child and have more responsibility. Academic interaction at home means parents support their children, motivate them, help them with their homework and problems and control their children. Level of education is closely related to the way in which parents are involved in this academic interaction. The higher the level of education, the more parents are involved. Furthermore it turned out to be that a lot of parents were not able to help their children with the homework. In these cases they asked other people, more educated, to help their children. School related involvement is the kind of involvement which shows the largest difference between fathers and mothers. Mothers talk to the teachers, go to parents meetings, join in parental groups and clean the school. The majority of the fathers does not have any contact with the school. Fathers who do have contact, speak to the teachers once in a while. This difference is probably explained by the current gender roles which indicate that mothers are the ones who have contact with the school, fathers do not. Results found in this study are in accordance with Lamb's three-pong model, which was earlier explained (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). Almost all parents suggest they do feel responsible, but because of a very low accessibilities there is little interaction (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987).

This study shows the importance of gender roles. Since there is not a lot of research which focuses on this roles and their influence, more research is needed to investigate more precisely how gender roles influence parental involvement. Although former research of Harris and Goodall (2008) shows that working conditions are the main reason to explain why parents are not involved in the schooling of their children, results from this study seem to indicate that more important than working conditions are the gender roles. The results of this study show that for fathers there is a relation between working conditions and their involvement in academic interaction at home, however this relation does not exist for mothers. This probably means that the task division between fathers and mothers which state that fathers should work and mothers take care of the children, is more important in the understanding of the level of parental involvement and the differences between fathers and mothers. Although literally working conditions are related to the level of involvement, it is important to keep in mind that the underlying explaining factor are the task divisions between fathers and mothers.

The results found in this study contribute to a better understanding of parental involvement in Costa Rica, but also in Hispanic cultures. Although it is necessary to examine the representativeness of this study.

To improve parental involvement different things can be done. Most important is that the contact of the fathers will be improved. Furthermore it is important to take into account that these persons do not have money and little time. The following strategies (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006) are low-cost activities which the community and the school itself can arrange, without any help of the government

- Changing meeting times to evening, so that fathers also can participate and do not have to work.
- Organize parent – child activities, especially father – child activities. Such as sport activities.
- Contacting parents, and especially fathers, in person to ask them to participate in activities.
- Organize community dinners with the children, parents and teachers. This will create an informal setting where parents and teachers can talk to each other.
- Use newsletters of the school to inform parents about the things which are going on in the school and inform and invite parents about coming activities.

Things the government can do to improve parental involvement with the schooling of their children are:

- Parenting program which focuses on the improvement of the involvement of especially fathers.
- Inform parents about the importance of their involvement.
- Investigate how parents want to be involved.

This study has some limitations. One limitation that the data obtained is based on the opinion of the parents. It could be that parents have a different view on what they do, than the way they actually behave. However, informal observations do confirm the data. Furthermore, giving the small size of the research sample, it is difficult to say for which population the conclusions of this study are representative. These limitations aside, the current findings provide some base-level data that appear worthwhile to report in our attempt to better understand fathers' and mothers' engagement with school-age children in Costa Rican families. For future research it is important to examine if parents in the city are involved in a different way than in the rural areas. Furthermore future research should focus on the influence of gender roles. This study did show there is a relation, but the exact impact of this relation is still unclear. What is more, these gender roles are probably changing because of Western influences (Fletcher & Silverberg, 2006), it is interesting to examine how this gender roles change and how this influence the behavior and involvement of the parents.

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Appendix 1 The interview

Entrevista con los padres

1.1 ¿Cómo está interesado en la educación de su hijo?

1.2 ¿Crees que es su:

- responsabilidad que su hijo va a la escuela a tiempo?, ¿qué hacer al respecto?

- Tarea para controlar y vigilar: control de las tareas, mantener un ojo en las cifras
- Tarea para ayuda con los deberes.
- Tarea para anime a su hijo a hacer correctamente su mejor.

