CLOSING PUPILS' ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN MATHEMATICS THROUGH THE USE OF PREPARATORY HOMEWORK IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE

By

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Abstract

This study examined closing pupils' achievement gap in mathematics through the use of preparatory homework in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. The study adopted a pre-test, post-test control group quasi-experimental research design. Sixty five primary two pupils in both private and public schools in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State were selected to participate in this study, multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample. The research instrument titled Preparatory Homework Activities Pack (PHAP) and mathematics achievement test (MAT) was used for data collection. The reliability index of PHAP was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and it yielded (0.82). Seven

research hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance. Inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used. The finding revealed that preparatory homework has significant effect on pupils performance in mathematics. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made; Preparatory homework should be given to pupils who have strong and as well weak academic performance in schools, and 10 minutes rule of homework per grade should be observed by teachers and parents.

Keywords: Homework, Preparatory Homework, Achievement Gap

Introduction

Mathematics is a relevant subject to learners daily activities and it helps in building reasoning as well as cognitive development, other subject and field of study relay and draw their basic concept from mathematics, most especially science related field. This however may be responsible for the reason why mathematics is made a compulsory subject at all levels of education and a required subject to be passed at credit level before gaining admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria. At preschool and basic education level, the rudiment of mathematical concepts is of primary focus (Numeracy). Relevant research stated that achievement in mathematics can help children's performance better in releted subject and subjects alike. The huge benefit of good performance in mathematics makes it impossible to neglect learners' performance in mathematics but to find necessary medium to improve children achievement in mathematics, among mediums presented by educators is the use of homework.

Sulyman (2017) defines homework as all form of classroom related and non-classroom related activities assigned to learners by their teachers to be executed or completed outside the class which may include but not limited to quantity or period of reading to be performed, writing or typing to be completed, problems to be solved, a school project to be built (such as a diagram or display), or other skills to be practiced. It can also be seen as out-of-class tasks assigned to students as an extension or elaboration of classroom work (Sulyman, 2017). Homework is schoolwork assigned to pupils which are required to be executed, perform or done outside the classroom which is distinguish from classroom task. Homework, or a

homework assignment, is a set of tasks assigned to students by their teachers to be completed outside the class (Sulyman, 2017). Homework can also be defined as any task assigned by school teachers intended for pupils to carry out during non-school hours (Cooper, 1989). This definition explicitly excludes in-school guided study; home study courses delivered through the mail, television, audio or videocassette, or the Internet; and extracurricular activities such as sports and participation in clubs (Cooper, 1989). This means children have extra time to work on school activities at home which may greatly help children's learning.

Home work has enormous importance, among which includes; improving children's thinking and memory, developing children's positive study skills and habits, encouraging children to use time wisely, teaching children to work independently and take responsibility for his or her work, it also allows children to review and practice what has been covered in class and helps children to get ready for the next day's class: Home work also helps children to learn to use resources, such as libraries, reference materials, and computer Websites to find information and encourages children to explores subjects more fully than classroom time permits, it also allows children to extend learning by applying skills to new situations and integrate learning by applying many different skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or equation (E-School, 2010).

Researches has consistently shown that homework reinforces skills, concepts and information learned in classes, prepares pupils for upcoming class topics, teaches pupils to work independently and develop self-discipline, it encourages pupils to take initiative and responsibility for completing a task, it allows parents to have an active role in their child's education and helps them to evaluate their child's progress as well as relate what is learned in school to children's lives outside of school and helps to connect school learning to the real world (Cooper, 1989; Cooper, 2006; & Jennifer, 2019). Homework is an important extension of classroom learning, it helps to cement the ideas that children learn at school (or should be

learning!), helping things sink in further and expanding their knowledge (Rachel, 2019). Studyguide (2019) further reiterated that homework can improve the study habits of a learners, and through homework learners can create a good time management at home by keeping a good study schedule and still do other home activities that they want to do and shows that learning can not only happen in school but also anywhere. Despite these numerous importance of homework, there is an existing debate on the quantity and effect of homework (Sulyman, 2017). In the first camp is Harris Cooper, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University. Conducted a review of the existing research on homework in the mid-2000s, and found that, up to a point, the amount of homework students reported doing correlates with their performance on in-class tests. This correlation, found in the review was stronger for older students than for younger ones (cooper, 1989).

