

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Perspectives on Homework

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Abstract

This study uncovers perceptions and perspectives of teachers and students on homework from grade eight. The main objectives were to explore teachers' and students' perception on homework. It follows qualitative research method to gather and analyze data. We have reviewed some related articles on homework. To conduct this study, we have used primary as well as secondary sources of data. The major findings of this study are although some of the students who are weak, lazy and low performing feel homework as a load, however, they did not deny the fact that homework leads to invention. They were found to be doing homework. When the given homework is creative and rewarding, it can be taken as a notion of creativity for students. The study found that homework always benefits both students and teachers for improved learning, remembering, reading, and writing habits. It increases knowledge, skill and values on the part of students. Homework is essential to get involved in learning. It is an exercise to excavate creativity and critical thinking in learning, An evaluation of homework provides teachers a feedback to take right action for effective teaching and learning. Despite some issues such as burden, stress and anxiety on homework, the study concludes that giving homework to the students is always good, rewarding and meaningful. Homework supports to the students to take part in competitive tests and examination. Moreover, taking feedback can be a

good source of information to design better assignment to the students from the side of teachers.

Keywords: Homework, perception, perspective, load, creativity

Introduction

This article is based on perceptions and perspectives of teachers and students on homework. Buijs (2013) asserts that homework is known as a set of tasks assigned to their students by their teachers to complete outside the classroom, primarily at home. Common homework assignments may include required reading, a writing or typing project, mathematical exercises to be completed, information to be reviewed before a test, or other skills to be practiced (Andrews & Larson, 2017). The prime purposes of assigning homework to students are to increase the knowledge and improve abilities and skills of the students, to develop critical thinking and creative writing, to prepare them for upcoming lesson, and to reinforce what they have already learned (Fisher, Lapp & Frey, 2011).

Homework also provides an opportunity for their parents to learn about their children's education and progress. Homework is a universal practice used in schools and universities. It is commonly related to academic achievement of the students. It is taken as a means of students' practice material. It is taken as a preparation for an examination. Moreover, it is one of the most popular and frequent instructional tools used in home-based involvement and it is a task in which parents are involved more directly in their child's learning. Homework is a necessary step to improve teaching learning process (Allodi, 2002). Effective homework benefits students by taking into account their individual differences while offering teachers greater control in their planning. It teaches students to work independently and develop self-discipline. It encourages students 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. It also reinforces skills, concepts and information learned in class. Homework activities relate what is learned in school to children's live outside of school and helps to connect school learning to the real world. Hence, homework enables the students to recall a certain problem and apply it to another distinctive situation (Buijs, 2013).

Homework refers to the work given to students after class. It is intended to make students capable of doing things on their own and to recollect what they have learned in class. It is based on the teaching provided to them in class. This can be in written form

or they might be asked to memorize a lesson (Bembenutty, 2011). Homework is part of a traditional classroom teaching technique where the teacher moderates the information provided to the students in class and checks their retention rate based on their performance. The method of teaching is usually lecture-based and does not involve dialogue between teacher and students.

Ur (2005) mentions that homework is associated with learning. It improves a learning and writing habit of a student. Teaching learning is a very challenging job. It involves the two parties; teacher and the students. The job of teacher is not merely teaching the students. Rather he/she can function as a guide, feedback provider, corrector, motivator, counselor and many more for the students (Harmer, 2008). A good teacher should be able to pinpoint the mistakes of the students. Not only this, one should be able to provide correct feedback to his students so that the students can improve further. In the practice of language teaching, teachers support students in verbal, written and non-verbal forms. They may correct their responses or simply acknowledge them. This act of support is taken as feedback.

