This paper aims at analysing the structural relationships among some latent and observed variables related to the assessment of written language performance in 139 fourth grade students of Elementary School selected from nine public schools of the northwest of Mexico. Questionnaires were also applied to the children’s parents and teachers. The resulting model confirmed the structure of five latent variables: Parents’ educational level, parents’ support perceived by the children, parents’ support perceived by the parents, and written language performance. Good convergent construct validity was obtained in each one of these variables. It was also found that the latent variable “parents’ support perceived by the children” and “parents’ support perceived by the teachers”, were significantly explaining the latent variable “performance in written language” (regression coefficients = 0.40 and 0.23). Furthermore, students’ performance in written language was explained in a significant way by the teacher’s self-evaluation about their knowledge and about teaching according to the Spanish language curriculum in fourth grade (agreement). No significant relationship between parents’ educational level and written language performance was found.

Key words: Parental support, reading, writing, structural Modeling, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Structural modeling of variables related to parental support in Mexican children’s performance on reading and writing

The learning processes and the functional domain of written language are both influenced by different contextual variables as well as by endogenous variables like the individual characteristics. Consequently, factors related to family environment, parents’ support, school, curriculum, teachers, cognitive and motivational students’ variables, and socioeconomic issues, among others, have an influence on students’ performance during family variables and students’ learning has focused on learning evaluations.

Previous research have emphasize on the relationships between aspects such as: Socioeconomic, educational and cultural level of families, parental support and implication on their children learning, expectations and beliefs of parents about their children learning and about the school (Bazán et al., 2003; Buckner et al., 2001; Burgess et al., 2002; Castejón and Pérez, 1998; Hawes and Plourde, 2005; Lazar and Weisberg, 1996; Fehrmann et al., 1987; Leseman and de Jong, 1998; Mella and Ortiz, 1999; Stroup, 2001; Tiedemann and Faber, 1992).

Among this kind of variables, parents’ support has been particularly considered a fundamental aspect in students’ education; it encompasses the commitment and implication of parents in school activities of their children, and time devoted in helping them in their homework, and has, thereby, a positive effect on students’ academic achievement (Becher, 1986; Fehrmann et al., 1987).

Parents’ support to the student learning and to his academic development implies a the set of family
members’ activities that aims at holding the school efforts to support those processes, and encompasses at least three aspects: 1) To provide assistance in homework or school tasks; 2) To provide or help students to find time and appropriated places for the study activities, and 3) to maintain regular communication with teachers and the directors of the school.

Different studies have demonstrated that parents’ support to their children’s schoolwork in the beginning of the literacy processes is a significant predictor of children’s performance in reading, writing and pronunciation tasks, as well as a good predictor of the development of habits and discipline in the study activity. Also, it has an important impact in parents’ implication with the development of their children in reading and writing (Andrews and Zmijewski, 1997; Bartau, 1997; Greenhough and Hughes, 1999; Halsall and Green, 1995; Leppänen et al., 2004; Leseman and de Jong, 1998; Song and Hattie, 1984; Steinberg et al., 1992; Thompsons and Binder, 2003; Stewart, 1995).

On the other hand, concerning the role of teachers, evidences show that instructional strategies, teachers’ experience, level of studies and curriculum domain, and variables associated to teachers’ self-esteem and self-expectations, are all importantly related to the students levels of performance (Bafumo, 2005; Bazán et al., 2005; Cole, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Findlay, 2005; Jacobson et al., 1992, 1992; Jinkins, 2001; Resnick and Harwell, 2000; Rowam et al., 2002). In like manner, conditions and factors of the school context appear to be significantly related to the students learning (Burcke, 1998; Cervini, 2003; Fidler, 2002; Myrberg and Rosén, 2001; OCDE, 2003; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Reimers, 2000; Reimers and Cárdenas, 2007; Schmelkes, 2003).

