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**PRACTICES ON CAPITALIZING THE HOMEWORK IN THE
DIDACTIC PROCESS**

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Abstract

The research was done at the request of the Romanian Ministry of Education and is part of the study made by the Institute of Educational Sciences following the public debate on homework. The research focuses on the capitalization of homework in the teaching process. The analysis was made according to the time when the homework was certified, the form of checking, and the verification methods were performed. The analysis took into account the participants' residence environment, the gender of the students, the specifics of the subjects and the level of education. From the analysis of the responses received from students and teachers, which refer to time, it turns out that the majority of teachers check the theme in the next hour. The fact that some teachers admit that they do not have time to check homework, as well as students who say that they are not checked, are considering the possible factors that could influence this process: the number of students in the classroom, the lack of motivation of the teachers, the burden with various stressful tasks. Regarding the form of assessment, the front check is predominant, according to both teachers and students. Regarding the way of verification, teachers' answers show a balance between discussing the difficulties encountered with the students, verifying the notebooks and the oral verification. The students responded that the check was made in a large percentage by discussing the difficulties encountered, checking the notebooks and evaluating on paper.

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Keywords: Homework, students, teachers, time, form of checking, modalities of checking.



1. Introduction

Homework is a controversial subject in the school world. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (Dexonline, 2009), through the homework is understood as "Written exercise given to schoolchildren, students, etc. for the application of acquired knowledge". In the literature, homework represents a set of tasks that teachers assign to students to be completed outside the class. Common homework assignments may include required reading, a writing a project, mathematical exercises, problems, or other forms of tasks (Emami, 2014).

Homework has a clear goal and a key role in student development both at school and on a personal level. The themes help the student to consolidate the information learned at school. Everything that is learned at school is meant to help build a solid foundation of information that will help the student feel prepared to face certain challenges in the process of learning. If the themes are not made on time, the information learned in the class is lost, which leads to the formation of deficiencies in the information base of the student (Painter, 2003).

Homework is designed to stimulate student creativity (Carbonem, 2009). Writing themes is an exciting activity for student growth of responsibility. Educating the student with a spirit of responsibility is a very healthy and beneficial process. It has to face the small responsibilities since the early years. This ensures the development of a capable adult and a sense of developed responsibility (Earp, 2014).

The homework and their explanation are an integral part of the lesson, contributes to achievement of aims, is a natural continuation of the lesson and ensures the creative use of the acquired capacities during the course lesson. The role of homework leads to the consolidation of learning outcomes; the development of learning time; learning abilities and the achievement of sustainable learning outcomes in the path of personal development. Homework has the role of developing the student's independent work skills, encouraging learners to access various resources, as well as preparing them for final evaluations. The power of concentration is also very well trained during homework; this activity "benefits factual knowledge, self-discipline, attitudes to learning and problem-solving skills" (Darn, 2007).

The subject for homework have created amongst the school actors - teachers, pupils, parents - two camps: ones pro-theme, that asks for more themes and one cons, that does not want to spend time with homework. The key issue is how the teacher manages the homework topic, the importance it attaches to its quality and quantity of them. The arguments for the homework are both pros and cons.

1.1. The pro arguments

The themes help to assimilation and deepening of lessons taught in class. The homework contains elements learned by students on the day and is required precisely for a better understanding of the notions. These themes force the student to apply the theoretical knowledge to a practical problem. Thus, the theoretical part will be understood and learned more easily and not mechanically. This helps to retain the notions learned over a longer period of time and to find solutions in practical life.

Homework is an effective way to spend time for student. Homework solving will give the pupil an increase in his level of intelligence, which will lead to better results in school and in life. This way, the child will gain more confidence in his or her way of thinking. Also, imposing homework is a good way to prevent the child from engaging in other activities that may not be beneficial to his or her education.

1.2. The cons arguments

Homework is not an effective way to educate children. Homework is ineffective when home children are surrounded by a lot of temptations (eg computer, TV, etc.). In addition, parents are too busy to take care of their children's themes

The student can acquire the knowledge on class. Any application that can be given as the homework can be redefined as classroom work.

The number of homework is too great, and solving them can take a lot of time for children. To home, children need to play or practice other activities, not for school. In addition, they need to have more time to socialize with friends or family. Homework also creates stress for students and their parents and reduces the amount of time that students could spend outdoors, exercising, playing, working, sleeping, or in other activities.

