

## Homework: the Antagonist of Learning

Homework is a ubiquitous apparatus utilized in all forms of academic environments, with the intention of expanding knowledge and reinforcing previously taught information. It can take several forms, from reading, to practice problems, to extra lectures or observation of videos. While its main objective is to increase academic performance and develop a student's intellectual bank, several psychological studies have revealed it may not be as effective as advertised. Moreover, in many cases academic performance may improve, but the actual learning process is overlooked. Further, a decrease in assigned homework actually can inversely lead to enhanced learning.

The current literature of research finds no correlation between homework and academic achievement in elementary school. In high school students, some research supports the benefits of homework, but many do not. In fact, previous studies concluding an association between time spent doing homework and grades received, have reevaluated their claims, acknowledging that consideration of other variables may disprove their findings (Hattie & Anderman, 2015). Those that do indicate more time spent working on homework on average leads to better grades, do not consider the learning itself, rather solely investigate the correlation from scores.

A fundamental psychological argument opposing the acclaimed benefits of homework is elucidated through distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to motivated behavior driven by internal fulfillment. Alternatively, extrinsic motivation refers to behavior motivated by external sources such as money, awards, grades and numerous others. Compilation of research considering topics beyond academics, demonstrates that when working towards a goal for purposes originating for self-fulfillment, rather than monetary reward, leads to more satisfaction and enjoyment from the initial process.

This can be illustrated by one particular study examining motivation and video games;

individuals reported more enjoyment when playing video games without receiving a monetary reward (Bostan, 2016). This is because the individual views the task from a self-directed effort, and internally justifies enjoyment of the task due to personal preference rather than authoritative direction (Lepper & Greene, 2015). The motivation to play the video game is purely for self-satisfaction, and thus individuals possess more desire to complete the activity as well as report more happiness in retrospect.

This same concept can be applied to homework and learning. Individuals complete assignments through external motivation, under the notion that doing the necessary work will resolve with superior academic performance. However, while this may be true, the actual learning does not necessarily occur. Part of this is due to the gap separating a grade's inability to fully convey learning; receiving an "A" on an assignment does not necessarily indicate mastery of information. Since so much of grading is a subjective process, individuals may not be able to articulate information in the desired manner, regardless of knowing it.

Individuals possess a higher propensity to learn when the motivation comes from within and gain more satisfaction learning for self-driven purposes. When told to learn a new concept, students typically turn to rote memorization. This is sufficient to succeed on tests and quizzes, but is usually forgotten shortly after. Further, students often seek out the minimal amount of information required to attain the desired scores, rather than an interest in actually understanding the underlying concepts. However, when people seek out knowledge out of their own curiosity, they are much more likely to retain and learn from the process. Therefore, completing homework becomes an autonomous task, which not only impedes, but deters from the learning process.

References

Bostan, B. (2016). *Gamer psychology and behavior*. Switzerland: Springer.

Hattie, J., & Anderman, E. M. (2013). *International guide to student achievement*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lepper, M. R., & Greene, D. (2015). *The Hidden costs of reward: New perspectives on the psychology of human motivation*. Psychology Press.