

The Influence of Homework Assignments on the Students' Achievement from the Teachers' Perspectives

By

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the influence of homework assignments on the high basic school students' achievement in public schools in Nablus directorate from the teachers' perspectives. It also aimed to check the role of the study variables such as gender, qualification and experience in the influence of homework assignments on the high basic school students' achievement in public schools in Nablus directorate from the teachers' perspectives.

To achieve these aims, the researcher used a 21 - item questionnaire and then distributed it among the sample of the study which was chosen randomly and it consisted of 30 teachers during the first semester of the scholastic year 2014 – 2015. The results of the study revealed that the total score for the teachers' evaluation on the relation between homework assignments and students' achievement was acceptable with a total percent of 61.40.8%.

In the light of this finding the researcher recommended teachers to give regular homework assignments that require high mental skills, that is homework assignments of high quality rather than quantity. Another recommendation is given to the school principals to cooperate with teachers in this regard. One more recommendation is directed to the curriculum centre to include homework assignments of high quality after each unit.

Key words: Homework assignments ,teachers' perspectives, students' achievement

ملخص الدراسة

هدفت الدراسة الى التعرف على أثر التعيينات البيئية على انجاز طلبة المرحلة الاساسية العليا من وجهة نظر المعلمين. كما وهدفت الدراسة الى التعرف على اثر المتغيرات المستقلة مثل النوع الاجتماعي المؤهل العلمي والخبرة فيما يتعلق بأثر الواجبات البيئية على تحصيل الطلبة.

ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة استخدم الباحث استبيان مكون من احدى وعشرون فقرة وزع على عينة عشوائية مكونة من ثلاثين معلم و معلمة .أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بوجود اثر ايجابي للواجبات البيئية على تحصيل الطلبة حيث قدرت نسبة التقويم ب 61.40% وبحيث تعتبر درجة مقبولة.

في ضوء هذه النتائج الايجابية أوصى الباحث بأمور تتعلق بكل من المعلم ومدير المدرسة ومصمم المناهج وذلك لاعتبار نوعية الواجب البيئي المتضمنة في المناهج والاساليب التدريسية والعلاقة التي تربط المدير والمعلم بهذا الخصوص .

الكلمات الرئيسية: الواجبات البيئية , وجهة نظر المعلمين وتحصيل الطلاب.

Introduction and background

Introduction:

The issue of homework assignment is as old as the human beings, as learners face in almost every day experience . Learners tend to learn from the very beginning of their lives. According to the traditional approach, homework is emphasized via quantity and not quality as the aim of teaching and learning does not exceed memorization. In contrast, modern approaches ask for the reverse; for example the aim was to transform universities to reflect social diversity and respond to the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous student population (Cooper, H., Robinson, J., & Patall, E. (2006).

The supporters of student centered learning are regarding students as not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge; the goal must be to transform them and assist them in learning, to challenge common perceptions, myths and what can seem as being already 'known' (Cooper, H. (2007). Homework assignments is a concept inspired by new movements and the methods of critical pedagogy. Various factors have contributed to the development of this concept since that time.

The behaviorist view of learning confidently stresses the phrase, "Practice makes perfect," indicating that an individual must be actively involved in doing a behavior repeatedly in order to fully learn it (Armrod, 2012). The cognitive view of learning, particularly the findings of verbal learning research, also supports the idea of practice being important to learning. Over-learning, the cognitivist idea of mastering concepts and then practicing them further, "enables [the learner] to remember the information more accurately at a later time" (Armrod, 2012, p. 149). Educators, it seems, have thrown their support behind proving these notions to be true. In school, students receive instruction on a concept, then move to practicing the skills required by the concept in class, and finally go home to continue practicing the skills on their own. The parts of both cognitivist and behaviorist views of learning that some educators seem to miss, however, is that practice is most effective when done in several small periods of time, known as distributed practice, rather than being done all at once in a larger period

of time, known as massed practice (Armrod, 2012). On the surface, it would appear that educators are actually doing this: the short practice time in class is complimented by a second practice time at home. I would agree that many educators are, in fact, doing this right.