Homework is one of the burning issues in present era. Many researches have been conducted in this field. However, they have not fully addressed the issue of homework. It is heard that sometimes, the work they have been assigned might be the cause of boredom for study (Bennett, S., & Kalish, N. 2006). On the other hand, it can also increase the creativity of the students. Therefore, this study specifically deals with the matter whether homework increases creativity or interrupts better learning of students. Our focus in this article to find out what kind of homework students like to do and what kind of homework helps to develop students' critical thinking and creativity. In addition, our focus is to find out students' preference on creative work or the exercises given in their text. On this backdrop, the main objectives of this study were: to explore teachers' and students' perceptions and perspectives on homework.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' and students' perception and perspectives on homework. This study also investigates whether homework is taken as load or notion of creativity. The study explores the answers of these main research questions from teachers and students. How do teachers and students perceive homework? Why is homework necessary for students? Similarly, some subsidiary research questions of the study are: Why do teachers think continuous feedback is necessary for students? What kind of homework do teachers like to give to the students?

Which types of homework do students like most? Why do students think homework is necessary for better achievement? What do students feel when the teacher provides feedback on your homework?

Review of Related Literature

The main aim of this review is to explore students' and teachers' perceptions and perspectives on homework. In this review, we have reviewed different relevant articles which are pertinent to the study. This article argues that, as a pedagogical practice, homework plays a critical, long-term role in the development of children's achievement and motivation in learning. Homework provides children with time and experience to develop positive beliefs about achievement, as well as strategies for coping with mistakes, difficulties, and setbacks (Bempechat, J.2004). The study presents theoretical literature in which homework is associated with.

Theoretical Literature Review

Learning language is a matter of practice and repetition (Gas & Selinker, 2009). It can be linked with the theory of behaviourism. According to behaviorism, a behavior can be studied in a systematic and observable manner with no consideration of internal mental states. 1. The primary means of investigating learning is by observation. 2. Principles of learning apply equally to different behaviors and to different species of animals. Behaviorists typically state that human beings and other animals learn in similar ways. 3. Learning processes can be studied most objectively when the focus of study is on stimuli and responses. Typically learning is described as a stimulus and response relationship, $S = R$. 4. Internal cognitive processes are largely excluded from a scientific study. 5. Learning involves a behavior change. Some behaviorists proposed that if no observable change happens, then no learning has happened. 6. Organisms are born as blank slates. Organisms are not born with any predispositions to be made in certain ways. Since each organism has a different experience with the environment, each will have a different set of behaviors. 7. Learning is largely the result of environmental events. Behaviorists tend to use the term conditioning instead of learning to reflect this. The most useful theories tend to be universal ones. 8. The learning of all behaviors is best explained by as few learning principles as possible.

Doing homework is a mental process (Chomsky, N. 1965). It can be linked with the theory of mentalism. The mentalistic language acquisition theory, advanced by Noam Chomsky in 1960s, supported through such concepts like Nativist Position (Nativism), Innateness Position, and Rationalist Position, claims that for the basic

structure of language and how it is mastered and how human language develops, it is not the environment but language structures, processes, and ideas that dwell in mind at birth serve for the acquisition of languages. According to this theory, the speaker's inborn knowledge of language, not the consequences of behavior, can be held responsible for the acquisition of language. In this study, the attributes of the mentalist language acquisition theory will be explored. Learning is a mental process. It is our mind that creates infinite number of sentences out of finite number of structures. Language acquisition is inventive, creative and constructive process (Pandey, 2012).

Doing homework and getting feedback is a constructive process (Sharma & Pandey, 2024). It can be linked with the theory of constructivism. The assumptions of constructivism knowledge is constructed from experience. Learning is a personal interpretation of the world. Learning is an active process in which meaning is developed on the basis of experience (Pandey, 2012). Conceptual growth comes from the negotiation of meaning, the sharing of multiple perspectives and the changing of our internal representations through collaborative learning. Learning should be situated in realistic settings; testing should be integrated with the task and not a separate activity (Ur, 2005).