However, there are contrary opinions against homework; Joe (2019) reported that research on homework tends to focus on homework's quantity rather than its quality, because the former is much easier to measure than the latter. While experts generally agree that the substance of an assignment matters greatly (and that a lot of homework is uninspiring busywork), there isn't a catchall rule for what's best, the answer is often specific to a certain curriculum or even an individual student. Kids (2019) summarized the points against home based assignment to include that homework encroaches on important family time at home, also, many homework assignments are checked for completion and not for accuracy, they are seen as "busy work" if it does not relate closely enough to a specific lesson, for older children and teens, it can contribute to sleep deprivation and stress, and it lowers motivation and intrinsic interest in academic subjects. This study therefore shows weather home based assignments should be use or not and weather it can particularly improve academic achievement of less academically achieving learners by closing up pupils achievement gap.

For homework to be developmentally appropriate, Cooper in Janine (2019) a leading researcher on homework, has examined decades of study on what we know about the relationship between homework and scholastic achievement, and proposed the "10-minute rule," suggesting that daily homework be limited to 10 minutes per grade level. Thus, a 1st grader would do 10 minutes each day and a 4th grader, 40 minutes. The National Parent Teacher Association and the National Education Association (both in America) both endorse this guideline. For middle school students, Cooper and colleagues in Janine (2019) reported that 90 minutes per day of homework is optimal for enhancing academic achievement. Beyond this threshold, more homework may not necessarily contribute to learning.

According to Ogunsanwo (2003) and Sulyman (2017), there are three types of homework: practice, preparatory, and extension. Practice homework reinforces newly acquired skills. For example, learners who have just learned a new method of solving a mathematical problem should be given sample problems to complete on their own. Preparatory homework help learners to get ready for activities that will occur in the classroom. Learners may, for example, be required to do background research on a topic to be discussed later in class. Extension homework is frequently long-term continuing projects than parallel classwork. Learners must apply previous learning to complete this homework, which may include science fair projects and term papers (KidsourceonLine, 2009).

Cooper (2006) positioned that there are two types of homework based on purpose, these are instructional and non-instructional. The most common instructional purpose of homework is to provide the learners with an opportunity to practice or review material that has already been presented in class. Preparatory homework introduces material to help students obtain the maximum benefit when the new material is covered. Extension homework involves the transfer of previously learned skills to new situations. Finally, homework can require learners

to integrate separately learned skills and concepts. This might be accomplished through using book reports, science projects, or creative writing (Cooper, 2006).

Homework has other purposes in addition to enhancing instruction. It can be used to establish communication between the parent and the child (Sulyman, 2017), fulfil directives from school administrators and punish learners. Homework rarely reflects a single purpose. Rather, most homework's serve several different purposes; some relate to instruction, whereas others (non-instructional) may meet the purposes of the teacher, the school administration, or the school district. The degree of choice afforded a child refers to whether the homework is compulsory or voluntary. Related to the degree of choice, completion deadlines can vary from short term, meant to be completed overnight or for the next class meeting, to long term, with children given days or weeks to complete the task (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006). The focus of this study is on instructional type of homework and specifically on preparatory homework. Rosárioet al. in Minke (2017) further explained preparatory homework as a type of homework that focuses on preparing learners for the next lesson. This type of homework is designed to encourage learners' thinking about a previous topic discussed in class and prepare for future topics therefore improving their academic achievement.