Problem of the study

Educators in schools and in other educational affiliations are thinking deeply of better teaching and learning that capture students' attention to learn better. One of these ideas is homework assignments as good means of learning and teaching. The researcher conducted this study in an attempt to shed light on the issue of student centered learning skills via showing the importance of homework assignments in motivating students to learn better.

Questions of the study:

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1-What is the influence of homework assignments on students' achievement from the teachers' perspectives?

2-Are there any statistical differences on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to gender?

3-Are there any statistical differences on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to qualifications ?

4-Are there any statistical differences on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to experience?

Objectives of the study:

This study has the following objectives:

1-Identifying the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement from the teachers' perspectives

2-Determining the influence of the study variables (gender, experience and qualification) on the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement in public schools from the teachers' perspectives

Significance of the study:

This study is important because it deals with an important concept that could revolutionize the process of teaching and learning, upgrade it and change it into student-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness. This study is also important as it could benefit educators and researchers on the issue of homework assignments: quality vs quantity.

Definition of Terms:

Homework assignments : refer to tasks to be accomplished outside the class; they include a quantity or period of reading to, problems to be solved, a school project to be built or other skills to be practiced keeping in mind that the basic objectives of assigning homework to students are the same as schooling in general: to increase the knowledge and improve the abilities and skills of the students. (Haddock, 2006)

Students' achievement: the extent to which students have accomplished their educational goals ; It is commonly measured by either examinations or continual assessment and in this regard, individual differences have always been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Sophie and Chamorro-Premuzic (2011).

Limitations of the Study

This study had been formulated to be applied amongst 30 female and male teachers who were teaching learners in the high basic level (fifth graders to tenth graders) in the government schools in Nablus Directorate during the first semester of the scholastic year 2014 – 2015.

Literature Review

The researcher arranged the different related studies chronologically and topically for the sake of facilitation and making reading of the previous studies easy and enjoyable.

The concept of homework assignments was first introduced in a Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the Bologna Process in Leuven in 2009, where ministers agreed that “ homework assignments and mobility will help students develop the competences they need in a changing labor market and will empower them to become active and responsible citizens.”

Ikhlef & Knight, (2013) indicated that student-centered activities including self assessment and homework assignments receive higher percentage of standards met by schools and the other affiliations in the society where students feel they are responsible for their learning through increasing their awareness towards getting better results.

Hannafin, Hill, Land, & Lee, (2014) emphasized the importance of new learning environment, designs and frameworks which have emerged consistency with constructivist-inspired views of learning where homework assignments is an effective tool which helps students determine learning goals, learning means or both.

Bembenutty, H. (2011c) state that students learn more efficiently when they are actively engaged with content through incorporating homework assignments into different courses such as biology. As a result, student content learning is increasing over time.

Cooper (2007) emphasized the importance of models of homework assignments that consider balance between the type of homework, the amount of homework and the students' needs and interests as well as the wishful learning.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., Battiato, A., Walker, J., Reed, R., DeJong, J., & Jones, K. (2001) found that there was a strong influence of homework assignments on students' achievements when students understand the material and with students of high abilities. They also stated that, "parents' and children's approaches to homework seem to more functioning than children working alone.

In the area of the purpose of homework as an assessment tool for teachers to see where their students are currently performing, Cooper and Jackson Nye and Lindsay (2001) concluded that "student's attitude toward homework was not associated with homework completion, nor did it show a direct path to grade" They originally hypothesized that the opposite would take place. They also found that, positive parent attitudes toward homework not only predicted amount of parent facilitation but also directly related to student's attitude toward homework. If the parents can influence homework to such a great degree, then one would naturally hope that the student's personal motivation from the classroom would also play a role in homework completion.

In connecting homework and academic achievement, Cooper, Patall, and Robinson (2006) did not find a strong correlation except for students in secondary grades who were more likely to have a correlation between homework and achievement.

Balli, Demo, and Wedman (1998) agreed with Bassler, et al. (1995) Hill & Tyson, (2009). Conroy, W. (2012) as they all emphasized the role of parents' involvement on having better achievement in children's output. They also found that two-parent families are more likely to help with homework than are single-parent families.

