

The Importance of Homework in Primary School

A38

Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1	4
1. Definition of Homework.....	4
1.1. What is Homework?	4
1.2. A Brief History of Homework.....	4
1.3. The Importance of Homework	5
2. The Role of Homework	6
2.1. The Reason for Doing Homework.....	6
2.1.1. Criticism of Homework	8
2.2. Types of Homework	10
2.3. Parental Homework Strategies	11
2.4. Amount of Homework Required	12
Chapter 2	14
3. Research Design and Methodology	14
3.1. Method and Participants	14
4. Teachers' Point of View	14
4.1. Types of Homework and Workload	14
4.2. Evaluation in the Eye of Teachers.....	15
4.3. Teacher-parent Communication	17
5. Children's Point of View	18
5.1. Reasons for Doing Homework (Children's Viewpoint).....	19
5.2. Evaluation in the Eye of Children	20
6. Parents' Point of View	21
Conclusions	23
References	24

Introduction

Homework is a very important part of learning nowadays, especially for little children, for it serves the function of aid and developer of learning strategies as well as studying itself.

This research will be carried out in order to prove the importance and usefulness of home assignment in primary school, more specifically concerning English language teaching.

The work will be divided into two chapters which will also have their own subdivisions.

Chapter 1 is going to deal with the overview of previous, already existing studies concerning the subject of homework giving/getting, its types, required amount, importance and its criticism at the same time. Viewpoints and opinions of well-known researchers will be taken into consideration (such as Wilkins, Wankat, Goldstein and Zentall, Collins etc.)

Firstly, the most important movement is to define what homework is. Furthermore, the role of home task and parental strategies should be discussed, because one of the first steps to a healthy and relaxed studying is to create a comfortable environment for the children in which they are able to study effectively.

Chapter 2 will focus on the practical side of the survey. The best method to adopt for this investigation is making interviews, mainly because children are more communicative through this method.

Five teachers, five children and five parents (from different environments and of different genders) will be asked about their experiences and opinions of the subject.

The most important questions are about types of homework, workload, evaluation, reasons for doing home assignment and children-teacher-parent communication.

Chapter 1

1. Definition of Homework

1.1 What is Homework?

According to most definitions found in different dictionaries homework (or home assignment) is a task assigned to students by their teacher to be completed outside of class. This usually includes a period of reading to be performed, writing or typing to be completed, problems to be solved or school projects to be built or other skills to be practiced.

According to another phrasing: „Homework is an integral part of the learning process, and is a fundamental key in helping our students prepare to become independent learners. This in turn is imperative in our technologically changing world and in our hypercompetitive, global economy.”¹

Home assignment needs to have direct relevancy to what is being taught that day or week. It never introduces new material because one of the main purposes of doing it is to practice those learned in class.

1.2 A Brief History of Homework

In its modern meaning, the actual home task was formed in the United States. Prior to the turn of the century, homework was really not a part of the average child's experience. This is largely because school itself was not necessarily a part of the average child's life, and once most children were done with their school day, they were expected to go home and do chores or help run the family farm.

It wasn't until after the Civil War that going to school became mandatory in many states. When it actually reached the mandatory level a need for teachers arose and it also pique the interest for education among the public. The newer teachers began to teach more challenging curriculum. Homework in the higher grades became more frequent, and even began to become a part of elementary school education although it mainly consisted of memorization or other rote learning.

¹ WILKINS, R.C.: *Teaching for success—What is Homework?*, 2012 Available from:
<http://www.eslteachersboard.com/cgi-bin/articles/index.pl?page=3;read=3676> (Retrieved 13 February 2012)

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, homework became a given in most schools. Then, the idea that homework might not be that good for children began to spread. An article in Ladies Home Journal portrayed it as a child abuse and as something that has a negative impact on children's well-being or health.

In the 1940s homework once again was found a positive task what was necessary for children, but due to Progressive education it was getting more creative and went beyond memorization of facts.

When in 1957 Sputnik was launched Americans were shocked that Russia could produce scientists that could launch a satellite before the United States experts stimulated the education system and as a result introduced the importance of homework.

