

Homework – Education’s Biggest Scam

Homework is possibly one of education’s most contentious subjects. Before we ask the purpose of homework we must first look at education.

Q) Why do children/students attend school?

A) To learn

Learning is most effective when done in a relaxed and happy atmosphere: the school must provide a place where the students want to be. Then, and only then, will the students’ learning be maximised. This is our goal and we must start with a clean slate and put strategies in place which promote this. Anything which hinders this must be scrapped. This seems common sense.

The above (providing a place where students want to be) is a prerequisite for effective learning.

Now, let’s consider the purpose of homework. In early years of education there is no reason for homework. If young children in primary school cannot learn all they need to during school hours, there is something wrong with the education system.

In secondary school the purpose of homework is for students to consolidate what they find difficult. After a lesson each student will have different needs as to what work needs consolidation. Only each individual student knows his/her ‘homework needs’ and so only each individual student knows what homework he/she needs to be doing. The logical conclusion to this is that each student chooses his/her homework: the idea of the teacher setting all students the same homework is senseless. If a student chooses his/her own homework he/she is more likely to do it and more importantly, learn from doing it.

The homework pundits will argue that some/many will not do homework. We must ask if homework is appropriate for all students. (In secondary modern schools years ago homework was not set and the students learned appropriate skills to prepare them for life). At the moment, students who do not hand in homework have detention and are often made to complete the homework at school in the presence of a teacher. The student may complete the homework but there is no learning taking place under these conditions.

What does happen is that the student’s relationship with one or more teachers deteriorates, resulting in less learning taking place in lessons. I believe that forcing a student to do homework results in less learning overall because of their ‘anti school/teacher’ attitude.

Efficiency is output/input. From this definition, homework, as conventionally set in schools with the resulting sanctions and marking must be one of the most inefficient tasks of the education system.

There is a wealth of literature exposing the fallacy that ‘homework as conventionally done improves performance’: it does not.

The reason homework is done is because parents/guardians expect it. Schools are often judged by how much homework is set. (If parents believe homework improves performance then they too should be set homework each night by their employer).

Parents, governors and governments need to be educated in what really improves students’ learning.

On a final note, teachers nowadays have no time to focus on what really improves learning as they are too busy doing all the unnecessary tasks (such as all the hours spent on homework issues) imposed by constantly changing government strategies.