Ricarda, Anja, Anne, and Linda (2017) define academic achievement as outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals which were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school. Pupil's performance in various subjects and areas is what contribute to academic achievement, a child achievement in various subjects has never been the same most especially in numeracy, as there are children who are performing very well, there are other children who are struggling in learning mathematics. Over the years, the disparity in children achievement is on the high side, results has shown a wider gap in children performance most especially in mathematics. This can be noticed in Nigeria common entrance results over the year which clearly shows the disparity in

pupils' achievement. In 2017 out of 78,378 pupils who participated in the exam, only two pupils scored 180% and above, with a significant numbers of pupils scoring below pass mark, in 2019, more than 80,000 pupils registered for common entrance examination and only about 6 pupils score about 190%, significantly high number of pupils scoring way below average, and two candidate scored just 1 mark out of 200 marks (This days, 2017; 2019). Pupil's performance at this level can be trace to learners performance at secondary school. Out of about 1,590,173 candidates that sat for 2019 examination (WAEC) in Nigeria, 822,098 were males while 768,075 were females, representing 51.70% and 48.30% respectively, In the breakdown of the results, "1,309,570 candidates representing 82.35% obtained credit and above in a minimum of any five (5) subjects, with or without English Language and or Mathematics, with about 20% failure rate which clearly shows the achievement gap. This study use homework as a treatment on learners with poor performance in mathematics in other to close pupils' achievement gap.

Achievement gap is the disparity in academic performance between groups of students, which may manifest in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college completion rates, among other success measures (Susan, 2011). GreatSchool (2014) opined that learning gap and opportunity gap are terms synonymously use with achievement gap and it refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of pupils, or same group of pupils such as white students and minorities, public and private school. Including less performing and high performing pupils, for example, pupils from higher-income and lower-income households. Achievement gaps may vary significantly in degree or severity from group to group or place to place, achievement gaps are defined by their consistency and persistence, achievement gaps are not typically isolated or passing events, but observable and predictable trends that remain relatively stable and enduring over time (GreatSchool, 2014). Achievement gap is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and

Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic white peers, and the similar academic disparity between; learners from low-income families and those who are better off, also in recent time on other achievement gaps, such as those based on sex, English-language proficiency, classroom performance and learning disabilities (Susan, 2011). Government all over the world have been making effort to close the gap one of which is No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which is aimed at closing achievement gaps among these various student groups, this study uses homework as a tool to close learning gap in the classroom.

In a study of 638 sixth-grade learners, practice and preparatory homework tasks showed impact on students' mathematic achievement (Rosárioet al., 2015, in Minke, 2017). learners were able to review the material covered in the future lesson from the textbook and write the main ideas covered in a note book to help prepare the students for learning. Kitsantas Cheema, and Ware (2011) in their study titled mathematics achievement: the role of homework and self-efficacy beliefs, examine how homework resources, mathematics self-efficacy, and time spent on homework impacted mathematics achievement across gender and ethnicity. The findings showed that achievement gaps diminished with the increase in availability and use of homework and the increase in mathematics self-efficacy. Increased in the proportions of homework time spent on mathematics homework were associated with a decrease in mathematics achievement. These findings suggest that educators should attempt to provide the resources for students to complete their homework and structure homework assignments accordingly. Interestingly, the findings also suggest that educators need to focus on enhancing self-efficacy with respect to mathematics for all students.

Also, researches as shown differences in academic achievement based on gender, Nnamani and Oyibe (2016) carried out a research on Gender and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Social Studies In Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State, the researchers found

out that there was a slight significant different in learners performance, AbduRaheem (2017) conducted a similar study; The Influence of Gender on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance In South-West, Nigeria in mathematics and ten other subjects, the study review that male student perform better in in mathematics and other science courses while female learners perform better in art courses exempt Yoruba. It is based on this that this study investigates how homework can be use as a tool to close achievement gap in the classroom, and to check if the effect homework have on closing achievement gap in mathematics will vary based on gender and school type. School type was also consider because of the difference observed by in researcher among public and private schools in respect to monitoring, structure and learning outcome.