Nowadays it is a must to give and get homework in every school. Throughout history, the upswings in amounts of homework seem to inevitably lead to a counter reaction and today is no exception. Even children in the second grade can come home with two hours of work to do and many parents are distressed by the amount of pressure they need to place on their children to get the work done. Currently many parents and teachers are feeling that the practice of homework may have gone too far.²

1.3.The Importance of Homework

Due to a useful research by Dr. Sam Goldstein and Dr. Sydney Zentall³ it can be read that the importance of homework lies within the relationship between home and school and in their interaction. They listed six constructive purposes of homework. These are the following:

1. Practice
2. Participation
3. Development of personal skills
4. Positive aspect of personal relationship
5. Keeping parents informed
6. Administrative aspect

² PONTE, W.: *The History of Homework*, 2009. Available from: <http://wendy-ponte.suite101.com/the-history-of-homework-a169016> (Retrieved 10 November 2011)

³ GOLDSTEIN, S., ZENTALL, S.: *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide For Solving Common Homework Problems*. Speciality Press, Inc., 1999

Through the first two—which are considered to be the most important—homework can improve a child’s achievement. In this case it does not only generate improvement of grades and knowledge but also academic skills, such as writing, reading or spelling.

The third approach can affect on the formation of responsibility and time management, while these two may create a positive impact on the relationship between the child and either the parents or the teacher.

Last but not least, with the help of homework schools are able to inform parents about activities and materials learned in class; furthermore it gives the opportunity to the school itself to achieve and maintain the set target of teaching.

So, as it has been written down by the two experts: “Homework is a bridge that joins schools and parents. From the school’s perspective there is the opportunity to monitor students’ independent progress. For parents there is the potential to gain a greater appreciation education and to express positive attitudes towards their children’s achievement.”⁴

Another study on this topic shows that homework completion is not only useful for the students (in this case foreign language learners), but that it matters during the evaluation, too. In other words, grades assigned to students were largely determined by whether they do their homework or not.⁵

2. The Role of Homework

2.1 The Reason for Doing Homework

As it has been mentioned above, the main reasons of homework is the same as schooling itself: to increase and improve the knowledge and skills of the students. On the other hand it is also a tool to reinforce what has been learned, prepare them for further difficult tasks and topics, to extend their knowledge or having them apply

⁴ GOLDSTEIN, S., ZENTALL, S.: *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide For Solving Common Homework Problems*. Speciality Press, Inc., 1999

⁵ BANG, H.J., SUÁREZ-OROZCO, C., PAKES, J., O’CONNOR, E.: *The importance of homework in determining immigrant students' grades in schools in the USA context*. Taylor and Francic Group, 2009, pp. 1-25.

different skills to a single task, and nevertheless to help parents to participate in their children's education.

There are two principles known that increase students' learning: practicing the skills being learned and receive feedback on their efforts.⁶

Practice is more useful if it is frequent and most students do it. This wants to highlight that it is better to give short but effective home tasks regularly than long and complicated (not clearly understandable) ones which will not be done by everybody anyway.

These assignments help the teacher to keep learners active and involved. No doubt that those children who are active and stay up to date in classroom activities learn more and can move further easily.

In a study by Ph. C. Wankat from Purdue University there are four main principles mentioned as part of homework assignment: practice, feedback, successful students and appropriate challenges.

Wankat has found that the most encouraging and motivating factors for doing homework are those situations when the grade counts towards the final course grade, when students are successful in what they do and finally, when they believe that it will help them to do better in class and on tests.

It is the teacher's task to set up problems which needed to be solved during the course of study, because if they are all easy to reach success, learners will not succeed when facing with more difficult problematic issues. In this case, the best idea would be to set the assignment into an upgrading list of tasks, starting with easy problems and going gradually towards more difficult ones.

Feedback is the second most important principle when giving homework. Two types of it are necessary to be mentioned. On the one hand, children have to get the right answers or solution to the questions – and it does not matter if these are discussed in class, handed out or posted somewhere—because they are immediately (when hand in their assignments) curious about the upcoming results. On the other hand teachers should show where and in what they made errors and mistakes. Many students think that their work is done correctly until they see the corrected version. Feedback is only useful

⁶ WANKAT, Ph. C: *The Role of Homework*. American Society for Engineering Education, 2001, Purdue University, pp. 1-7

when answered right away and it is still current, because otherwise children lose their interest in the result and only glance on their grade but put the paper away immediately. Embedded comments provide much better feedback than a mere grade at the top of the paper.

With his finding, Wankat tried to prove that homework and learning correlate. As it has been written down previously, students feel motivated when they know that the grades of home tasks count at the end of the course or final test. Those who do their assignments regularly have a better understanding of the topic and they are more likely to improve their knowledge than those who do not hand in the assignments or who just simply copy it from someone else.