The present research has focused on four factors (constructs) as predictors of the students’ performance in written language evaluations within the school curriculum. These factors are: Academic level of parents, parents’ support (parental support) perceived by children, parents’ support reported by parents, and parents’ support perceived by the teachers. Additionally, an indicator of self-evaluation of knowledge about the curriculum of Spanish Language of the Ministry of Education (Public Education Secretary, SEP), as well as an indicator of the knowledge on the conceptual foundations and content of the Spanish Language program of the SEP, were included as predictors.

The teaching and learning of Spanish language is obligatory in Mexico, and are implemented following the plans and programs of the Public Education Secretary according to the characteristics of each region, to teachers’ characteristics and experience, and to the students previous knowledge. Since 1995, the plans and programs implemented in Mexico for teaching and learning Spanish language follow a functional and communicative approach with a strong influence of Constructivism; they constitute a work frame to organize instruction within the elemental schools of the country. In general, the curriculum of Spanish language encompasses six programs (from the first to the sixth grade of primary school) including four organizational components of thematic contents with its corresponding curricular goals or objectives, for instance: Oral expression, Reading, Writing and, Reflection on Language.

The scheme of the didactic organization of the subject matter Spanish Language is presented in Table 1. Four linguistic components suggested by the SEP are included for grades 1st to 6th of Primary School, as well as their subcomponents or general themes (Table 1).

Furthermore, the implementation in Mexico of the Spanish programs was complemented with governmental programs oriented to guaranteeing the teachers’ training by means of massive publication and distribution of printed materials and books, and with the free distribution of texts in agreement with the contents and the activities established in the programs of study and educational materials.

Then, It could be supposed that a good teacher’s knowledge of the curricular programs, contents and organization, and the knowledge of the instructional strategies and exercises proposed by the SEP, would have an impact on the classroom work of the latter, and consequently, on the students learning.

Regarding this aspect, it is important to develop studies focusing on the analysis of the relationships structured among different contextual and personal variables within the reading and writing field in elementary education level.

This research intends to test an structural model of the relationships between children performance in reading and writing tasks during achievement tests, on one hand, and on the other hand, several variables related to; (a) the perception of parents’ in children, teachers and parents, (b) the educational family level, (c) the teachers’ knowledge and use of the Reading and Writing Mexican Program (used as teaching strategies), and, (d) the indicators of teachers’ improvement, Hereby, the goal of the study was to establish the structural configuration among endogenous variables (such as children’s performance in written language exercises derived from the Spanish programs and school texts in 5th grade of Elementary School) and the hypothesised exogenous variables like parents and the educational levels of the parents and tutors of the students.

Using structural equation models to study the written language

The structural equation modelling (SEM) constitutes a (SEP), which are in turn, improved or complemented statistical methodology used extensively by researchers of the social sciences and behaviour due to its capacity to
Table 1. Contents’ organization of the Spanish language curriculum in México, from 1st to 6th grades (SEP, 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral expression</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Reflection about Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction during communication</td>
<td>Knowledge about written language and other graphic codes</td>
<td>Knowledge about written language and other graphic codes</td>
<td>Reflection about oral and written communication codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functions of oral communication</td>
<td>Reading functions, types and characteristics of texts</td>
<td>Reading functions, types and characteristics of texts</td>
<td>Reflection about the communication functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral speech, intentionality and communicative situations</td>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>Text production</td>
<td>Reflection about the information sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge and uses of different sources of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 quantify relationships between observed variables and latent variables or theoretical constructs (Bazán et al., 2006; Raykov and Marcoulides, 2000).

The use of the structural models has increased in the last decade, it had great impact in the study of written language, from basic applications, such as path analysis of relationships between context, task and personal variables with the performance of children in reading and writing (Aunola et al., 2002; Bazán et al., 2003; DiPerna et al., 2001; Leseman and de Jong, 1998; Leppänen et al., 2004; Mella and Ortiz, 1999; Muthén et al., 2003; Sénéchal et al., 2001; Tiedemann and Faber, 1992); furthermore it has been used for the structural modelling of relationships between different variables associated with reading and writing processes (Bazán et al., 2007; Georgiou, 1999; Koolstra et al., 1997; Lonigan et al., 2000; Purple, 1998).