1.3 ¿Usted y su esposo tienen la misma tarea en este?

2.1 ¿Quién es responsable por el cuidado diario de su hijo, incluyendo el suministro de alimentos a diario y prestando atención? ¿De cómo hacer esto en la práctica?

2.2 ¿Usted y su esposo tienen la misma tarea en este?

3.1 ¿Quién es responsable para ayudar a su niño en los casos que piden una atención especial? Por ejemplo, si su niño está enfermo o herido?

3.2 ¿Usted y su esposo tienen la misma tarea en este?

4.1 Cuando, por ejemplo, su niño viene a usted y dice: mamá tiene un problema por que no entiendo algo en escuela. ¿Cómo usted reacciona?

5.1 ¿Cree usted que es su responsabilidad para de tener contacto con la escuela? ¿De cómo hacer esto en la práctica?

5.2 ¿Usted y su esposo tienen la misma tarea en este?

6.1 ¿Crees que la escuela es importante?, ¿por qué?

6.2 ¿Usted muestra esto a su hijo?, ¿cómo?

6.3 ¿Usted y su esposo tienen el misma tarea en este

7.1 ¿Qué crees que es la razón que usted y su esposo se diferencian en la participación en la educación de su hijo?

Nederlandse samenvatting

Ouderlijke betrokkenheid bij de scholing van hun kinderen is belangrijk vanwege de positieve invloed van deze betrokkenheid. Onderzoek laat zien dat ouderlijke betrokkenheid de motivatie van kinderen op school verhoogt, en de prestaties en het gedrag van kinderen op school verbetert. Ouderlijke betrokkenheid heeft daarnaast in Costa Rica nog extra belang aangezien de overheid heeft aangegeven een hoge ouderlijke betrokkenheid als factor te zien in de verbetering van het onderwijs in het algemeen. Dit onderzoek richt zich op het onderzoeken van de manieren waarop ouders betrokken zijn. Daarbij zal er gekeken worden naar de verschillen tussen vaders en moeders en de invloed van verschillende variabelen op deze betrokkenheid. Deze variabelen zijn het niveau van educatie van ouders, de taakverdeling tussen vaders en moeders in de betrokkenheid bij de kinderen, en de werkomstandigheden van de ouders. Er werden 23 moeders geïnterviewd, aan wie bij afwezigheid van de vader bij het interview, gevraagd werd naar de betrokkenheid van de vader. Van de 54 kinderen die naar de basisschool in Caño Negro gingen werden van 33 de ouders geïnterviewd, een ruime meerderheid. Er wordt verwacht dat de steekproef representatief is voor alle ouders van Caño Negro en daarnaast ook voor omliggende dorpen. Dit, omdat werkomstandigheden, de sociaaleconomische status, de culturele achtergrond, niveau educatie en taakverdeling tussen man en vrouw hetzelfde zijn voor deze regio.

Uit het onderzoek komt naar voren dat moeders en vader erg verschillen in hun betrokkenheid bij de scholing van hun kinderen. Waar moeders de zorgende taak voor de kinderen op zich nemen, hebben vaders de taak om te zorgen voor het inkomen van het gezin. Deze verzorgende taak houdt in dat moeders verantwoordelijk zijn voor de dagelijkse verzorging van de kinderen, door het klaarmaken van eten, op bed leggen en wakker maken van de kinderen en het geven van aandacht door met kinderen te praten en samen activiteiten te doen. Hoewel vaders niet de verzorgende taak op zich nemen, geven ze wel ook aandacht aan hun kinderen. In gevallen dat speciale verzorging nodig is, hebben moeders ook de hoofdverantwoordelijkheid, hoewel ook de vaders hierbij helpen. Deze speciale zorg bestaat uit het naar de dokter gaan, geven van extra aandacht, geven van medicijnen en moeders geven aan thuis te blijven van hun werk. Zowel moeders als vaders helpen hun kinderen ook met hun scholing in huis. Deze hulp bestaat uit het motiveren van hun kinderen door het belang van onderwijs te laten merken en het belonen van positieve dingen en straffen van negatieve dingen. Verder controleren ouders hun kinderen in het naar school gaan en maken van huiswerk. Bij het huiswerk proberen ouders hun kinderen ook te helpen, hoewel dit niet

