

EduInspire - An International E-Journal
An International Peer Reviewed and Referred Journal
Council for Teacher Education Foundation, (CTEF, Gujarat Chapter)

ISSN 2349-7076

www.ctegujarat.org
ISSN 2349-7076

EduInspire

- An International Peer Reviewed and Referred Journal



VOL: XII

ISSUE: I

JANUARY-

2025

Council for Teacher Education Foundation,
(CTEF, Gujarat Chapter)

HOMEWORK: A Perception of Teachers

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Abstract

Homework has been labeled one of the most important practices for establishing a successful academic environment in school. The major objectives of the study: assess the adequacy and efficiency of the homework as a practice and ascertain the need to understand the policy of homework. The methodology of the study was conducted by feedback survey method. Some of the items in the questionnaire were in Likert type five point agreement scale. Total 96 teachers included in sample from all types of schools with random sample technique from surat city. The result of a feedback study on the homework, an important component at school level of learning, is presented. The analysis of the feedback from the high school teachers raises certain questions and asks to rethink about this important practice.

Introduction:

Homework is a cost-effective instructional technique. It can have positive effects on achievement and character development and can serve as a vital link between the school and family. Homework should have different purposes at different classes. For lower classes it should foster positive attitude, habits and character traits. For senior classes, it should facilitate knowledge acquisition in specific topics. Homework should be required at all classes, but a mixture of mandatory and voluntary homework is most beneficial.

Purposes of Homework:

From the literature and from comments received from teachers in a survey of elementary school teachers practices of parent involvement (Epstein and Becker, 1982), the following seven purposes of homework are identified:

1. Practice (to increase speed, mastery, or maintenance of skills);
2. Participation: (to increase the involvement of each student with the learning tasks);
3. Personal development (to build student responsibility, honesty, perseverance, time management, self-confidence);
4. Parent-child relations (to establish communication between parent and child on the importance of schoolwork and learning)
5. Policy (to fulfill directives from administrators for a prescribed amount of homework per week);
6. Public relations (to inform parents about what is happening in class); or
7. Punishment (to remind students of the teacher's requirements for class work or behavior).

Types of Homework:

As mentioned earlier appropriate homework and well-designed student practice will increase student learning. If a teacher wishes to make a significant difference in students achievement the suggested type of homework would turn out as a positive homework practice. Research suggests ideas for planning homework and activities to support learning practice:

- Memorization of basic rules, algorithms, or laws so the skill becomes rote.
- Increase in skill speed, used for improving students' abilities to apply these skills in more complex problem solving.
- Deepening understanding of a concept—providing students time to read further, elaborating on a new idea and expanding their understanding.

- Preparation for the following day's learning, such as an advance organizer or cue to increase readiness for new information.

Though each skill is important, most teachers say that the main reason they assign homework is to give time to practice skills learned in class. (Becker and Epstein, 1982). Montimore and Ouston (1979) reported that the assignment of homework by teachers and the doing of homework by students were positively associated with students academic performance and school behavior. They found that schools in which teachers gave frequent and large homework assignments had better students outcomes than did schools in which teachers assigned little homework. Their cross-sectional data was reported only as zero-order correlations, and

could mean that schools with good, hard-working students had diligent teachers who assigned more homework more often.

to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 1989). Homework increases students’ retention and understanding of the material it covers. It can also improve students’ study skills and attitude towards school and teach students that learning takes place outside the school too.

Homework and its Effects:

Homework is defined as “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant

Table 1.: Suggested Effects of Homework

Suggested Effects of Homework	
<p>Positive Effects</p> <p><u>Immediate achievement and learning</u> -Better retention of factual knowledge -Increased understanding -Better critical thinking ,concept Formation, information processing -Curriculum enrichment</p> <p><u>Long-term academic</u> -Learning encouraged during leisure time -Improved attitude toward school -Better study habits and skills</p> <p><u>Nonacademic</u> -Greater self-direction -Greater self-discipline -Better time organization -More inquisitiveness -More independent problem solving</p> <p><u>Greater parental appreciation of and involvement in schooling</u></p>	<p>Negative Effects</p> <p><u>Satiation</u> -Loss of interest in academic material -Physical and emotional fatigue</p> <p><u>Denial of access to leisure time and community activities</u> -Parental interference -Pressure to complete and perform well -Confusion of instructional techniques</p> <p><u>Cheating</u> -Copying form other students -Help beyond tutoring</p> <p><u>Increased differences between high and low achievers</u></p>