Although homework is designed to help the student better understand lessons taught in the class, however, this does not guarantee success, because some of them are quite difficult. Children often find it difficult to solve homework because either they do not understand the problem or they do not understand the information at school and then they do not know how to apply them at home.

The research was done at the request of the Romanian Ministry of Education and is part of the study make by the Institute of Educational Sciences following the public debate on homework. The public debate took place from 9 to 20 November 2017 and was made on the basis of an online Survey Monkey questionnaire. 70,952 actors from pre-university education attended the consultation: parents, students and teachers from all over the country. The present research focuses on the capitalization of homework in the teaching process. The analysis was made according to the time when the homework was certified, the form of checking, and the verification methods were performed. The responses were given by teachers (10,783 respondents) and students (32,786 respondents) (MEN, ISE, 2017).

The analysis took into account the participants' residence environment, the gender of the students, the specifics of the subjects and the level of education. From the analysis of the responses received from students and teachers, which refer to time, it turns out that the majority of teachers check the theme in the next hour. The fact that some teachers admit that they do not have time to check homework, as well as students who say that they are not checked, are considering the possible factors that could influence this process: the number of students in the classroom, the lack of motivation of the teachers, the burden with various stressful tasks. Regarding the form of assessment, the front check is predominant, according to both teachers and students. Regarding the way of verification, teachers' answers show a balance between discussing the difficulties encountered with the students, verifying the notebooks and the oral verification. The students responded that the check was made in a large percentage by discussing the difficulties encountered, checking the notebooks and evaluating on paper.

2. Problem Statement

The practices regarding the capitalization of homework in the teaching process take into account the following components for their assessment – time, forms and modalities:

- When the themes are verify: in the next hour, after several hours, there is no time / usually do not check the themes;

- What is the form of verification: frontal, individual, by random;
- How the modalities of checking are: discussing of the difficulties encountered by students, checking the notebooks, written or oral assessment.

3. Research Questions

Similar questions have been put to both, teachers and students. The questionnaires are referred to time - when the teacher checks homework, to assessments' forms and to evaluation methods (MEN, ISE, 2017).

- Usually when do you check the homework? (teachers)
- Usually, in your class, when do teachers check the homework? (students)
- What is the form of checking to homework that you use most often? (teachers)
- Usually, how do your teachers check if you've done your homework? (Choose a single answer.) (students)
- What is the way to check homework that you use most often? (teachers)
- Usually, in what ways does your teacher check your homework? (students)

4. Purpose of the Study

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5. Research Methods

The research instruments are the online questionnaires. The implicated actors are teachers and students. The host site is Survey Monkey.

6. Findings

The answers are analysing function to time - when the teacher checks homework, to assessment forms and to evaluation methods.

6.1. Timely reporting; the homework are check: in the next hour, after several hours, there is no time / usually do not do the homework

From the analysis of the responses of teachers to the question "Usually when do you check the homework?", it turns out that the vast majority, respectively 89% of them check the theme in the next hour, while only 2% say they have no time for it. (Figure 01-a)

Analysing the distribution by subject, the teachers of all disciplines responded that in the next hour. There is, however, a differentiation, so that for small classes and humanities the percentage is up to 92%, while to Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the answer is 85.5%. Some of the themes are checked after several hours, but some of the teachers admit they do not have time to check, with the percentage varying between 0.6% for primary and 3.9 for math and science.

When analysing responses according to the residence environment, about 90% of teachers responded that in the next hour, with a 2% difference in favour of the countryside; after several themes/ hours - 9.5% (urban) and 7.7% (rural) respectively. And in this case, we have 2% of city teachers and 1.5% of those in the country who say they do not have time to check the topic. The analysis of the data in the three cases is consistent, meaning that about 90% of the professors say they are checking the themes in the next hour and 2% do not have time for this process.