Muller (1995) found that the most influencing factor was the mothers' employment status, that is the principal findings are that the category of part time employment of mothers appears to identify parents with higher overall levels. This study is similar to Fan (2001) Bowen and Lee (2006) who found that parent involvement at school created the greatest difference in levels of motivation. Unlike Hancock (2001) who showed that there was not a high correlation between anxiety, achievement, and motivation.

From the one hand of the information collected from the previous literature review, the researcher found out that there are some studies that showed strong effect and clear correlation between homework assignments and students' achievement such as Bassler et, al. (1995); Jackson, (2014) and Hannafin, (2014) among others. On the other hand, some studies showed that there is no correlation between homework and achievement such as Hancock (2001). In addition, some studies did not deal directly with homework assignments but with factors affecting homework assignments such as Muller (1995); Cooper and Jackson Nye and Lindsay (2001) and Cooper, Patall, and Robinson (2006) among others. What is unique in this study is that it investigated the role of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives and was applied on teachers who teach learners in high basic level in Nablus in government schools in Nablus directorate. Still, it found out that there was a positive correlation between the quality homework assignments and students' achievements.

Methodology

This section is devoted to specifying the steps and the methodology used in carrying out the research endeavor. This section discusses research design, study population and sample, instrument, its validity and reliability, data collection procedures, and the statistical analysis.

Study design

This study uses a questionnaire to reach the primary goal which is to investigate the influence of homework assignments on students' achievement from the teachers' perspectives. The researchers used quantitative statistical approach, which is suitable for this study.

Population and sample of the study

This study was conducted on 30 male and female teachers who were chosen randomly from the government schoolteachers in Nablus Directorate. Tables I, II and III show the sample distribution due to gender, qualification and experience.

Table (1) Distribution of the sample due to gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	14	40
Female	16	60
Total	30	100.0

Table (2) The distribution of the sample due to qualification

	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	6	20
B.A	18	40
M.A	6	20
Total	30	100.0

Table (3) The distribution of the sample due to Experience

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	4	13.3
Five - ten	15	50
More than ten	11	36.7
Total	30	100.0

Instrumentation

After conducting literature review on the influence of homework assignment on the students' achievement from the teachers' perspectives, the necessary data were collected via well-structured questionnaire which consisted of (21) items .

First: It informed the respondents of the objectives and the importance of the study, and assured them that the data collected would be for scientific purposes only.

Second: It collected demographic information.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was reviewed by a group of ten experts. All items that receive 80% and above are kept as questionnaire items whereas the rest are modified according to the experts' comments.

Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers used Cronbach Alpha formula to determine the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the study was (0.81) which is good and suitable.

Scale correction

The cut-point of this scale is 60% which means that score lower than 60 receive low perception and those above 60 reflect acceptable responses and this is according to the experts' comments.

Procedures of the study

This study was conducted according to these steps:

Finalizing the instrument of the study.

Questionnaire distribution.

-Gathering the questionnaire from the sample people of the study, encoding it, insert it to the computer, and processing it statistically by using (SPSS) program.

The study design

1- The variables of the study

The independent variables:

(A) Gender: (male, female).

(B) Experience

(C)Qualification

b-The dependent variable " The influence of homework assignments on students' achievement from the teachers' perspectives."

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 17 was used for data analysis. Various statistical tests and procedures were used including (means, frequencies, standard deviation, t-test for independent variables, ANOVA).

Results and discussion

The study aimed to investigate the influence of homework assignment on the students achievement from the teachers' perspectives. To achieve this, the researcher used 21 -item questionnaire.

