Homework in primary education from the perspective of teachers and pupils

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Homework is considered an instrument that reinforces learning (Cooper et al., 2006). However, there are different perspectives as to its relevance with some authors in favour of it and others against.

Thus arises the problem of this research: “How is homework perceived by 4th year teachers and pupils in the municipality of Nelas (Portugal), and if they could decide, would the pupils do their homework?”

Methods

Research of descriptive and correlational nature, based on an inquiry through two questionnaires, one for teachers and another for pupils.

Were inquired 14 teachers and 128 students of the 4\textsuperscript{th} year (9 to 11 years old) of the two Nelas Schools Groupings (Central Region of Portugal)

Statistical analysis – SPSS version 21

Descriptive and inferential statistics (chi-square)

Results

Data on teachers
- All teachers request homework and 85.7\% regard it as very important;
- The majority assign homework every day;
- Portuguese and Mathematics are the most requested curriculum areas;
- Exercises from textbooks and numerical operations are the most frequent type of homework assigned;
- Homework utility: consolidate contents (57.2\%) and creating study habits (25\%);
- Pupils should devote, a day, 30 minutes to 1 hour (71.4\%) or up to 30 minutes (21.4\%).

Data on pupils
- Pupils say that they like homework very much (34.4\%) or quite a lot (43.8\%);
- They would like the teacher to set group work (69.5\%) as well as research on the Internet (51.6\%);
- Most pupils said it is easier to learn if they do their homework;
- Although the majority of pupils take 1 hour or less to fulfill homework, 10.9\% admit that it takes from 1 to 2 hours;
- 88.3% admit they still have time to do other activities;
- 89.9\% of the pupils would do the homework, if they were given the chance to decide, and 10.2\% said they wouldn’t.

H1 - There are significant differences between the decision to carry out homework and the enjoyment in doing it. 
\rightarrow Confirmed hypothesis

H2 - There are significant differences between the decision to do homework and the amount of time spent on it.
\rightarrow Confirmed hypothesis

H3 - There are significant differences between the decision to do homework and the time left over for other activities. 
\rightarrow Not confirmed hypothesis

Conclusion

Both teachers and pupils agree that homework brings benefits for learning.

Some practical implications:
- It is important to strengthen the link between schools and families;
- Teachers should assign homework sparingly and always correct it;
- They should seek to diversify the type of homework and ask optional assignments (e.g. internet research or group work);
- They should also seek to individualize homework in order to overcome pupils difficulties;

Thus, homework can truly be an opportunity for the academic success of all pupils.

References