METHODS

Subjects

Participants were 139 students (66 men and 73 women) of 4th grade coming from nine primary public schools of the southern State of Sonora, in the northwestern region of Mexico. 68% of the subjects (94 students) were 10 years-old in average, while 27% (38 students) were 9 years of age, and 5% (7 students) were in average (11 years old). Likewise, the parents of the students as well as nine teachers (one for each group) took part in the study.

Sample selection

The performance of 139 children was previously evaluated in a study concerning the construct validity of the instructional contents of Spanish Language, in two factors: Reflection about language, and reading and writing processes (Bazán et al., 2004). The schools were selected from centers located in the zone metropolitan.

Nine groups (one group per school) were selected in a non-probabilistic way, with the following criteria: The nine first school groups where a 4th grade teacher who had verbally manifested to work in his/her classes in, at least, a 90% of agreement with the plans and programs of the SEP. It is worthy to say that in the nine schools, the same study program were implementing, in which they were using the same school books and materials

Instruments and materials

Educational level of the parents

Educational level of parents was measured by means of a questionnaire encompassing four questions to be separately answered either by (both) parents, or by the child’s tutor, in order to determine: The total years of receiving education, total hours devoted to reading, and the total time devoted to read together with the family during the week.

Evaluation of parental support

Questionnaire about parental support perceived by the own parents

It is a four-question structured instrument to be completed by parents in order to explore the following issues: Parental support to the child while he or she is doing the homework; parents’ interest on the student’s academic progress in Spanish language subject matter; parents’ revision or checking the student’s notebooks and school books; and parents’ evaluation of the student’s level of mastery in the Spanish language domain. The questionnaire had to be answered either by the two parents, by one of them or by the children’s tutors. It included questions that required self-evaluation of the parent(s) or the tutor(s) in a 0 (never/nothing) to 10 (always/very much) scale.

Questionnaire of parental support perceived by the children

An adapted version of the previous questionnaire had to be completed by the children; it included the same four questions formulated to the parents, in order to obtain their perception about: Parents’ interest on the student’s academic progress in Spanish language matter; parents’ revision or checking the student’s notebooks and school books; and parents’ evaluation of the student’s level of mastery in the Spanish language domain. The same self-evaluation scale than in the case of parents’ questionnaire was used.
Table 2. Evaluation activities within reflection about language, reading and writing areas, and internal consistence indexes (Bazán et al., 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic component or factor</th>
<th>Exercises sets (Competences)</th>
<th>Number of tasks or exercises by set</th>
<th>Índice de consistencia interna (Coeficiente Alpha de Cronbach)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection about language</td>
<td>1. Transformation of sentences and appraisal of change direction</td>
<td>5 (five)</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Use of concordance of gender, number, person and time in sentences construction.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Interpretation and use of words and sentences using the syntactic - semantic meaning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Knowledge of the alphabet and use of the alphabetical order.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Stories composition or production (inventing and writing).</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Writing stories about personal experiences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and writing</td>
<td>5. Comprehension of informative texts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Comprehension of narrative texts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Writing an abstract from an informative text reading</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Writing the beginning of a story</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Elaboration of informative texts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Writing to communicate feelings, opinions and justifications</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire of parental support perceived by the teachers

In order to collect information about the parental support as perceived by the teachers, a record card form was used. The form had to be completed by the teachers. On the first column was registered the students’ names, while on the rest of the columns, teachers had to write, for each child, his or her opinion about the four mentioned variables (that is to say, parents’ interest on the student’s academic progress in Spanish language matter; parents’ revision or checking the student’s notebooks and school books; parents’ evaluation of the student’s level of mastery in the Spanish language domain). The same indicators of parents used with children and parents were provided to the teachers.

