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Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Homework

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Abstract: In this paper an attempt has been made to study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards homework. Homework for students has been considered important for many reasons. Some of the researchers had seen homework as inhibiting the development of students' problem-solving abilities and as adding excessive pressure on students to succeed. Assuming that it is true that one's attitude affects one's behaviour (Kraus, 1995), and that in upper grades (6-12) there is a positive relation between students' completion of homework and their academic achievement. The present study is necessary to inform teachers that their attitudes toward homework can have an impact on their decisions when it comes to managing homework. There is no one way to implement homework that has shown to be effective for all students. Keeping in view the importance of homework for teachers and students development the investigator selected and studied the attitude of teachers towards homework. The results of the study revealed that gender wise, locality wise, and teachers of government and private schools do not differ significantly in their attitude towards homework.

Keywords: Attitude, Homework, Academic achievement, Elementary School Teachers

Background of the Study

Homework can enhance children's personal growth by teaching responsibility, good work habits, organization, and time management. However, homework also can be disruptive to family life. It can create conflict and interfere with recreation and social activities. Children need to learn to do their homework on their own. They need to begin and complete it on time. They need to stick with it even when it gets hard. They need to check and correct their work. Below are specific strategies and methods you can use to help your

children to do their homework on their own and on time. Homework has been defined simply as “tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours” (Cooper, 1998). Proponents of homework believe it can benefit students when used appropriately. The most obvious benefit is that it will improve students’ understanding of the material covered. It serves as a diagnostic tool that allows teachers to regularly monitor their students’ progress. It eases time constraints on the amount of curricular material that can be covered in class. It teaches students that learning also takes place outside of the classroom. It provides educators with a cost-effective way to extend the school day by several hours. It helps students develop good study habits, such as goal setting, following directions, organizing materials, planning ahead, and budgeting time, as well as strategies for dealing with mistakes, difficulties, and distractions. It also helps students develop positive attitudes toward school and a sense of personal responsibility. Critics say it is questionable whether homework, done at the end of a long day when motivation and concentration are low, has any benefits at all. It provides few, if any, academic benefits to students who don’t possess the skills needed to complete the assignment. Conversely, students who have already mastered the skills derive little or no benefit from completing the assignment. It provides teachers with little information about students’ true educational level or progress. Since homework is not completed under teachers’ guidance, they are often unaware of mistakes students make when completing assignments and have no control over who actually completes the work. Its overload can cause students to lose interest in the academic material and become physically and emotionally fatigued. Epstein has developed a ten-point typology of the reasons that homework is assigned to students, which she categorises as The Ten P’s—noting, that “some (reasons) are more defensible than others”! These are (Epstein, 2001 pp.237-241): Practice, Preparation, Participation, Personal Development, Peer Interactions, Parent-Child Relations, Parent-Teacher Communications, Public Relations, Policy and Punishment.

Review of Related Literature

After review of literature it has been found that there have been inconsistent results in regards to the effectiveness and purposes of homework. While some believe it to be an important asset to our education system, others believe it is too inconsistent and not a valuable tool to use in classrooms. Since it is presumably up to the teachers to decide what students will complete for homework, it may be most important to explore their attitudes toward homework, as well as their homework practices. Trautwein *et al.* (2009) found that the three main reasons for assigning homework were to narrow the achievement gap, improve school-to-home connections, and improve student motivation. Other significant purposes for assigning homework have included fostering students’ participation in learning, the development of good study habits, time management, and to fulfil district homework policies (Brock *et al.* 2007). Although the majority of educators use homework as a tool to reinforce daily lessons (Cooper *et al.*, 1998), others feel obligated to assign homework that they do not believe is effective or directly linked to student learning.