The question is: How much percent should the homework count in the final grades? If the teacher gives the explanation about the relation between the home tasks and the final scores and how they can achieve the best point and results, the best answer should be 5-15 %.

This will encourage learners and make them competitive, although we need to make a compromise if a work is handed in late or is not handed in at all. If children feel the burden of consequence and the result of the honest work, they tend to be more attentive and hard-working.

The achievement of efficient work depends on the availability of help. There are resources which are available at any time, such as textbook, friends from the class or different study-groups, but the teacher him/herself can help the student to understand the task and properly solve it.

To avoid copying, many teachers and schools advise to give children individual works, like essay-writing or creative activities. Why is copying such a big deal? Because the main objective and role of homework is to make children think and work on their own in order to develop themselves.

2.1.1 Criticism of Homework

As we could see in the history of homework that there existed such idea that home task had a negative effect on learners and learning itself.

However, most of today's experts agree that home assignment is necessary for development, there is research supporting the idea that homework is of little educational

value, and that for young children (e.g. 14 and under) it may have a negative effect on learning and rather does harm than any good.

Professor Harris Cooper and other researchers from Duke Program⁷ say that too much homework can be counter-productive for students of any grade.

According to this study, many teachers use the so called “10 minute rule” in which they add 10 minutes of homework as students progress one grade. Thus a four grader has 40 minutes, high-school seniors about 2 hours of homework each day. After two hours of work no achievement can be made.

The study also shows that the positive correlation is much stronger for secondary students than elementary students.

The author emphasize that younger students do not benefit from homework as much as older ones. Firstly, they are “less able to tune out distractions in their environment and also have less effective study habits.”⁸

Furthermore, this research suggests that most home tasks given in elementary schools are not for the sake of achieving higher level of knowledge in a particular subject area, but to develop a better time management and study skills.

It does not mean that home assignments should not be given to elementary students at all, but the amount and type should depend on their level and home circumstances. This homework should be short, lead to success without much struggle and involve parents and interest of the children. These creative activities can include areas in which children willingly take part, such as sport or high-interest readings, etc.

The reason for this is that more and more people (among them: parents, teachers and students) think that children need to do other activities in life other than bent over textbooks and use related tools found in the classroom. Being at school the whole day, do subject-related tasks and then do such things at home can easily make children burn out and loose interest in studying. That is why both teachers and parents have to work together and find activities that learners like, because especially if primary school children get a task which is interesting to them, they tend to think that it is just a game and will like the whole process of it.

⁷ DURHAM, N.C.: *Duke Study: Homework Helps Students Succeed in School, As Long as There Isn't Too Much*, 2006. Available from: <http://today.duke.edu/2006/03/homework.html> (Retrieved 13 February 2012)

⁸ Same author: DURHAM, N.C.

2.3 Types of Homework

A large body of literature has investigated this topic and in most research findings it indicated that there are supposedly three or four types of homework.^{9,10}

The following types are mentioned because parents should know what their children have to do and why:

1. Practice homework. The reason to use this type is that children need to repeat and review what they have learned in class so this will help to remember and retain it for a longer period of time. In case of language learning, mainly word definitions and spelling can be practiced and learned through this method.

2. Preparation homework. Students sometimes have to be prepared for a new topic, an activity or task in the class. This might require research on the subject or simply brainstorming. If the topic is interesting for them, they will like the idea of having a survey, for example; and it is the teacher's task to find a theme that interest them and occupies their mind and attention.

3. Extension homework. This type includes long term assignments, like projects of different sort. They should be able to connect it with topics discussed or studied in the classroom. In many cases and examples it could be contrasting or comparing things and presenting the ideas or findings. However this method is rarely used among primary-school children, because it requires knowledge that at this young age they do not have. On the other hand this idea can be built down to a level that small children would be able to do. This only depends on the teacher's attitude.

The fourth type has just been introduced in recent years and focuses more on children's talent of creativity and allows them to think and work freely and independently. This is the so called:

⁹ Internet: *The Importance of Homework and Studying* (online). Available from: http://mathandreadinghelp.org/articles/The_Importance_of_Homework_and_Studying.html (Retrieved 13 February 2012)

¹⁰ Internet: *Learn About the Four Types of Homework Students May Have* (online). Available from: <http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/9683-learn-about-the-four-types-of-homework-students-may-have> (Retrieved 21 March 2012)

4. Creative homework. It encourages students to use different skills to show what they have learned. Such exercises can be short presentations, surveys, interviews, etc. The aim of this is to present something they did or made themselves.