Statement of the Problem

The continuous poor performance of some pupils in mathematics is becoming more alarming, teachers over the years have use some instructional measure to help close the gap, which has yielded little or no favourable outcome as the gap remain unclosed. It is based on this the research investigated the effect of preparatory homework on the academic achievement of pupils with poor performance in order to close the existing achievement gap in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested:

Ho1: There is no significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho2: There is no significant effect of gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho3: There is no significant effect of school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho4: There is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework and gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho5: There is no significant interaction effect of preparatory homework and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho6: There is no significant interaction effect of gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Ho7: There is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework, gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Methodology

This study adopted pre-test, post-test, control group, quasi- experimental research design. The factorial design of 2x2x2 was adopted to test the hypotheses for this study. The first two factorial levels include the experimental and control groups, the second factorial design level include gender male and female, while the last factorial level is school type which emphases both private and public schools.

Table 1: indicating the factorial design used in this study

Groups	**Pre test**	**Treatment**	**Post test**
Experimental Group	O_1	X_1	O_2
Control Group	O_3		O_4

Where:
0_1 – Pre-test of the experimental group, X_1 – Treatment for the experimental group, O_2 – Post test of experimental group, O_3 – Pre-test of the control group, O_4 – Post test of control group.

Table 2: Showing the factorial matrix

Treatment	**Pupils' Gender**	**School Type**	
		Private	**Public**

Preparatory Homework	Male
	Female
Control group	Male
	Female

The population for this study comprises all pupils in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State in both public and private school. Pupils in primary two class was chosen to participate in the research study. Four schools were selected as sample size. Primary two pupils' were chosen in each of the sampled schools. Multi stage sampling technique was used. The first stage involved the random selection of schools in the metropolis. At the second stage four schools were selected which include 2 public and 2 private schools. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting experimental group from each of the schools. Intact class was use as the final sample technique.

A researcher designed instrument tagged mathematics achievement test (MAT) was used for the purpose of data collection. Preparatory homework activities pack (PHAP) was given before class activities. The preparatory homework activities pack was the stimulus instrument. All the instruments were validated Mathematics achievement test (MAT) was subjected to reliability using test re-test method. A trial test was conducted and yielded 0.82, it was determined using Pearson product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT); this instrument was constructed by the researcher based on school activities. It consisted of two sections, A and B. section A sought for the demographic information of the participants such as gender, class, and age. Section B comprised of 20 multiple choice items. The instrument was scored manually, one mark was awarded for each correct answer and zero was awarded for wrong answer. The total mark that was obtainable was 20marks. Preparatory homework activities pack (PHAP): This instrument was used for the treatment by the researcher and research assistants in the experimental group. It consists of five topics, five sub topics on each of the topics, while the control group are given the regular activities and homework.

Results

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) showing significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected model	1261.705a	8	157.713	.491	.858	.064
Intercept	88175.022	1	88175.022	274.454	.000	.828
Pre-test	237.627	1	237.627	.740	.393	.013
Treatment	211.460	1	211.460	.658	.000	.020
Gender	599.219	1	599.219	1.865	.177	.032
School type	627.068	1	627.068	1.952	.168	.033
Treatment * gender	340.776	1	340.776	1.061	.307	.018
Treatment * school type	464.006	1	464.006	1.444	.234	.025
Gender * school type	116.195	1	116.195	.362	.550	.006
Treatment* gender * school type	115.591	1	115.591	.360	.551	.006
Error	18312.613	57	321.274			
Total	377889.000	66				
Corrected Total	19574.318	65				

a. R Squared = .064 (Adjusted R Squared = -.067)

Table 3 shows significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is a significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1,65)} = .658$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.02$). The effect size is 2%. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. In order to determine the magnitude of treatment size, table 2 presents the estimated marginal mean score.

Table 4: Estimated marginal mean score of main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics

Treatment	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	80.621[a]	7.320	56.732	73.734
Experimental	85.307[a]	5.067	58.127	74.680

Table 4 shows that children given preparatory homework had higher mean scores (mean = 85.307) than children exposed to just conventional homework (mean = 80.621).

Ho2: There is no significant effect of gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics

Table 3 shows the effect of gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is no significant effect of gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1,65)} = 1.865$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.032$). Therefore hypothesis 2 is not rejected.