Homework and its Factors:

assignments and initial classroom factors

A number of factors influence the effect

have a place on the effect of homework.

of homework. Characteristics of students,

Table 2: A Model of Factors Influencing the Effect of Homework

<u>Personal Factors</u> Student characteristics -Ability -Motivation -Study habits Subject matter Grade level	<u>Assignment Characteristics</u> Amount Purpose Skill area utilized Degree of individualization Degree of student choice Completion deadlines Social context	<u>Initial Classroom Factors</u> Provision of materials Facilitators Suggested approaches Links to curriculum Other rationales
<u>Home-Community Factors</u> Competitors for student time Home environment -Space -Light -Quiet -Materials Others' involvement -Parents -Siblings -Other students	<u>Classroom Follow-up</u> Feedback -Written comments -Grading -Incentives Testing of related content Use in class discussion	<u>Outcomes or Effects</u> Assignment completion Assignment performance Positive Effects -Immediate academic -Long-term academic -Nonacademic -Parental Negative Effects -Satiation -Denial of leisure time -Parental interference -Cheating -Increased student differences

Related Research Finding:

through the following research findings

To develop a thorough understanding

regarding homework.

review of the related research studies is essential. In this context an attempt has been made to go through certain studies related to homework. It is interesting to go

- Elementary students should be assigned homework to establish good learning and study habits (Cooper, 1989, Lindsay, Nye, and

Greathouse; Gorges and Elliot, 1999).

- Teachers should assign appropriate homework at instructional levels that match students' skills and provide positive consequences for homework completion (Rademacher, Deshler, Schumacher, & Lenz 1998; Rosenberg, 1989).
- At the high school level , for every 30 additional minutes of homework completed daily, a student GPA can increase up to half a point (Keith, 1992).
- Students should receive feedback on their homework. Student achievement can vary based on the kind of feedback provided by the teacher (Walberg, 1999). Grading home work is helpful, but homework in which a teacher has embedded

instructive comments has the greatest effect on learning.

- Mastery requires focused practice over days or weeks. After only four practice session students reach a halfway point to mastery. It takes more than 24 more practice sessions before students reach to 80 percent mastery. And this practice occur over a span of days or weeks, and cannot be rushed (Anderson, 1995; Newell and Rosenbloom, 1981)
- Maughan Montimore and Ouston (1979) reported that the assignment of homework by teachers and the doing of homework by students were positively associated with students academic performance and school behavior. They found that schools in which teachers gave frequent and large homework assignments had better students outcomes than did

schools in which teachers assigned little homework.

Objectives:

The feedback survey was carried out in order to

- assess the adequacy and efficiency of the homework as a practice
- conduct a review of literature to understand the place of homework
- study the perception of the teachers towards the homework
- ascertain the need to understand the policy of homework.

Evaluation Methodology:

The evaluation study was conducted by feedback survey method. Some of the items

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

The findings of the study are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency, percentage and mean of teachers' agreement for the items related to homework

Sl.No.	Content of the Statement Item	Mean	SD	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	T	M
01	HW and Std. of study,	19.20	17.77	45 (46.88)	36 (37.49)	02 (2.08)	09 (9.38)	04 (4.17)	96	