Teachers’ questionnaire of self-evaluation on curriculum knowledge

The questionnaire focused on the self-evaluation of the teachers in the areas of the knowledge and coherent instructional use of the SEP programs at teaching Spanish language in fourth grade. The two first questions aimed at determining the use of a 0 (nothing) to 3 (completely) scale, the teachers’ self-assessment of their knowledge about the curriculum plans, and how much they used in implement their instructional strategies in correspondence with the latter. Finally, eight more questions were constructed using a likert scale and evaluated as 3 (always), 2 (almost ever) and 1 (never).

Procedure

Written language performance

It was analyzed in terms of the results obtained by the students at a previous study about convergent and divergent validity of this construct (Bazán et al., 2004), that yielded in turn from an exploratory and confirmatory factorial analysis, which showed two factors or linguistic components (constructs): Reflection bout language and reading-writing processes, by means of the structural equation analyses realized using the statistic program EQS 6.1 (Bentler and Wu, 2002). Covariance index between the constructs was 0.54 and demonstrated acceptable construct divergent validity. Besides, the model reported by Bazán et al. (2004) also showed an acceptable construct convergent validity.

For the present study two indicators were analyzed. The first one is the average score obtained by the students in the solution of six sets of exercises on Reflection about Language. The second one is the average score obtained by them in six sets of exercises on Reading and Writing. Children’s answers were collected during each one of the activities or exercises, and evaluated using a 0 - 4 scale (where 0 meant “do not write any answer” and 4 meant “the answer shows the 100% of the criteria used in evaluation”). Table 2 shows the organization of the evaluation’s tasks in the 12 sets encompassed in the two factors or linguistic components (Table 2).

Administration of the questionnaires to the teachers

During the individual administration of questionnaires, each teacher participant in the study was asked to give his or her opinion about four indicators of the support provided by the parent(s) or the tutor(s) to their child.

During a subsequent session they were asked to fill a questionnaire of self-evaluation bout knowledge and correspondence between their instructional strategies and practices and the Spanish Language Program of 4th Grade (SEP).
Administration of the Parental Support Questionnaire to the students

The students received a questionnaire aiming at exploring their perceptions of parents’ support to their academic development in Spanish Language area, administered during a ten minutes session.

Administration of a parental support questionnaire to children’s parents

Questionnaires were sent to the students’ parents or tutors in a closed envelop, and were returned by them within seven to twelve days period. Each questionnaire included questions related to the variables mentioned before: Educational level, time devoted by parents to reading, time devoted by family to read in the family, as well as four questions concerning the support that parents supply to their children’s learning and development in Spanish language academic subject matter.

All the answers were evaluated according to measurement categories and criteria previously specified. Two independent observers, which passed training in order to work with the measurement categories and criteria for each instrument, were carried out in the registers. The reliability index among observers was 0.85. An experts’ panel clarified disagreements among them.

RESULTS

Written language performance

Concerning the results related to children’s performance in the two linguistic components analyzed (Reflection about Language, and Reading - Writing), Table 2 shows that the average scores obtained by the students are similar in Reflection about language (x = 1.88) and in Reading and writing (x = 1.88). No significant differences were found respect to the linguistic component nor the issues related to the schools participating in the study or gender (Table 3).

Parental support

The perception of the parents or tutors’ support, and their interest on children’s learning and domain of written language were analyzed using four indicators and three information sources or factors (children, parents and teachers). Table 4 presents the Cronbach’s alpha indexes to establish the internal consistence for each factor (following the information source). The table shows that (regarding the three factors related with the perception of parents according to the information source) a better internal consistency is obtained for the factors concerning parents’ self-evaluation and teachers’ perception of parents. The variable “Parents support to their children in homework and school tasks in Spanish Language matter” had the lowest internal consistency index of the three information sources (Table 4).