Fisher, Lapp and Frey (2011) conducted a study entitled "Homework in Secondary Classrooms: Making it Relevant and Respectful." This study shows that homework is not likely to be effective if it is not completed nor is it likely to help if the students make all the problems wrong. Homework might help when it is the practice of familiar concept. From the examples mentioned in this paper, we have found that the teacher did not assign homework as an afterthought, but instead as a well-integrated dimension of his or her instruction. It was the independent practice that occurred only after the students were well prepared, and it was also an integral dimension of what was to follow in the class. We have learnt from this study is that our goal as a teacher should be to discharge duty and responsibility for the betterment of students. A reflective teacher can do this in a better way (Wallace, 2010).

Similarly, Buijs (2013) conducted a study on, "Homework assignments to enhance student engagement in secondary education." To conduct this study, the effects of four homework assignment were examined in two groups of 25 students. This study explored that secondary school teachers often complain that their students do not prepare for lessons. They show a passive attitude towards classroom activities and they have a limited awareness of their own learning process. It is argued that homework only

supports participation and learning when it is explicitly used with the purpose in mind. Therefore, teachers have to give assignments to reinforce what they are teaching in school and prompt students to recognize and extend their learning into new and richer areas. By reviewing this article, we come to know that the lack of class participation is detrimental to students' learning process and progress. Students tend to be passive in class and teachers get frustrated experiencing that students' never do anything which in turn results in a lack of motivation to get students involved. This can turn into a vicious circle from which students and teachers escape. In this study, the jigsaw assignment and the preparation of analytical tasks were found to be effective (Harmer, 2008).

Similarly, Fawzy (2012) conducted a study entitled, "Teachers' perspective on homework." Homework practices vary widely among teachers. Some teachers make well planned assignments to combine learning and pleasure. Others use homework as a routine to provide students with drills on important activities. This study examines the perspectives of teachers, working in schools operating in Egypt. It compares the view points and practices of teachers working in Egyptian language. The study was conducted with teachers working in international schools located in Cairo. The research addresses the question: what are teachers' perspectives and practices of homework in schools. This study analyzes qualitative data through a survey distributed to teachers working in language and international schools. The major finding of this study is that teachers' opinions and practices of homework do not significantly vary in these settings. Homework has its own culture that affects teachers' perceptions and practices regardless of the setting.

Cunha, J. et al., (2015) investigate the parent's concepts of their homework in elementary school. This article is about parental homework involvement which has positive and negative aspects, depending on parents' behaviors. This study examines 4th graders, parent's conceptions of three Portuguese public schools on their involvement in their homework. With the purpose of mapping parents, various conceptions of homework involvement 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed. This study follows the phenomenological design to analyze the parent's conceptions of involvement in their children's homework. Data analysis produced six categories relating the participant's conceptualization of parents' involvement in homework. Three categories are related to what aspects, and describe the participants understanding to parental involvement in homework. The other three categories are related to the how aspects and describes how participants conceptualizes parents involvement in homework.

From the aforementioned reviewed article, we analyzed that parents' conceptions of homework involvement have a positive meaning and focus primarily on the role played in the promotion of academic learning by developing their children's autonomy, exerting control near their learning and providing them with emotional encouragement. This article shows that the homework is necessary to perceive parents involvement in their children's homework. This study was useful to promote parent teacher collaboration and parent training workshops, and to improve the quality of parental homework involvement.

Sallee and Rigler (2008) publish an article on, 'Doing Our Homework on Homework: How Does Homework Help?' This research based article surveys over 180 students and personal interviews with teachers about homework. They share their results and make suggestion for revising homework assignment practices. They claim that, educators should be thinking about the objectives of every assignment. Homework inclusion and assignment are meaningful in a larger purpose to the best support for development of all students. From this reviewed article, we analyze that, homework is a necessary step in improving teaching. Effective homework benefits students by taking into account their individual differences, while offering teachers' greater control in their planning. Homework takes teachers back to teaching and to the question of what teachers want from their students to come away from their classes having learned and experienced (Harmer, 2008).