First: Results related to the first question of the study “What is the influence of homework assignment on the students achievement from the teachers' perspectives?” To Answer this question percentage , frequencies & degree of influence were computed and table 4 shows this results . A special criterion (60%) is used to measure if the students have positive or negative attitudes towards examinations and assignments. If the percentage is 60% or more, we can conclude that their attitudes are positive, otherwise their attitudes are negative. Table (4) shows the results:

Table(4)

Percentage ,frequencies and degree of the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement

No.	Items	Mean	%
1	Clear homework assignments scaffold learning	4.18	83.55
2	Homework assignments reinforce students'	3.67	73.30

	understanding		
3	Homework assignments are good means of follow-up	3.52	70.30
4	Skilful selection of Homework assignments support self-correction	3.68	73.30
5	Too much homework hinder conducive environment.	3.14	62.80
6	Homework assignments do not consider student's individual differences.	3.08	61.55
7	Homework assignments are good means of self learning	2.99	59.80
8	Homework assignments should be of high quality.	2.68	53.55
9	Homework assignments help students achieve better results.	2.50	50.05
10	Homework assignments of high quality increase student- centeredness.	2.37	47.30
11	Regular accomplishment of homework assignments helps students to be better learners	2.24	44.80
12	Homework assignments of high quality enhance students' critical and creative skills.	3.14	62.80
13	Homework assignments updates the students' knowledge.	3.08	61.55
14	Homework assignments enables students to link previous lesson with the new one.	2.99	59.80
15	Homework assignments is a good source for supplying students with feedback.	2.68	53.55

16	Educated parents facilitates the accomplishment of homework assignments.□	2.50	50.05
17	Full-time working parents have no time to scaffold their children on doing their homework assignments	2.37	47.30
18	Family atmosphere affects successful accomplishment	3.14	62.80
19	Parents' support in homework assignments increases students' interest and motivation	3.08	61.55
20	Too much help from parents minimizes the level of students' independency	2.99	59.80
21	Regular follow-up from parents of their childrens' homework assignments increases the degree of seriousness in children.	2.68	53.55
	Total score	2.97	61.40

Table (4) shows the means and the percentages of the items of the questionnaire which are between (4.18-2.68). Items 1-4 receive the highest means and percentages (4.18 , 3.67, 3.52 and 3.47) respectively. Teachers have positive attitude towards the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievements.

While item number (11) receives the lowest mean and which clarifies the following: There is no clear relation between regular accomplishment of homework assignments and becoming be better learners that is, it is not so much important to give students homework every day to become better learners. This finding contrasted Ramdass& Zimmerman, (2011) who found the opposite result. Items (10 and 17) receive the same low means and percentages (47.30) which means that there is no strong correlation between the type of homework assignments and student-centered learning. Additionally, the result of item 17 showed low correlation between full-time working parents and their children's accomplishment of homework assignments. This finding agreed with Hancock

(2001) but contrasted Muller (1995) , Fan (2001) and Bowen and Lee (2006) who found that parent involvement at school created the greatest difference in levels of motivation. Items (12 and 18) receive same importance as their means are (3.17) and items (13 and 19) receive same importance as their means are (3.08) and this tells us that homework assignments of high quality enhance students' critical and creative skills. The child's family atmosphere affects positively the child's successful accomplishment of homework assignments. The result of item(19) showed that parents' support in homework assignments increases students' interest and motivation. As for the result of item (13), it showed that homework assignments can help students update their knowledge. The results of these items agreed with Jeynes (2011) who found out that the more the parents are engaged in their support in the accomplishment of homework assignments, the more the children will be motivated to follow up and do the assignments. However, this finding is unlike Kralovec, & Buell (2000) who found out that homework disrupts families, overburdens children, and limits learning.

Second: Results related to the second question of the study:"Are there any statistical significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to gender?"Table 5 shows the result

Table (5) means and standard deviation of t-test for independent samples on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to gender.

	Gender	Mean	SD	T	Sig.
total score	Male	3.2099	.19288	12.075	.001*
	Female	3.2625	.23615		

As it is seen from the previous table that there are statistical differences in the means of the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives on the variable of gender on total score between males and females in favor of females. Females have a more positive perception on the influence of homework assignments on

the students' achievement than males. Up to the researcher's knowledge no other studies whether locally, regionally or internationally find this result.

Third: Results related to the third question of the study: "Are there any statistical significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to qualifications ?" Table 6 shows the result.