According to Trautwein *et al.* (2009), when teachers attempt to involve parents in their adolescent's education, the child held negative attitudes and emotions toward the teacher and the class. Students also tended to favour and show positive homework effort toward teachers who did not believe in parents helping students with homework. While there is a considerable amount of research surrounding the attitudes of parents toward homework, there is much less available on teachers' attitudes (Brock *et al.* 2007). Cooper & Valentine, (2001) observed that some educators argue that schoolwork can only be effective for so many hours of the day. Cooper *et al.*, (1998) revealed that critics of homework have also added to the research base by showing that many teachers who assign homework are ignorant of its advantages and disadvantages. Wiesenthal *et al.* (1997) found that teachers' attitudes toward homework can also be greatly affected by the homework policies of the school districts at which they teach. He also concluded that teachers' attitudes were significantly different in the schools where homework was valued by the administration. He further found that teacher attitudes and beliefs about the benefits of homework influenced their behaviour with homework in their classrooms. Cooper *et al.* (1998) found that there was a significant negative relation between teachers' practices (the amount of homework given) and the attitudes of students in the same teachers' class. Ostdam & Hooge (2013) stated: "By engaging in educational activities with their children at home (homework, reading, modelling), parents communicate their expectations for achievement." (p. 338). Homework, nevertheless, is among the school tasks that most students think of as a burden and as an extension of the school day. Townsend (1995) conducted a study to determine if homework influenced the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge and understanding. Results indicated that third grade students who completed homework received significantly higher scores on a teacher-made test designed to assess acquisition of new vocabulary when compared to students in the control group. Pelletier and Normore (2007) conducted a study to determine if there was a relationship between the amount of homework completed by third grade students, their classroom test scores, and their achievement test scores. They found that students who completed more homework, as a percentage of the amount of homework assigned, received significantly higher classroom test scores and standardized achievement test scores. Public Schools of North Carolina (1999) reported that grade 10 students who spent more time completing homework received higher North Carolina High School Comprehensive Test reading and math scores. After adjusting for differences due to gender, ethnicity, and parents' educational level, the data revealed that students who reported spending at least three hours per week doing homework scored above the state average in both reading and maths. Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, and Greathouse (1998) investigated the relationship between student achievement and the amount of homework assigned in three U.S. school districts. They concluded that the amount of homework assigned by teachers was not significantly related to students' standardized achievement test scores at either the upper or lower grades. Pezdek, Berry, and Renno (2002) studied the relationship between the amount of homework completed and fourth through sixth graders' scores on a locally developed mathematics achievement test.

Rationale of the Study

During the past one-hundred years, the attitudes of educators and the general public toward homework have changed several times (Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, & Greathouse, 1998). Early in the 20th century, in the late 1950s, and presently, homework is and has been regarded as a positive influence on a student's academic achievement. The present study is necessary to inform teachers that their attitudes toward homework can have an impact on their decisions when it comes to managing homework. Current research on teachers' homework policies and attitudes toward homework is lacking and what is available is inconsistent. There is no one way to implement homework that has shown to be effective for all students. Regardless, it is essential that teachers show a positive outlook on homework. Homework as a whole is beginning to receive more attention as a topic to be researched. However, researchers have long studied the importance of incorporating homework into academia, which in turn, drives the research for the current study. The theory that all students benefit from completing homework (Cooper *et al.* 1998, Keith, Diamond-Hallam, & Fine, 2004; Trautwein *et al.*, 2009) raises questions for the current research to find answers on why all students are not currently benefiting from homework. There must be a reason why students are not gaining in some aspect (whether it is achievement, organization, or responsibility) from assignments being completed outside of school. With this theory as a driving force, the current research examines whether or not teachers' attitudes impact the way they implement homework. Teachers' attitudes toward homework need to be studied and addressed in order to fully understand their homework practices. Hence the current research provides a new lens into the topic of homework and the impact that teachers may have on students' motivation and attitudes toward homework. After review the related literature the investigator is interested to find out the answer of the question that "Is there any difference in the attitude of teachers towards homework in terms of gender, locality and type of management of school"? To address this research question and keeping in view the importance of homework in teaching learning process the present problem was stated as: "*Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Homework*"

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were achieved in the present study:

1. To find out the difference in the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards homework.
2. To find out the difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards homework.
3. To find out the difference in the attitude of government and private elementary school teachers towards homework.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested in the present study:

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards homework.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards homework.
- Ho3: There is no significant difference in the attitude of government and private elementary school teachers towards homework

Methodology of the Study

The present study is expressed in the following headings. In this study survey method of research under descriptive method was used, as this method is concerned with describing, surveying and investigating the present phenomenon.