Andreas (1991) investigates on the basis of classroom use- teaching guides for teachers in Cyprus. This article is especially on Homework in Teaching and Learning. It describes an approach to teaching and learning, techniques of homework organization, and an example of implementations as experienced in teaching English to high school students in Cyprus. The main element is organized around the public system of secondary education in Cyprus, taking into consideration the various characteristics of its functioning. While talking about homework, this article talks about language skills and grammar. From this reviewed article, we analyze that, for teaching guides, teachers should follow language skills. Teaching techniques and approaches directly work with homework teaching and learning. The objectives of each course are implemented, to a considerable degree, by homework assignments.

From the above literature, it can be deduced that homework has to be done separately from the regular classwork. It also enables the student to revise what they learned in class. This is necessary as it allows the students to properly understand the

work being done in schools. It also helps develop the study skills and good work habits. It helps them learn to work under deadlines, usually without a teacher's help (Harmer, 2008). Homework allows the parents to be in the loop of what is going on in the school. In order to maintain the effectiveness of the same, teachers can ensure that the work is purposeful and does not take a lot of time. This will ensure that the students do not feel burdened by the homework (Ur, 2005).

Methods

We have followed a qualitative method to carry out this study. We have adopted interpretive phenomenological design. We have used both primary and secondary sources of data collection. We interviewed and analyzed their homework as primary sources of data collection and reviewed some research articles, read some related books and journals as secondary sources of data collection.

Students and teachers of public schools of basic level, class 8, were the participants for this study. As a sample of this study, 4 teachers and 4 students from public and institutional schools from Kathmandu district were selected using non-random sampling procedure.

We have developed two types of tools for data collection. An open ended interview and homework observation are the research tools. To conduct a research study, we need different types of instruments for data collection. Therefore, we have used camera and audio recorder as instruments for data collection.

Data Collection Process

This study aimed to find out the perception and perspectives of teachers and students on homework. We have visited selected public schools inside the Kathmandu valley to meet teachers and students. After that we explain our purpose and process for the study. Similarly, we asked permission from the principals to support the study. After getting permission, we have developed good rapport with students and teachers. Then we conducted in-depth interview with selected participants. We also observed students' homework. From the interview and observation of the students' homework, we have got data. It shows that for collecting required data, we have used qualitative method of data collection. Therefore, we have interviewed with teachers and students and also observed the students' homework to find out what kind of feedback they got from their teachers and whether it helps them to be creative or they take homework as a load.

Finding and Discussion

In this section, we have interpreted, explained and analyzed major findings received from the collected data. They are thematized and described in the following ways.

Homework as Notion of Creativity

Difficult homework can be severely detrimental to students. If students feel easily discouraged or unable to complete assignments, they can develop negative views towards teachers, school and learning. If teacher gives more creative homework such as project work, drawing, free writing, puzzles and puns, students feel so excited to do them. Regarding homework, students like to do free writing homework because they can give their opinion freely on the basis of topic. Students can show their view confidently regarding the topic. In this case, S1 presents, “I am enjoying with project work, report writing, arts and other practical homework. I can learn from my society, family, and friends which keep me active and socialized”. Other students and teachers agree with the idea of S1 and add that homework is essential to get involved in learning. It is an exercise to excavate creativity and critical thinking in learning. In this case, Sharma and Pandey (2024) assert that homework gives space for feedback to improve learning.

Homework as a Load

Students who spent more hours on homework tended to be more behaviorally engaged in school, but were simultaneously more stressed about their school work and tended to report more physical symptoms due to stress, fewer hours of sleep on school nights, less ability to get enough sleep, and less ability to make time for friends and family. The voices of these students reflect a primary challenge faced by students in our study. In this case S3 mentions, “If students have several hours of homework per night, how can they find time for other efforts in their lives including extracurricular activities, leisure, and social time. However, limited amount of homework is a fun and exciting.” Some of them articulated that they never seem to have enough time. One adolescent S4 stated, ‘Now, I understand the expression not enough hours in a day.’ Another student S2 presents that in a day, I want to be able to do homework or study, have time with friends and family, and do activities that are important to me. I do not always feel I have enough time for this, and I feel pressured. Because of homework load, tests, and quizzes, students reported, for example: students recognized that

spending so much time on homework meant that they were not meeting their developmental needs or cultivating other critical life skills.