altijd mogelijk is, omdat ouders zelf niet altijd over de benodigde kennis beschikken. In geval ouders zelf niet kunnen helpen, geven ouders aan hulp bij andere mensen te zoeken die wel in staat zijn om te helpen. Ook in de hulp bij scholing thuis zijn moeders meer betrokken dan vaders. Als het gaat om het contact van ouders met de school blijkt uit de resultaten dat vaders zeer weinig tot geen contact met de school hebben. In de weinige gevallen dat vaders wel contact hebben bestaat dit uit het praten met de meester of juf over de voortgang van hun kind, 2 vaders gaven aan af en toe te helpen bij school gerelateerde activiteiten. Moeders hebben meer contact met de school. Alle moeders praten met de juf of meester over de voortgang van hun kind. Verder gaan moeders naar contactmiddagen voor ouders en zijn ze betrokken bij activiteiten van school. Deze activiteiten zijn er meestal op gericht op geld voor de school te verzamelen. Moeders regelen deze activiteiten, zorgen voor drinken en eten tijdens de activiteiten of zijn alleen aanwezig.

Als het gaat om gerelateerde factoren die invloed hebben op de betrokkenheid lijkt met name de taakverdeling tussen man of vrouw van belang te zijn. Moeders hebben grotere verantwoordelijkheid voor de kinderen dan vaders. Hoe deze taken precies verdeeld zijn en hun invloed moet echter nog verder onderzocht worden. Verder blijken werkomstandigheden gerelateerd te zijn aan de tijd die ouders besteden aan de betrokkenheid bij hun kinderen. Hoe zwaarder en langer de werkomstandigheden, hoe minder tijd voor de betrokkenheid. Als laatste is het niveau van educatie gerelateerd aan de mate waarin ouders hun kinderen helpen en kunnen helpen bij scholing thuis. Hoe lager het niveau van educatie, hoe lastiger het voor ouders is om hun kinderen te helpen en hoe minder ouders hun kinderen helpen.

Om ouderlijke betrokkenheid te verbeteren zijn er de verschillende aanbevelingen opgesteld. Mogelijke verbeteringen die door de gemeenschap zelf tewerkgesteld kunnen worden zijn:

- Veranderen van de tijd van ouderbijeenkomsten, van de middag naar de avond zodat vaders ook aanwezig kunnen zijn.
- Organiseren van ouder – kind activiteiten, in het speciaal vader – kind activiteiten. Zoals sportactiviteiten.
- Persoonlijk benaderen van ouders, in het speciaal vaders, om te vragen of ze willen participeren in activiteiten.
- Organiseren van buurttentjes, waarbij kinderen, ouders en leerkrachten aanwezig zijn. Dit zal een informele sfeer creëren waarbij het echter goed mogelijk is om te zorgen voor contact tussen ouders en leerkracht.

- Gebruiken van een nieuwsbrief van school om ouders te informeren over de gang van zaken op school en uitnodigen voor activiteiten.

Verbeteringen waarbij hulp van overheidsinstanties nodig zijn:

- Verrichten van onderzoek naar de manier waarop ouders betrokken zouden willen zijn.
- Bijscholing van de ouders (mogelijk door te participeren in het onderwijs van hun kind).
- Geven van voorlichting over het belang van ouderlijke betrokkenheid.
- Oudertrainingsprogramma dat zich richt op de verbetering en verhoging van ouderlijke betrokkenheid, voornamelijk van vaders.

Verder onderzoek zou zich moeten richten op de precieze invloeden van de taakverdeling tussen vaders en moeders. Daarnaast moet onderzoek verricht worden naar ouderlijke betrokkenheid in de stad, aangezien dit mogelijk verschilt met ouderlijke betrokkenheid in rurale gebieden.