02	HW and a match with learned skills	19.20	13.29	18 (18.75)	43 (44.79)	20 (20.83)	12 (12.5)	03 (3.13)	96	
03	Regular HW assignment	19.20	18.17	48 (50)	33 (34.38)	09 (9.38)	02 (2.08)	04 (4.16)	96	
05	Instructive comments on HW	19.20	23.21	63 (65.63)	23 (23.96)	02 (02.08)	03 (3.13)	05 (5.21)	96	
06	HW develops study habits	19.20	13.31	78 (81.25)	13 (13.54)	00	04 (4.17)	01 (1.04)	96	
07	HW and memorization of content	19.20	22.79	56 (58.33)	36 (37.5)	00	02 (02.08)	02 (2.08)	96	
08	HW and skill development	19.20	14.65	32 (33.33)	41 (42.71)	09 (9.38)	03 (3.13)	11 (11.46)	96	
09	HW deepen understanding	19.20	17.90	29 (30.21)	49 (51.04)	02 (2.08)	14 (14.58)	02 (2.08)	96	
10	HW and next day learning	19.20	22.18	13 (13.54)	09 (9.38)	09 (9.38)	63 (65.63)	02 (2.08)	96	
11	Parents as facilitators	19.20	25.97	03 (3.13)	07 (7.29)	06 (6.25)	71 (73.96)	09 (9.38)	96	
12	HW and teachers' support	19.20	28.95	77 (80.21)	07 (7.29)	06 (6.25)	02 (02.08)	04 (4.17)	96	
13	HW and teachers' pressure	19.20	24.43	05 (5.21)	07 (7.29)	09 (9.38)	68 (70.83)	07 (7.29)	96	
14	HW and time organization	19.20	20.56	29 (30.21)	55 (57.29)	02 (2.08)	05 (5.21)	05 (5.21)	96	

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

(SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, UD-Uncecided, DA-Disagree, SDA-Strongly Disagree, T-Total, M-Missing)

Result and Discussion:

The findings of Rademacher, Deshler, Schumacher, & Lenz, (1998), Rosenberg (1989) lend an indirect support to the above findings. They are of the opinion that teachers should assign appropriate

homework at instructional levels that match student's skills and provide positive consequences for homework completion. This supports the statement that homework should be assigned according to the std. in

which they study. 46.88 % + 37.49 % of respondents agree with the above statement. They also agreed that homework should match students' skills learned in the class (18.75 % + 44.79 %).

Salend & Schliff, (1989) in a survey of teachers of students with learning disabilities found that 80 % of teachers regularly assigned homework, but few matched the tasks to students' skills and provided feedback or positive consequences for homework performance. (Table 3, item no.3)

Item no.05, 06, 07, and 08 directly or indirectly positively affect the achievement of the students. Students should receive feedback on their homework. Student achievement can vary based on the kind of feedback provided by the teacher (Walberg, 1999). Grading home work is helpful, but homework in which a teacher has embedded instructive comments has the greatest effect on learning.

58.33 % teachers strongly agree and 37.5 % teachers agree with the statement that homework helps in memorizing basic content. This statement is supported by Cooper, 1989, Lindsay, Nye, and Greathouse; Gorges and Elliot, 1999. They were of the opinion that elementary students should be assigned homework to establish good learning and study habits.

A good percent (80.21 %) of teachers agree with the positive relation between homework and teacher's support. According to the type and difficulty level of homework teachers should assist the students by providing library, internet facility.

Thus findings of the present study confirm the result of previously referred literature. The result also shows that the majority of the teachers have positive attitude towards homework.

Conclusion and Suggested Actions:

The present study focuses on a few facts which could not be neglected. These facts ask any teacher

- to assign appropriate homework type to meet the learning outcomes
- to assign appropriate homework that helps students to achieve better result/grade
- to assign the right level of homework that matches the instructional skills
- to give appropriate feedback that corrects misunderstanding
- to give instructive comments which has greatest effects on learning and achievement
- to assign more practical and projects type homework
- to develop a supportive structure (library, internet and different resources) which helps students to do the homework
- to assign the right amount of homework
- assign the homework to meet the needs of individual students or groups of student
- not to give homework as a punishment
- not to view the homework as an opportunity to test.

This study suggests an in-depth research including students and parents perception regarding homework and different aspects concerned to homework and learning.

The present study helps the researcher to understand the place of homework at any level of learning. It is a cost effective instructional technique having positive effects on achievement and skill development.

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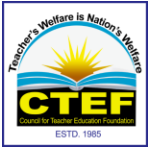
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