

# What are parents' attributions for their children's learning and how do they relate to parental involvement?

## Background and Rationale

Parental involvement in children's education is associated with positive academic and social outcomes. This project contributes to research into factors that may underlie levels of involvement. Research in Cyprus found that parents who attributed their child's school achievement to their own (parental) contribution tended to have higher levels of actual involvement in their child's education (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). This role for attributions has not been explored in the UK.

For Educational Psychologists, a better understanding of parents' attributions for their child's learning, and how this relates to their involvement, could help to inform the information we give to parents, and the variety of ways they can support schools and parents working together.

## Research Questions

1. **What** are **parent attributions** for their children's learning?
2. **How** are **parents** involved in their children's education?
3. Is there a **link** between attributions and involvement?

## Procedure

1140 parents from 5 primary schools were invited to respond to questionnaires. Responses were received from 139 parents. These were collated and reduced into specific factors using principal component analysis. The relationship between attributions and involvement was explored with multiple regression analysis.

## References:

- Fantuzzo, J.W., Tighe, E., McWayne, C.M., Davis, G., & Childs, S. (2002). Parent involvement in early childhood education and children's peer play competencies: An examination of multivariate relationships. *NHSA Dialog: A Research-To-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field*, 6, 3-21.
- Georgiou, S. (1999). Parental attributions as predictors of involvement and influences of achievement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69(3), 409-429.
- Georgiou, S., & Tourva, A. (2007). Parental attributions and parental involvement. *Social Psychology of Education*, 10(4), 473-482.

## Measures

**Parent Attribution Scale** A 20 item scale answered on a five point Likert Scale, based on scales used in research by Georgiou (1999) and Georgiou & Tourva (2007).

**Parent Involvement Scale** . A 23 item scale answered on a four point Likert Scale, based on scales developed by Georgiou & Tourva (2007) & Fantuzzo et al. (2002).

**Background information** relating to family and demographic factors was also collected.

## Implications for EP practice

- A role for supporting schools in raising awareness of parents' role and different ways that they can be involved.
- Supporting schools in strategically planning and evaluating different types of involvement and how to communicate with parents to increase likelihood of them responding/being involved.
- Promote programmes which provide strategies for parental involvement (e.g. Paired Reading) or support parents in developing a positive view of their involvement (e.g. VIG)

## Recommendations for future research

- Exploring the perspectives and experiences of parents least involved in their children's education.
- Explore teacher attributions for children's learning and how these may be different to parents.
- Evaluate specific interventions that schools run to promote parents' understanding of their role or to increase parental involvement.

## Results

### *Parent Attributions (PA)*

Child's motivation to learn and child's interest for the subject were the items considered most influential in learning. Chance/Luck was the item considered least influential. Four factors were identified and used in regression analysis: Child Effort, Child ability, Parent and family factors and Teachers (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's between 0.59 and 0.81).

### *Parent Involvement (PI)*

Parents were most involved in Parent-Teacher Evenings. Parents were least involved in activities related to school decision making and volunteering in their child's class. Five factors were identified and used in regression analysis: School work at home, general learning activities at home, School decision making, Communication and Volunteering with school and General rules and discipline (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's between 0.62 and 0.80)

### *What is the relationship between PA and PI?*

Attributions to the role of parent and family factors in children's learning significantly and positively predicted parental involvement in learning at home ( $B=0.31$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and school work at home ( $B=0.31$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Attributions to child's own effort were also a significant and positive predictor for parental involvement in learning and schoolwork at home ( $b=0.22 - 0.25$ ,  $p<0.05$  for both). Number of children in family was negatively associated with involvement in schoolwork at home ( $B=-0.22$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).