Regarding the notion of load, T1 expressed, “Homework is not compulsory for students. It has its own limitation. Some teachers give a lot of homework for students which are totally disturbing for them. Students take homework as a burden nowadays which destroys their creativity and it became load for them”. However, available literature shows that homework benefits both teachers and students. Even T1 agrees that doing homework is good for better learning although he feels bored in doing homework. In this context, Sallee and Rigler (2008) presented that educators need to think and plan the objectives of every assignment. Homework inclusion and assignment are meaningful in a larger purpose to the best support for the development of learning culture of all students. As a professional, I love giving homework to the students. It truly involves them in learning and creating new ideas.

Strong and Weak Aspects of Homework

Each day, students are assigned homework to complete and return to school. Some students complain that homework is just a hassle and has no benefits while others do their homework in the hopes of supporting final examination. In this context, S1 says, ‘too much homework is not good but limited amount of homework results productive and creative learning.’ Homework has some positive as well as negative impact on students’ learning and achievement (Bembenutty, 2011). As a professional and experienced teacher, I assert that no homework is bad for students. Planned homework always results better learning on the part of students. In this context, Andrews and Larson (2017) homework supports students in tests and examination. Moreover, it develops reading and writing habits.

Strong Aspect of Homework

Homework has some positive impacts on the academic progress of the students. It is important to establish good study habits. Working on homework after school helps students to engage in study and it makes them active in learning. In this context all the teachers agree that homework helps students to remember and apply what they have learned. Homework improves students’ study habits, problem solving skills, communication skill and self-discipline. The benefits of homework are immense. Generally speaking, homework improves academic performance among learners. Homework may improve academic skills among older students, especially lower-achieving students. It improves writing skill and creativity. Right amount of homework

leads to a new invention. In this context, Sharma and Pandey (2024) remark that from the feedback of students, better assignment is designed. Hence, emphasis should be not on how long students spend on the homework but on what they gain through the practice and feedback. It can be useful to help students develop their self-regulation skills.

Weak Aspect of Homework

Homework has an adverse impact on students' achievement and learning. It is found that too much homework increases students' academic stress. It increases students' pressure to complete homework because students often miss family meals and activities to complete hours of homework. They are deprived of enjoying outer world much. In this context, Bennett and Kalish (2006) expressed that students do not like lengthy and overloaded homework that create anxiety and boredom.

Reasons for Homework Incompletion

All teachers mentioned that some of the students do not complete their homework. There are some reasons behind not completing homework. One of the reasons is that they do not understand the given task. Similarly, they do not complete their homework due to insufficient interest towards given task. All teachers agree that weak, lazy and pretending students do not enjoy doing homework. Therefore, it is stated that the given task should be creative and interesting for the students. Moreover, the teachers should give homework to their students being based on the level of students' knowledge and interest.

Teachers' Perception and Perspectives on Homework

Homework is good for learners. Regarding homework, whether it is compulsory or not, teachers presented the following perceptions.

Teacher1 says, "Homework is not compulsory but necessary for students. It has its own limitation. Some teachers give lots of homework for students which are totally disturbing for them. Students take homework as a burden nowadays which destroys their creativity and it became a load for them. However, limited amount of homework leads students on the royal road of success."

T2, T3 and T4 articulate that homework should be compulsory but it should be very short and sweet. It should be student centered. It should be based on what they have learnt in the classroom. In this regard, Bennett and Kalish (2006) expressed that home work creates psychological burden if teachers give them lengthy homework. Most

of the school dropout situation is the result of lengthy homework. Regarding why homework is important to the students, teachers express the following:

Both T1 and T2 say that homework is needed to engage students in learning at their home. While giving homework teachers should think about their need and interest. If teacher assigns them homework according to their ability, it helps them to continue their study.