Of course all these help to develop self-discipline, study habits and time management skills, but the main perspective of the home task is to set goals to the children and when they meet the requirements, enjoy the result and development.

2.4 Parental Homework Strategies

Several studies have revealed that parental involvement is beneficial when doing homework, but too much of this help can decrease the positive effect of the task. That is why parents need to pay attention to their children and guide them when it is necessary, but not completely do the work instead of them.

There is much that a parent can do to help the child to feel comfortable and uninterrupted while working.¹¹

First of all, a quiet and distraction-free area will make the environment calm and peaceful. Setting a regular time, providing the child with good lighting and the school supplies, such as pen, pencil, paper, etc., also keeps him or her well-focused. In the case of language learning, a dictionary is always helpful, too.

Many teachers advise parents not to correct their children's homework and mistakes, because they need to know what the students have understood and can do independently. The reason for this is that grades need to reflect the students' level of knowledge, neither the parents' nor the cooperation of parents and children, therefore everybody should let their children write down the corrections and mistakes so that the teacher is able to evaluate correctly.

"Independent learning is encouraged and improved by providing guidance (such as explaining how to look up information or find a word in a dictionary) rather than merely providing the answers to the child's homework-related questions."¹²

There are cases when correction from the parent is needed or highly recommended. Such activities include reading, for instance, because if the child tries to learn how to read and the parent can help him/her in pronouncing or spelling the words correctly, it will stick into the child's mind and will not make mistakes in that anymore

¹¹ already quoted: *Learn About the Four Types of Homework Students May Have*

¹² Internet: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homework> (Retrieved: 10 November 2011)

(for foreign language learner students it is helpful only in that case when their parents know the language).

When parents do their work at the same time their child does, it sets a good example to the child.

Another thing that can help is the parent-teacher or parent-school cooperation, because this way both the parent and the school can be informed about what the child is able to manage and how the “burden” can be changed for the student’s sake and well-being.

2.5 Amount of Homework Required

A review by researchers at Duke University on homework showed that, within limits, there is a positive interaction between the amount of homework which is done and student achievement. The research also indicated that too much homework could be counterproductive.¹³

This research supports the above mentioned (in the Criticism of Homework) ‘10-minute rule’ which means the process of homework should take 10 minutes per grade and this denotes that a 1st grader should have 10 minutes of home task each day, a 5th grader 50 minutes and a 9th grader has to study at home 90 minutes per day.

In primary school, as the criticism of homework by H. Cooper mentions, much home assignment is not so much effective as it is in upper primary or secondary classes.

In other resources it is advised that the time limit should be 20 minutes per subject, concerning 3 subjects per day.¹⁴

A teacher must be reasonable when giving home assignments because it is also a request for students to be self-governing of their discipline and complete a task on their own.

The only exception to the 20 minute rule is reading. Continued practice and exposure to reading makes better readers, so there will be instances where the homework becomes a fixed number of pages rather than time. Teachers must decide based on the individual student's particular needs.

Remembering the students’ abilities is very important so they will not feel frustrated and let down and will be able to carry out the task.

¹³ Already quoted: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homework>

¹⁴ Already quoted: Wilkins, 2012

The next issue is regularity for the sake of efficiency and durability. The students' proportional workload should concur with children's age and the amount of homework.

Regular evaluation and oral-compliance is required for an effective development.

Home assignments are supposed to be given on an average level based on an average student's knowledge and in case of difficult and long projects the teacher should give at least one week to complete.

If a student is not ready with the assignment, the teacher can give extra task or a so called "punishment" which means the child needs to do this one and an additional work in order to get the final grade or pass the material.

In 1998 the British government cut by half the amount of time spent on homework for primary school children.¹⁵

These new guidelines recommend that the time limit of home assignment done by children should not exceed the '20-minute rule' and it means that this is the total amount of time per day (and not per subject) allowed for home tasks except for the reading activities, which can also take up to 20 minutes.

For upper primary school students this limit is 30 minutes per day.

¹⁵ *Homework Cut for Youngest Learners* (online). Available from:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/211159.stm (Retrieved 12 December 2011)

Chapter 2

3 Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Method and Participants

As the aim of this study was to investigate on the role and importance of homework and to prove that homework is a useful and helpful way of developing knowledge within appropriate limits, it was decided that the best method to adopt for this investigation was making interviews with all sides of the concerned subject. This way, different useful pieces of information and ideas could be gathered and presented below.