Taking into account the fact that the questionnaire of parental support was constructed using the same four indicators for the three information sources, it seemed recommendable to realize a confirmatory factorial analysis with EQS 6.1. Figure 1 represents the resulting model obtained from the organization of the 12 indicators in three factors according to the information source: Parents’ support perceived by the children (SupParenCh), parents’ support perceived by parents themselves (SupParenPa), and parents’ support perceived by the teachers (SupParenTe).

Figure 1 shows the standardized coefficients for the three factors or constructs, and the covariance between the three factors. It is worthy to note that the indicator “Parents’ support to their child during the realization of homework and school tasks in Spanish language matter” receives the lowest factorial weight (0.22) from the factor Parents’ support perceived by children (SupParenCh) with associated measure error of 0.98. Nevertheless, this fact is not affecting the convergent and divergent validity of the construct; the resulting model showed an excellent fit respect to the hypothesized ($\chi^2 = 67.39, \ p =.06, \ CFI = .98, \ RMSEA = .05$) so that it is possible to affirm that the measurement of the parental support with the same four indicators in each one of the information sources is reliable and has convergent and divergent construct validity (Figure 1).

Teachers’ self-evaluation of their knowledge of Spanish language program (curriculum)

First, the variable Teachers’ knowledge about the theoretical approach and contents of the Spanish language programs of the SEP, showed a significant correlation ($R = 0.98$) with the variable “teachers self-evaluation of frequent implementation” of the SEP program of Spanish written language in fourth grade.
On the basis of the average of these two variables’ scores, an Indicator Index was constructed in order to describe the self-evaluation of teachers about their knowledge and agreement with the Secretary of Public Education’s (SEP) Spanish program in their teaching practices (frequent implementation) in 4\textsuperscript{th} grade (TSELFKNO).

Concerning the variable Knowledge of the Spanish language program, it could be said that in general, the 10 items questionnaire on knowledge about theoretical approach and contents of the Sep program showed an acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha coefficient = 0.65). The average obtained for the 10 questions was assumed as an indicator of the teachers’ knowledge and mastery of the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade Spanish language program (TKNOWPRO).

### Structural analysis of variables associated with performance evaluations of reflection about language, and reading and writing

In order to analyze the structure of the relationships among parents educational level, parental support perceived by children, parental support perceived by parents themselves and by the teachers; teachers’ self-evaluation of their knowledge and observance of the Spanish program and the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade students’ performance in written language assessments (Reflection about language, Reading and writing), an hypothetical model testing by means of structural equations and the statistical program EQS 6.1 (Bentler, 2001) was used.

Figure 2 presents the hypothesized model of structural relations assumed. Latent variable Children’s performance in a 12 tasks set (Achievement) was defined as a dependent variable; it was formed by two factor components: Reflection about Language, and Reading and Writing. Meanwhile, the constructs: Parents’ educational level, parental support perceived by children, parental support self- reported by the parents, and parental support perceived by teachers, as well as the variables concerning teachers’ self-evaluation of their knowledge and frequent implementation of the Spanish language program of the SEP, were assumed as predictor variables (Figure 2).

Figure 3 shows the resulting structural model. Not all the manifested variables and factors initially presented in Figure 2 were included: During the structural analyses of the previously hypothesized relationships with the EQS program, it seemed pertinent to remove or add some relations among variables in order to improve the goodness of fit of the model.
Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Parental support perceived by children, parents and teachers.

**SupParenCh**: Parental support perceived by children. Helpwch; interech; reviewch y Assessch;

**SupParenPa**: Parental support perceived by parents. Helpwp; interep; reviewp y Assessp

**SupParenTe**: Parental support perceived by the teacher. HelpwT; IntereT; reviewT y AssessT

**Indicators**:

**HelpHw**: Parents help children in their Spanish Language homework

**Intere**: Parents express interest in their children academic progress in Spanish Language

**Review**: Parents check notebooks and workbooks of their children in Spanish Language in order.

**Assess**: Parents assess the children level of mastery and knowledge in Spanish Language, and realize support activities in order to strengthen their abilities.