Population and Sample

All the elementary school teachers (who teach classes' from 6th to 10th standard) of government and private schools of Sundernagar Tehsil were constitute the population of the study. The sampling was done at two stages. At the first stage 24 elementary schools were selected randomly out of total number of elementary schools in said tehsil of Himachal Pradesh. At the second stage at least four and not more than six teachers from each selected schools were selected randomly. In this way 136 teachers were constitute the sample for the present study.

Tool Used for Data Collection

In this study Teacher's Attitude towards Homework Scale developed and standardized by Dr. K.S. Katoch (2012) was used. This scale contains 30 items. The reliability of the tool is .89.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Since the data from the attitude scale was available in the form of scores, so to find out the significance of difference between the various groups 't' test was applied.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The inferences are important for the future scholars and investigators to know about the problem and its solutions. Therefore the data have to be analyzed and interpreted carefully otherwise it serves no useful purpose. The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained with the help of tool is given as under:

1. Gender-wise Comparison

Table 1: Showing Gender-Wise Comparison of Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Homework

Sl. No.	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	df	't' Value
1.	Male	61	92.58	11.90	134	0.519*
2.	Female	75	93.65	12.01		

* The mean difference is not significant at .05 Level

Table 1 indicates that 't' value (0.519) is not significant at .05 level of significance. This means that attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards homework do not differ significantly. From the table 1, it may be concluded that male and female teachers have almost equally favorable attitude towards homework. Hence the null hypothesis that, "There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards homework" is accepted.

2. Locale-wise Comparison

Table 2: Showing Locale-wise Comparison of Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Homework

Sl. No.	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	df	't' Value
1.	Rural Teachers	58	93.58	11.87	134	0.345*
2.	Urban Teachers	78	92.88	11.45		

* The mean difference is not significant at .05 Level

Table 2 shows that 't' value (0.345) is not significant at .05 level of significance. It means that there exists no significant difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards homework. Hence the null hypothesis that, "There is no significant difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards homework." is accepted.

3. Type of Management of School

Table 3: Showing Comparison of Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Homework on the Basis of Type of Management of School

Sl. No.	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	't' Value
1.	Govt. School Teachers	68	94.23	12.45	134	0.262*
2.	Private School Teachers	68	93.68	11.99		

* The mean difference is not significant at .05 Levels

Table 3 shows that 't' value (0.262) is not significant at .05 level of significance. It means that elementary teachers of government and private schools do not differ significantly in their attitude towards homework. Hence the null hypothesis that, "There is no significant

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difference in the attitude of government and private elementary school teachers towards homework” is accepted.

Major Findings

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

- Male and female elementary schools teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards homework.
- Rural and urban elementary schools teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards homework.
- Government and private elementary schools teachers do not differ significantly in their attitude towards homework.

Educational Implications

After analysis of data it was found that, gender wise, locality wise and type of management of school, elementary school teachers do not differ significantly. From this it may be concluded that all groups have almost equal favorable attitude towards homework. It may be due to the reasons that all elementary teachers irrespective of locality wise and gender wise believe that homework benefit students largely. They all also believe that homework provides opportunities for students to identify and learn to use resources, such as the library, Internet, reference books, and other community resources. It also allows students to use their unique talents and abilities to produce individualized and creative work products.

Conclusion

All elementary school teachers felt that homework improves communication between parents and their children on the importance of schoolwork and learning. It serves as a diagnostic tool that allows teachers to regularly monitor their students' progress and eases time constraints on the amount of curricular material that can be covered in class. It helps students develop good study habits, such as goal setting, following directions, organizing materials, planning ahead, and budgeting time, as well as strategies for dealing with mistakes, difficulties, and distractions. Hence homework plays very important role in the learning of the child and promotes educational motivation among students.

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