Participants were selected on the basis of the topic. Fifteen people were interviewed out of which there were five teachers, both males and females, five children (between the age of 7 and 10, and also from both genders) and parents—mainly mothers as it has turned out that they are the ones who help children with homework most of the time.

In an attempt to make each interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, the interviewer met them separately and talked to them in isolation so that they did not feel embarrassed or uncomfortable to speak and they were not affected by others, either.

According to the aim of the study different opinions and ideas are shown –from the point of view of teachers, children and parents –in the following.

4. Teachers' Point of View

In order to get a wide range of ideas on the matter, there were different questions taken up concerning homework.

4.1 Types of Homework and Workload

The very first question focuses on the reason why a teacher gives homework in general.

According to the answers the main reason is that through homework children can practice and revise what they have studied in class so the information gained will more easily get into their long-term memory and this received knowledge can only be fixed by practicing.

If a student does not do his or her homework it reflects on his/her results and understanding of the topic. One of the teachers said that he never let children go home without knowing or retelling why he/she got a particular homework, because this way children got a better understanding of what and why they were doing something and they did not forget that they did it for themselves not for the teacher or the parents.

The next question was about the type of homework they gave. The most common types were: “choosing the right answer” tests, translation, making up dialogues, word memorisation, studying grammar rules by illustrating them with own examples, grammar exercises from text books and reading short stories (for older students—4th grade).

Three out of the five interviewed teachers said that even if the syllabus required them to give an exact type of homework on an exact topic, they tried to give exercises or tasks that might have been interesting to both children and teacher, because they thought out of experience that children liked to do homework if they felt that what they were doing is important and enjoyable, although test books—especially old ones—did not offer a wide range of interesting tasks. Thus teachers need to have much creativity and put more effort in giving assignments.

All interviewees stated that home tasks must be given in each class and they usually gave them at the end of the lesson in the last 5 minutes, when they explained what to do and discussed with the children the process and tools available to use and of course, the due date.

Of course, the time expected to be spent on homework differs between the age of the students and the type of the task, too. A 1st grader usually gets about 15 minutes of homework, what they do during the afternoon occupation at school. A 4th grader has to spend more time on doing his/her task (between 20-30 minutes) and solves more complicated exercises, like smaller project making or composition writing using words connected to the learned material. There was one teacher who said that he gave only a couple of words to memorize to very young learners.

4.2 Evaluation in the Eye of Teachers

For the question of “How do you correct homework?” the answers varied.

Someone insisted on correcting the work outside of the class, at home, where there was no disturbance and the teacher can think and pay attention to the job more

carefully, while admitting that this method could only be used in case of written homework. Others suggested that when it came to correcting, they rather did it in class with children, especially in case of simple, short exercises which did not require too much time. This helps students to understand what they have done well and on what they need to spend more time. On the other hand it also gives an effective review of the previously learned material. If the given task takes a long time to check, most teachers correct it after school, but they talk it over during the following lesson.

Each of the questioned people was strong-minded that children needed to know how they did on a particular topic after handing in their home assignments. Although none of them used the correcting method when children correct each other's work, but all of them found it useful, however only in upper classes.

Concerning the due date of home tasks, every teacher agrees that it always depends on the given task. If it is a short written work, students have to be ready for the next lesson, but if the assignment requires research or if it is a project work they can hand it in either in three days or in a week. In case of learning or reciting a poem, teacher and children may agree upon a date which would be appropriate for both sides.

Both grade and comment is important when giving feedback on the work—as it has turned out during the interviews. Teachers feel that it is important to tell their students if they need to work harder or to give them praise when they do something well. Thus children learn that even later in life their work will be worth doing and making efforts to do something as perfect as possible, because work and effort always bear their fruit. In the same way, they need to know how they could improve and become better at what they are doing. If a student does not do well on a task it is important to communicate with him/her and find out what is the cause behind the misunderstanding or the lower result.

On the other hand, as it has been mentioned, giving grade for homework is also helpful. This encourages students to want to reach a better result and as it will be discussed later, even bad grades push children toward studying.