Figure X: EQS 6 afc apoyofam 3 Chi Sq.=67.39 P=0.06 CFI=0.98 RMSEA=0.05
Figure 2. Hypothetical model of structural relationships among variables associated with performance on reading and writing in fourth grade of elementary school.

Achievement: Children’s mastery in 12 written language activities concerning Reflection about Language, and Reading and Writing.

Parented: Parents’ educational level

SupParenCh: Parental support perceived by children

SupParenPa: Parental support perceived by parents

SupParenTe: Parental support perceived by teachers

TSELFKNO: Teachers’ self-evaluation of their knowledge of 4th grade Spanish Language program and its frequent implementation in practical situation

TKNOWPRO: Teachers’ level of knowledge about 4th grade Spanish Language program of the SEP.

In like manner, this resulting model indicates that the four factors or latent variables assumed in the hypothetical model of Figure 3, show a significant configuration, although it was not possible to confirm that the factor Parents’ education level (ParentsEd) is formed in turn by indicators of the previous four indicators considered in the analysis (the variable concerned with Time devoted by the family to reading together was removed) (Figure 3).

Concerning the structural relationships among factors or latent variables, the model showed that children’s performance in tasks of Reflection about Language and Reading and Writing, in great degree, received a significant influence from Parental support perceived by children (factor coefficient = .40), followed by parental support perceived by teachers (factor coefficient = .23).

No significant relationships were found between Parents’ educational level and children’s performance, neither between Parental support self-reported by parents, and children’s performance.

It seems worthy to stand out that the teachers’ self-evaluation of their knowledge and application of the SEP Spanish program did have a significant effect on the children’s performance during assessments in Reflection
DISCUSSION

1. The first aspect to be discussed is the structure shown by the indicators in the interior of the four resulting factors or constructs: Parents’ Educational Level, Parents’ Support perceived by children, Parental support and self-reported by parents themselves, and Parental support perceived by teachers. It could be said from these findings that the time devoted by the family to read together is not a good indicator of the parents’ educational level. This fact suggests the pertinence of constructing in future studies, separate variables related to the educational level and to the reading practices as a cultural issue, in order to analyse its potential impact on the learning processes and on the corresponding mastery of the written language.

Furthermore, the findings show the methodological relevance of studying the support’s activities that parents or tutors provide to their children, using the three different
information sources and the same indicators for each one of them.

Although a significant convergence was found among the constructs, it was evident that the latter are moderately low, which means that there exist moderate differences among the contents reported by the students, the parents and the teachers concerning the parental support to their children.

2. Findings also sustain the assumption that children’s performance during assessments on written language with tasks derived from the official plans, programs and text books of the SEP, receives a significantly influence from Parental support perceived by the own children and by the teachers, but not from the Educational Level of the parents.

Other studies realized with Spanish speaking students in Elementary School have shown that variables related to parents’ implication and the support activities they provide to their children, are good predictors of variables such as: the children’s learning, their academic achievement, and their performance in reading and writing evaluations, than their educational level (Barber, 1988; Bazán et al., 2003; Castejón and Pérez, 1998; Castro, Lubker et al., 2002; Mella and Ortiz, 1999).

In line with the previous findings, the results reported by Bazán et al. (2007) in a similar study conducted with third grade students, showed that parental support was a better predictor of the children’s performance in written language (Reflection on language, and Reading and writing) when compared to the educational level of the parents.

In addition, the educational level of parents had a significant effect on the factor Parental support; an indirect relationship was found between educational level and students’ performance, which were mediated by the factor Parental support. This one encompassed in turn three indicators: An average of the indicators of children’s perception of parental support, the parents’ report on the support provided to their children, and the teachers’ perception in respect to parental support.

