INvolving PARENTs Through HOMework
– SOME CRITICAL ISSUES OUT Of PUPILS’ PERSPECTive

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Previous research has provided evidence on the positive correlations between parents’ active engagement in their children’s schooling and better outcomes and behavior of their children in school (Cooper et al, 2006; Epstein, 2001; Erikson, 2004; Högdin, 2006; Ravn, 2005). Within this research field, homework is one area that has been emphasized in order to closely study on parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling. Recently, in line with the Swedish discourse on involved parenthood, both pedagogical and social implications of homework have been stressed. However, in this area, there is an absence of research on if and in what way the existed homework routine in Swedish schools improves children’s learning and parents’ involvement. The central standpoint in this study is also the importance of listening to children’s own voices as co-creators of the social context where they live and act. This paper aims to describe and analyze pupils’ experience of doing homework and their views on parents’ support in homework in order to illustrate the relations/tensions between pedagogical and social dimensions embedded within homework. The empirical data was collected from a survey on 73 pupils and five group interviews with 6th grade pupils in five compulsory schools in one municipality located in the northern part of Sweden. A descriptive hermeneutical approach is applied in analysing the data intending to make explicit interpretations of pupils’ experiences and understandings on the phenomenon of homework. The result from both survey and interviews shows that most of the pupils have no motivation to do their homework because it merely repeats earlier assignments they have already completed. That is, their homework assignments do not challenge them in terms of their own knowledge, skills and learning styles. Homework often collides with their leisure time or after school activities, which has become a stress factor in a time perspective. They experience their parents’ care and assistance, but this kind of parental involvement is described as more like “control” than support. The lack of motivation and the “control” and stress factors usually lead to conflict with their parents at home. The study indicates that if schools wish to use homework to engage parents in their children’s schooling there are many questions and challenges the schools must face, including questions about what, how and why homework is organized as an adjunct to schoolwork.

Keywords:
Homework, Parents’ involvement, Pupils’ perspective.