For the question “Do you differentiate homework?” four teacher said that they did, because they paid attention to the personal knowledge or achievement of the individual. So children who are ahead of the others usually get a heavier work-load and more difficult exercises than those who are fallen behind. It doesn't mean that children with some kind of special needs do not have to acquire a certain kind or rate of

knowledge, they just need to get more attention and patience and should be given tasks that are eligible compared to their own abilities.

One interviewee mentioned that he gave more difficult assignments to those who attended private lessons or had personal English tutors, because if they studied along with the others while knowing more than their classmates, they could easily get bored and might have thought that they were better than the others and this could have led to some problems when solving tasks.

On the other hand, there was a teacher who insisted that she herself heard that in recent methodology it was preferred to differentiate between children according to their knowledge, she rather stayed objective and gave the same homework to every student, because this way some children did not feel like being kept out from the rest of the group.

4.3 Teacher-parent Communication

Answers differed concerning this part of the interview.

Three of them mentioned that they kept in touch with their students' parents with the help of the school journal and during parents' meetings and informed parents about both positive and negative achievement or development of their children, because they found it important to have a great understanding and communication between the two sides, so both of them could be informed about the progress of the individual student, because this was in everybody's interest and most importantly was for the sake of the child.

Two teachers said that they did not get in contact with children's families regularly, although they admitted that it should be changed, for they understood the importance of it.

All teachers kept record of the homework they give. They used journals and asked children according to the syllabus and the previously given tasks were also written into the class-journal, and the students' personal journal, too, so parents could get a clear view of what their children were supposed to do outside of the class.

Teachers have to check if everybody wrote down the homework into their exercise-books, so children do not forget about it. It is also a good method to ask a student from the class randomly (after giving out the assignment) how s/he has

understood what to do and whether any of the students have questions, since there are not too many parents who are able to help in such subjects as English.

Keeping journal is also helpful to the teacher, so s/he does not have to keep everything in mind and when it comes to control, they can easily look up the previously given task in there.

When a child is not ready with her/his homework, there are different ways a teacher can use as “punishment”.

Some say that it is not worth punishing children, because if they do not understand something, they are not able to do it at home, but others argue that because home task topics are always discussed in class, it is no excuse that somebody does not understand. That is why the teacher is there—to help.

An effective punishment should be reasonable and working.

It seems that most educators use the ‘Three stage punishment’, which means that if a child is not ready with the work for the first time, s/he has a notice written for his/her parents into his/her journal. If it happens for the second time, s/he gets a bad mark into his/her personal journal and in the third case this bad mark is written into the class-journal.

All interviewees insisted that some kind of punishment was necessary, because it did not only help children in studying but also moved them toward good socialization. They need to understand and see how good deeds are rewarded, and on the other hand, bad deeds are punished in society. Thus children understand that they can reach anything by working hard and if they try to avoid work it will lead to a poor-minded and deviant life.

5. Children’s Point of View

There has been lots of research made on the topic of the role or the importance of homework with the help of studying children’s learning approaches and strategies, but there are not too many studies where we can find young children’s opinion about this matter. This is one of the main reasons why these interviews with children have focused mainly on their ideas and opinions.

5.1 Reasons for Doing Homework (Children's Viewpoint)

All five students had almost the same idea about homework and its reasons. They generally have said that it is necessary for learning and helps to improve, and through this type of work they can see what they have been able to understand in class. Home tasks are also given in order to help teachers to realize the results of their teaching.

One child mentioned that in her opinion, teachers gave homework because they wanted students to be occupied in something what they considered useful.

When it comes to studying English language, most children feel that the home tasks are more difficult than those they usually do in class, and the reason for this is that there is not enough time to cover the topic and do exercises in class at the same time, so teachers simply give the more complicated ones for home assignment and that is why students do not always understand what they are supposed to do.

On the contrary, there are cases when they feel an exercise is too easy compared to the ones done with the teacher. Although it might be rather tricky, because it just may be the cause of a good explanation and understanding of the material.

If children understand what they are expected to do, they gladly do so, no matter how difficult it seems to be.

Four out of five children said that they always wrote down what their task was into their journals, mostly because their teachers or their parents said so, but they all admitted that it was useful and helpful when they knew where to look for some information on the work to be done, when they forgot something.

There was a question concerning the regularity of homework. It turned out that they got homework in almost every class, although they did not feel that it was too much, if they understood the task.

The problem is not with the regularity of homework, but with the amount, because according to children there are too many subjects and each teacher gives home task every day and even 4th graders spend at least one or two hours a day studying after school, which they feel too much, especially if we consider the amount advised in Chapter 1, which means that a nine-year old should spend about 40 minutes per day with doing homework.