English summary

Parental involvement with the schooling of their children is important because of the positive influence of this involvement. Former research shows that parental involvement increases the motivation, and improves the performance and behavior of the child at school. Further, parental involvement is of extra importance for Costa Rica, because the government of Costa Rica tries to improve the educational system by way of improving parental involvement. This present study focus on the way in which parents are involved in the schooling of their children. Besides, it shall focus on the differences between fathers and mothers, and the influence of different variables on parental involvement. This variables are: level of education of the parents, task division between fathers and mothers concerning the involvement with the children, and work circumstances of parents. Twenty-three mothers were interviewed. In case fathers did not participate in the interview, mothers were asked about the involvement of the fathers. Of the 54 children who went to the primary school in Caño Negro, the parents of 33 children were interviewed, the greater part. It is expected that this sample is representative for all parents in Caño Negro and surroundings villages. This is expected because work circumstances, socioeconomic status, educational level and task divisions between fathers and mothers, are the same for these people.

The results show that fathers and mothers differ a lot in their involvement with the schooling of their children. Where mothers have the task of taking care of the children, fathers have the responsibility to ensure the income of the family. This caretaking role means that mothers are responsible for the daily care of the children, which includes preparing food, laying the children in bed and awake them, and give them attention by way of talking to them and join in activities. Although fathers do not share a lot of time in this caretaking task, they do give attention to their children. In cases of special need mothers have the main responsibility, although the fathers do help and support a lot. Special care means parents take their children to the doctor, give them extra attention and medicines and mother stay home from their work. When it comes to academic interaction with the children, both fathers and mothers try to help. This help consists of motivating the children, show the importance of education to the children and reward positive results and punish negative things. Furthermore, parents control their children to make sure they go to school, and have their homework done. Parents also help their children with the homework, although this is not always possible because of a lack of knowledge of the parents. In case parents cannot help their children themselves they ask other, more educated, people to help. Mothers have a lot

more contact with teachers and spend much more time in school-related activities than fathers. The results show that fathers have very little to no contact with the school. In the few cases where fathers do have contact this contact means they talk with the teacher about the progress of their child. Only two fathers said they occasionally help with school-related activities. Mothers have more contact with the school. All mothers talk to the teacher about the progress of their child, go to reunions for parents and are involved in activities of school. These activities are usually aimed at collecting money for the school. Mothers participate in this activities by way of regulating drinks and food.

When it comes to related factors which affect involvement, the task division between mothers and fathers, seems to be particularly important. Mothers have greater responsibilities for the children than fathers. The division of these tasks and their influence should be further investigated. Furthermore, working conditions appear to be related to the time parents spend with their children. The heavier the working conditions, the less involved the parents are. Finally, the level of education is related to the degree in which parents help their children with their schooling. The lower the level of education, the harder it is for parents to help their children.

In order to improve parental involvement, the following recommendations were set up. Possible improvements which can be done by work of the community itself are:

- Changing the time of parents meetings from the afternoon to the evenings so that fathers also have the possibility to come.
- Organize parent- child activities, especially father- child activities. For example sport activities.
- Personal approaching of the parents to ask if they want to participate in activities.
- Organize community dinners where children, parents and teachers come together in an informal environment. In this scenario it is possible for parents and teachers to talk to each other and get to know each other.
- Using a school newsletter to inform parents about the affairs at school and inviting parents for activities.

The following recommendations need to be supervised by a governmental institution or something similar.

- Investigate the way in which parents would like be involved.
- Training of the parents (for example by way of participation of the parents during the classes).
- Provide information about the importance of parental involvement.

- Innovate a program for parents which focuses on improving and increasing parental involvement, particularly of fathers.

Further research should focus on the precise influence and effects of the roles of fathers and mothers. Furthermore, research should be conducted for parental involvement in the city, as this situation may differ from this present study and therefore may come with very different results.