In contrast, the current study conducted with fourth grade students permitted to clearly identify the differential effect of parental support on the students’ performance level in two indicators of their mastery of the written language: Reflection about language, and Reading and Writing, when measured by different information sources. This finding suggests that parental support as perceived by the children, followed by parental support perceived by teachers, can significantly explain the fourth grade students’ performance.

In fact, a great advantage of the present study was to rely on information about the support that parents supply to their children, and in this way, counting with the possibility to go further than parents self-reports.

In this study, parental support had a strong and positive effect on the level of children’s performance in academic assessments that are in correspondence with the curriculum and instructional materials of the Public Secretary of Education, but only when the latter is reported by the children and by the teachers who have knowledge about the progress of their academic learning and about their mastery of linguistic competences. Anyway, these findings corroborate the assumption related to the impact of the family support’s activities, in order to complement and reinforce children’s learning and academic development.

Studies realized with students speaking languages that are different from Spanish have also demonstrated that variables related with commitment, implication and the support of parents in respect to their children’s learning beyond the school activities’ context, have a strong and significant influence on learning and acquisition of written language, as well as on the academic evaluations of the children’s linguistic competencies, in contrast to the educational level or the socioeconomic level of the parents (Buckner et al., 2001; Faires, 2000; Griffin and Morrison, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, 1992; Hoover-Demsey et al., 2001; Mavrogenes and Bezruzcko, 1993; Saracho, 1996; Sénéchal et al., 1998).

Unfortunately, in Latin America and particularly in Mexico, the reality of families participating in learning mechanisms of the students is still distant. Families would have to be actually implied in the learning processes of their children as a real actor, not only incorporated in the activities of parents’ association, or like simple customers to be informed, but for instance, of the curricular changes or the results obtained by their children in large-scales evaluations.

3. Another fundamental aspect concerning the students’ learning and their consequent performance in assessment situations is the issue related to the knowledge and mastery that teachers have about psychological and pedagogical curriculum approaches and foundations, as well as their knowledge about the curriculum and the contents of Spanish language as subject matter implemented by the Mexican Ministry of Education (specifically by the Public Education Secretary, SEP) in fourth grade.

Concerning teachers self-evaluation on their own knowledge about contents and curricular structure of the subject matter, and furthermore, about its practical implementation, the data obtained in this study show that this variables has a better predictive value when measured by means of a quantitative and hierarchical scales, than through a knowledge questionnaire.

Although the study found a significant relationship between self-reported knowledge (TSELFKNO) and knowledge expressed in the questionnaire (TKNOWPRO), only teachers’ knowledge measured by means of self-evaluation had a significant effect on the students’ performance. This means that teachers’ self-evaluation has a better predictive value than the level of achievement in the context of assessments concerning the curriculum and the organization and theoretical approach of its contents.
These findings could be indicating that teachers have a better understanding of methodological and practical aspects of the programs for teaching Spanish language, though they do not master its theoretical foundations, and would suggest that they feel more confident when judging their practice in correspondence to the official program of the SEP. These findings are in line with the results of previous studies showing that variables that are related to the teachers’ self-evaluation, and its impact on teaching practices and knowledge about programs, predicted in a significant way, the results of students performance assessment at the end of a school year, in samples from second, third and fourth grades (Bazán et al., 2000; Bazán et al., 2005; Bazán et al., 2007).

Consequently, results of learning processes, especially in Elementary Education should be analyzed, taking in account, the role of the teachers (Schmelkes, 2003); they implement in educational practice, the curriculum, the contents and strategies recommended by programs and by educational politics of the country, and besides, are in possession of a knowledge about the characteristics of the families that can support the children learning. The development of further studies conducted with children from different school grades, from different cities and states, and the examination of different variables associated with learning and achievement in written language, could bring greater evidences and better perspectives of generalisation than the results obtained in this study, for the analysis of structural relations of variables associated with the acquisition and functional mastery of the written language.

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