Table (6): The result of ANOVA due to qualification

		Sum of Squares	D.F	Mean Square	F	Sig.
total score	Between Groups	.247	2	.082	1.784	.150
	Within Groups	13.909	27	.046		
	Total	14.156	29			

As it is seen from table 6, there are no differences are statistically significant on the level 0.05 on student centered learning skills in classroom and student achievement due to qualification. This means that the certificate whether it is low or high does not change the respondents' perception towards the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement

Fourth: Results related to the fourth question of the study: "Are there any statistical differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to experience ?" Table 7 shows the result.

Table (7) The result of ANOVA due to experience.

		Sum of Squares	D.F	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total score	Between Groups	4.030	2	.366	.355	.948
	Within Groups	10.333	27	1.033		

	Total	14.364	29			
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As it is seen from table 7, there are no differences that are statistically significant at ($\alpha=0.05$) on the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives due to experience. This means the number of years in teaching does not affect the respondents' perception towards the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement. Up to the researcher's knowledge, no other studies have the same result, so it could be fruitful to conduct studies whether locally or internationally about the role of experience in the area of homework assignments and students' achievement.

Conclusion and recommendations:

The results of this study showed that teachers have positive attitude towards the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievements. Additionally there were statistical significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the means of the influence of homework assignments from the teachers' perspectives on the variable of gender on total score between males and females in favor of females. As for the other two variables experience and qualifications, there were no statistical significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the means of the influence of homework assignments on the students' achievement.

Recommendations:

In the light of the results of this study, the researcher recommended the following:

Recommendations for teachers and parents

1- Teachers should choose homework assignments skillfully to motivate students to learn and follow up the school work.

2- Teachers should give clear homework assignments to scaffold learning

3-Teachers should give homework assignments of high quality to enhance students' critical and creative skills.

4-Teachers should have a good channel to cooperate with parents in this regard.

Recommendations for further research

Since there were statically significant differences due to gender and in favor of females, the researcher invited other studies to be conducted in the area of homework assignments and their influence on the students' achievements with reference to gender variable

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

Due to the importance of homework assignments in teaching and learning as feedback for both teachers and students, and as good means for evaluation, the evaluation system should consider homework in any future modifications of the educational system

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Appendix I

Dear Teachers,

The researcher is conducting a study entitled: "The Influence of Homework Assignments on the Students' Achievement from the Teachers' Perspectives". Please go through the items carefully and answer them in the space provided. Be sure, your answers will be used for scientific purposes.

Thanks for your cooperation

Part I

Personal Information

Gender: ☐ Male

☐ Female

Experience:

☐ less than five years

☐ five to ten years

☐ more than ten years

Academic qualification

☐ Diploma

☐ BA

☐ MA

Part II

The items of the questionnaire

Please read the items and respond to each one in the space provided .

No.	Items	Less than 60	60 and above
1	Clear homework assignments scaffold learning		
2	Homework assignments reinforce students' understanding		
3	Homework assignments are good means of follow-up		
4	Skilful selection of Homework assignments support self-correction		
5	Too much homework hinder conducive		

	environment.		
6	Homework assignments do not consider student's individual differences.		
7	Homework assignments are good means of self learning		
8	Homework assignments should be of high quality.		
9	Homework assignments help students achieve better results.		
10	Homework assignments of high quality increase student- centeredness.		
11	Regular accomplishment of homework assignments helps students to be better learners		
12	Homework assignments of high quality enhance students' critical and creative skills.		
13	Homework assignments updates the students' knowledge.		
14	Homework assignments enables students to link previous lesson with the new one.		
15	Homework assignments is a good source for supplying students with feedback.		
16	Educated parents facilitates the accomplishment of homework assignments.□		
17	Full-time working parents have no time to scaffold their children on doing their homework assignments		
18	Family atmosphere affects successful accomplishment		

19	Parents' support in homework assignments increases students' interest and motivation		
20	Too much help from parents minimizes the level of students' independency		
21	Regular follow-up from parents of their childrens' homework assignments increases the degree of seriousness in children.		
	Total score		