T3 and T4 present that homework is for practice and revision of classroom knowledge. It is a way of reinforcement to learn something new. Students can take homework as a recap. In this connection, Ur (2005) presents that correction and grammatical rules are essential for the mastery of language learning.

Feedback

Students perceived feedback as an information provided to the learners with the objective of improving their performance. They said that feedback played a constructive and catalytic role in their learning. Teachers' feedback worked as a motivation tool in the process of teaching and learning (Sharma & Pandey, 2024). Pertaining to feedback, teachers expressed the following.

T1 and T3 assert that feedback should be motivated and interesting for students. According to them, daily feedback is not needed but feedback is necessary. Students ignore feedback if teachers give them daily feedback but they take seriously and try to improve if teachers give them feedback at the end of week or end of unit.

T2 and T4 are female teachers. They express that they always give feedback to their students. They think that feedback is compulsory for them. It helps in a process of teacher development. Without feedback, they do not know what task was completed by them and whether it is correct or incorrect. In this context, Sharma and Pandey (2024) assert that it is necessary to give feedback to students for further improvement and critical thinking. In this line, Wallace (2010) states that doing homework makes reflective students. They start reflecting their homework in a class with their friends. Hedge (2008) presents that reflective activity such as diary writing, journal writing and note making helps students to do better homework. Through feedback a teacher can develop him or her professionally. Teacher development is a way of updating the knowledge in the area of teaching and learning. It is a way of reflection and interaction (Richards & Farrell, 2010). Moreover, Pandey (2012) asserts that reflective practice contributes to the professional development of teachers.

Students' Perceptions and Perspectives on Homework

All students like written homework. If a teacher gives them written task, they attend school with completion of the task but they do not think reading as a task for them. Free writing, project work and group work are taken easy by the students. All students like personal feedback but they do not like feedback that is given to them personally in the classroom. In this connection, S1 and S2 say that homework can be used as a motivation tool to learning as it helps to recognize the strengths and weaknesses through which we can improve our learning. Agreeing with these ideas, S3 and S4 expressed that homework contributes to creativity and effective learning. Fawzy (2012) present that planned homework on the part of students always results meaningful and effective learning. Pandey (2023) suggests that “teachers’ narrations and reflections are equally important for their development in a profession (1119).

Conclusions and Implication

In this study, students’ and teachers’ perceptions and perspectives on homework, we have arrived at the positive and negative impact of homework on students and their learning. However, the study showed a positive aspect of homework which contributes to better learning. We explored reasons behind not completing homework from the side of students. Weak, lazy and low performing students sometimes take homework as a load. After analyzing the views and opinions of students and teachers on homework, it can be said that homework plays a pivotal role in students’ learning and their achievement. It has both positive and negative impact on students’ achievement. Creative task helps students to increase their creativity. It supports to develop students’ study and writing habits. On the other hand, it has some negative impacts on students. When students get a lot of homework, it can be load for them. Moreover, it increases students’ academic stress. On the other hand, homework is taken as notion of creativity in the sense that if the teachers give them creative works such as drawing, filling color in pictures and project work. It helps them to be creative and inventive. Furthermore, doing homework gives space for thinking, planning, creative writing and critical thinking.

This study has a good pedagogical and policy level implication. Policymakers, administrators, teachers, students and parents can receive benefit from a study. When all

these stakeholders collaborate, pedagogical practice will be developed. School administration needs to formulate policy in favour of promoting homework on the part of students. It is useful for the teachers who are teaching in school level as it provides the types of homework students like the most. Furthermore, it will be helpful for future researchersto conduct a quantitative research, taking a large sample with a wide coverage, related to homework.

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