This above mentioned problem is one of the main reasons that children do not do all their homework for every day. If they get bored with studying they lose interest and rather go and play than sit down and study more. They feel they have been corrupted by

adults, because they have to study in the morning and when they want to rest and play a bit, they have to go back to studying again.

On the other hand—as it has been written previously—another reason for not completing home assignment can be the poor understanding of the material or the instructions. Most things depend on the teacher, even in children's opinion. They think that if the teacher took more time explaining a task and if s/he was more understanding toward those not being good at e.g. English, children would know how to solve a problem. However, students still know that it is their interest to go and ask the teacher if they are not completely aware of what should be done, but they do not do so. The reason is simple: they are afraid that if they do not understand something, their classmates will laugh at them or the teacher will punish them. They do not want to seem stayed behind, and unfortunately this is how they usually step into the trap of dropping behind from the others.

5.2 Evaluation in the Eye of Children

Three children say that they correct their homework in class, with the help of the teacher and they are told what they have said or written incorrect, and at the same time they can correct their mistakes and look through the material once again.

Two of the interviewees have stated that in their class the teacher is the one who always collects the exercise-books and corrects written home tasks at home, but after giving them back, she tells what she has found compulsory to be discussed or explained once again.

Every teacher checks assignments in each class, so it is inevitable to realize one's mistakes and correct them in time, while it does not bring up further problems.

Furthermore, children feel the importance of homework. They think it is very helpful tool to learning, especially English. Among many exercises, when English homework is concerned, children say that word learning is one of the most important task to do, because they do not have time to do it in class, that is why it is given as homework.

Three out of five children insisted that they were usually not very pleased with the feedback they got, because it did not usually contain as much praise as they needed. If they got a good grade or praise it would help them realize that they are important.

By encouragement teachers could reach more than by telling off the children for doing something wrong, because if students feel that they are not good at something and at the same time they are approved of that feeling, they will lose courage to speak up or ask for help.

Grade can be a big issue in this matter.

All the interviewees said that whenever they got a bad grade they felt that they had to prove they could do better.

Children like to compete. If they see a realistic aim which they can follow, they will do anything to reach the goal, because they want to win. In this case the good grade is the ball which needs to be caught and carried on. Thus it does not mean that after getting a good grade one can lay back and rest, on the contrary, it means that the person has to keep up to the others and “fight” for keeping it.

According to children the worst punishment when they do not do their homework is bad grade written into their personal journal. They feel that if their parents see it, they will be disappointed and will think that their child is not clever enough. Children do not want to disappoint either their parents or the teacher.

The answer for the question “What could your teacher do to help you do your homework?” was uniform. To students’ mind the best way to make homework more interesting and helpful is to give tasks that interest them.

It has turned out that children like cross-word vocabulary activities, mystery-solving exercises, answering abstract opinion questions connected to reading materials and so on. Hence, the only thing what a teacher should do to make children like the given assignment is to pay attention to their interest.

6. Parents’ Point of View

This part of the interview section was interesting from the point that only mothers were asked, because as it has been mentioned above, they are the ones who supervise their children’s homework, at least in art subjects.

Three of the polled five mothers felt that their children had to do too much homework, one of them thought that it was just enough and another one said that she had more work (not just homework) when she was at the same age as her child.

Mothers, of course, worry for their children and they do not want them to be overloaded with work. They think students, especially at a young age, need to concentrate rather on playing than doing school work all the time.

On the other hand they send their children to different art or religious studies, like music schools or Bible studies, and that is, admittedly, the main source of concern. It is no surprise children feel fed up with studying and work, if they are in some kind of school in 24 hours of the day. Moreover, when the child finally gets home from the last occupation, s/he still has to sit down and do his/her home task and the next day goes the same way.

Parents say that their children spend about 1 to 2 hours doing home assignments and it is tiring for both their children and for them, because they always try to help.

They create a calm and quiet place for the child where s/he can concentrate on the work and if s/he asks for some help they do anything to help him/her out.

Most of the interviewees said that the only subject they were not able to help with was English, because they had never learned it at school, so their children were not able to do it for every occasion.

However, their children felt happier when they received a good feedback in English than in cases when they were given a helping hand. The reason for this was probably that children knew that they were the ones who actually deserved praise, because that home task was completely their work and it contained all their efforts.