Ho3: There is no significant effect of school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3 shows the effect of school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is a significant effect of school types on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1, 65)} = 1.952$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.033$). Therefore hypothesis 2 is not rejected.

Ho4: There is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework and gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3 shows the interactiveeffect of preparatory homework and gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is no significant effect of preparatory homework and gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1, 65)} = 1.061$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.018$). Therefore hypothesis 4 is not rejected.

Ho5: There is no significant interaction effect of preparatory homework and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3 shows the interaction effect of preparatory homework and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of preparatory homework and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1, 65)} = 1.444$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.025$). Therefore hypothesis 5 is not rejected.

Ho6: There is no significant interaction effect of gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3 shows the interaction effect of gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1, 65)} = .362$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.006$). Therefore hypothesis 6 is not rejected

Ho7: There is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework, gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics.

Table 3 shows interactive effect of preparatory homework, gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. The finding revealed that there is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework, gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics ($F_{(1, 65)} = .360$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta 2 = 0.006$). Therefore hypothesis 7 is not rejected.

Discussion of findings

This study revealed the following findings; the main purpose of this study was to investigate if the use of preparatory homework will have effect on pupil academic performance. To

achieve this, mathematics was used as a measure of performance. Also this research focuses on how to bridge achievement gap within a class and in various classes. Gender, and school type were used as moderating variable in other to certain school and gender bias. The findings revealed that there is a significant main effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics. This finding is supported by Cooper (2006) that preparatory homework perform an instructional function of helping learners to improve their performance by introducing material to help learners obtain the maximum benefit when the new material is covered. It also supports the findings of 638 sixth-grade learners,that were given preparatory homework, the tasks given showed impact on students' mathematic achievement (Rosárioet al., 2015, in Minke, 2017). Learners were able to review the material covered in the future lesson from the textbook and write the main ideas covered in a note book to help prepare the students for learning.

This study also revealed that there is no significant effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics based on gender, this indicate that though the treatment is effect but there was no different in the effect of the treatment on the bases of gender. This is not inline with the study conducted by Nnamani and Oyibe (2016); and AbduRaheem (2017). Nnamani and Oyibe (2016) carried out a research on Gender and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Social Studies in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State, they find out that there was a slight significant different in learners performance, while AbduRaheem (2017) conducted a similar study; The Influence of Gender on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance In South-West, Nigeria in mathematics and ten other subjects, the study review that male student perform better in in mathematics and other science courses while female learners perform better in art courses except Yoruba.

Other findings revealed that there is no significant effect of preparatory homework on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics based on school type, this indicate that though the treatment is effect but there was no different in the effect of the treatment on the bases of school type; that there is no significant effect of preparatory homework and gender on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics, this indicate that though the treatment has effect but when combine with gender, it does not has significant effect on the pupils academic performance in mathematics; that there is no significant interaction effect of preparatory homework and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics, this indicate that though the treatment is effective but when combine with school type, it does not has significant effect on the pupils academic performance in mathematics; that there is no significant interaction effect of gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics; and that there is no significant interactive effect of preparatory homework, gender and school type on the academic performance of pupils in mathematics, this indicate that though the treatment has effect on its own but when combine with gender and school type, it does not has significant interactive effect on the pupils academic performance in mathematics.

Conclusion

Learning is a continues process and the duty of a teachers and facilitator is to help learners to learn, all learners are capable of learning depending on approaches and method employed by the teacher, achieve gap keep widening in our classes the tasks of closing it lay on our teachers, preparatory homework as it has just been revealed is a good instructional strategies that can be employed in closing the existing achievement gaps in schools. Also the practice of giving homework should be understood by teacher and tailored to the intended purpose of homework.

Recommendation

This study thereby makes the following recommendations;

1. Preparatory homework should be given to both pupils who have strong and weak academic performance in schools.
2. 10 minutes rule of homework per grade should be observed by teachers and parents.
3. Homework should not only be based on practices.
4. Parents should be informed about pros and cons of homework and their duty while helping pupils with homework.

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