Also, parents insisted that two foreign languages being taught in school were too much and children often confused Ukrainian and English, because they were not fully aware of which language was which.

In these difficult cases and with any problems, parents can turn to the teachers and they admit the fact that the students' journal is a good device through which they can get feedback on their children's performance and at the same time, if they have something to add concerning homework they find most of the teachers cooperative and willing to help.

They think that the school should give a bit less but more effective home tasks to children and should organize events where children are able to show their knowledge.

On the other hand they would like to have more parents' meetings and discussions about helping their children in studying. This problem should be solved locally and it only requires effort and understanding from both sides.

Conclusions

As the aim of this study was to emphasise the importance and role of homework in primary school English teaching it has been proven that all sides involved agree that home assignment plays an important part in studying.

Chapter 1 tried to investigate and unite the previous opinions and studies made by experienced scholars and researchers. Most of them agreed that home task was and had always been beneficial to both teacher and child, for the former got a feedback on what she/he had taught well and effectively and the latter got to know how she/he understood the given material.

On the other hand, it emerged that the amount of tasks required could be counter-productive if it exceeded the limit a child is able to handle without any difficulty, e.g. exhaustion or attention disorder.

In the second part 15 people were interviewed on the basis of their role in this topic.

Teachers thought that children needed homework mainly because this way the material learned in class got into their long-term memories more easily. In case of evaluation the answers differed, because some did it herself/himself, but others involved students into the procedure.

According to children homework could be very useful and they liked doing it if it was interesting. The most surprising answer was that each of them thought that a bad mark increased the desire for better effort and made them more competitive. They all said they found the amount a bit much because they were occupied in too many activities at the same time and did not have enough free time.

The third side, parents, explained that they felt worried about their children, for they were not able to help them do their English homework, although they admitted that it was not their task to do.

All sides admitted that children-teacher-parent communication was incomplete and needed further actions to change toward a better understanding.

References

BANG, H.J., SUÁREZ-OROZCO, C., PAKES, J., O'CONNOR, E.: *The importance of homework in determining immigrant students' grades in schools in the USA context*.

Taylor and Francis

Group, 2009, pp. 1-25. Available

from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131880802704624>

BETTS, J.: *The Role of Homework in Improving School Quality*. University of California, San Diego, 1996, pp. 1-29.

CHEN, Ch., STEVENSON, H.W.: *Homework: A Cross-cultural Examination*. Blackwell Publishing, Michigan, 1989, pp. 551-561.

DURHAM, N.C.: *Duke Study: Homework Helps Students Succeed in School, As Long as There Isn't Too Much*, 2006. Available from:
<http://today.duke.edu/2006/03/homework.html> (Retrieved 13 February 2012)

GOLDSTEIN, S., ZENTALL, S.: *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide For Solving Common Homework Problems*. Speciality Press, Inc., 1999.

Homework (online). Available from: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homework> (Retrieved 12 December 2011)

Homework Cut for Youngest Learners (online). Available from:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/211159.stm (Retrieved 12 December 2011)

LACONTE, R.T.: *Homework as a Learning Experience. What research Says to the Teacher*. NEA Professional Library, West Haven, 1981, pp. 1-33.

Learn About the Four Types of Homework Students May Have (online). Available from: <http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/9683-learn-about-the-four-types-of-homework-students-may-have> (Retrieved 21 March 2012)

PONTE, W.: *The History of Homework*, 2009. Available from: <http://wendy-ponte.suite101.com/the-history-of-homework-a169016> (Retrieved 10 November 2011)

The Importance of Homework (online). Available from: <http://www.earlychildhoodeducation.co.uk/importance-homework.html> (Retrieved 17 March 2012)

The Importance of Homework and Studying (online). Available from: http://mathandreadinghelp.org/articles/The_Importance_of_Homework_and_Studying.html (Retrieved 13 February 2012)

WANKAT, Ph. C: *The Role of Homework. American Society for Engineering Education*, 2001, Purdue University, pp. 1-7

WARTON, P.M.: *The Forgotten Voices of Homework: Views of Students*. Taylor and Francis Group, 2010, pp. 155-165. Available from: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S15326985EP3603_2

WILKINS, R.C.: *Teaching for success—What is Homework?*, 2012. Available from: <http://www.eslteachersboard.com/cgi-bin/articles/index.pl?page=3;read=3676> (Retrieved 13 February 2012)