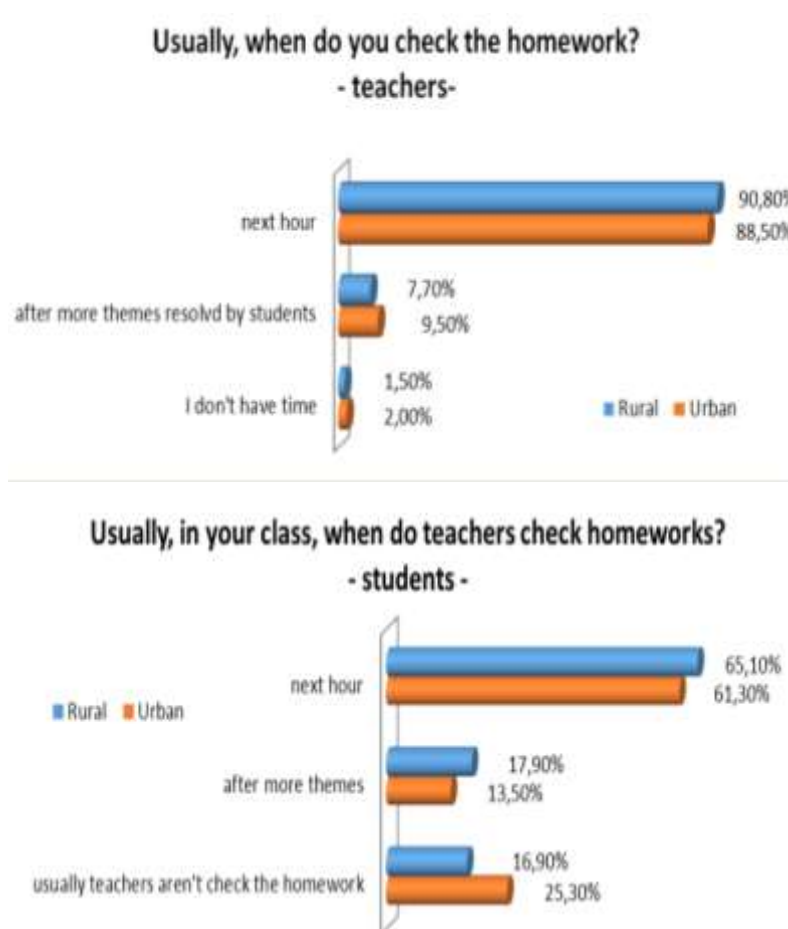


Figure 01. When teachers check the homework: a) answers of teachers; b) answers of students

To the question "Usually in your class, when teachers check the homework?", the students responded in similar percentages, about 60%, both at the primary, secondary and high school, that the checking is made in the next hour. (Figure 01-b) This percentage is in line with the data obtained from the processing of data, function to residence areas, where 65,10% were recorded in rural areas and 61,30% in urban areas. Also, the results function to students' genre show same percent, around 60%. To the "after several hours" option, were recorded values between 13% and 18%, with the exception of pupils in grades 2 and 4, where the result is slightly higher than 22%. The "usually, the teacher not check do the homework" option records quite high percentages, over 22% (with an average of 23.6%) for the answers of gymnasium and high school students. Primary pupils have a lower percentage, but rather high, respectively 15.7%.

Corroborating data from teacher and student responses, we find differences between values, and deviations may be justified by the perceptions of each group of respondents on homework - written themes, lessons learned, projects, frontal verification (it is possible that the students may be quantified as verification of the theme only the checking of written homework). However, the fact that both teachers admit that they do not have time to check, as well as the students who say in high percentage that they are not checked, conduct to the possible factors that could influence this process: the number of pupils in the classroom, the lack of motivation of the teachers, burdening them with various administrative tasks, professional stress...

6.2. Reporting to form of verification: frontal, individual, random

Teachers said that the check is mainly frontal (53%), then individual (31%) and random (16%).

To primary cycle predominate checking the notebooks (62%) and discussing the difficulties (26%), while to gymnasium and high school, to mathematics and natural sciences the percentages is reverse, in the sense that are predominant the discussion about the difficulties encountered by the students (53%), followed by check of notebooks (27.5%); at these subjects, students can receive notes during the oral examination of the themes (12.3%). In the mother tongue and in modern languages, there is some balance between the three types of verification (discussion of difficulties, check of the notebooks and oral examination, with emphasis on the latter).

When analysing the question, taking into account the residence environments, we find that frontal verification is predominant (around 53%) both in urban and rural areas, followed by individual examination of each student (29.6% village, 34% city) and verification by survey (17.5% city, 13.2% village)

From the students' point of view, the form of verification was studied through the question "Usually, how do your teachers check if you've done your homework? (Choose one answer.)".

By far, frontal verification is the most common, with percentages ranging from 46% in the small grades and XI - XII grades, and 58.2% to the secondary school and the lower cycle of the high school. Follows the random checking, the share increasing gradually from the primary (12.7%) to the upper cycle of the high school (35.8%); the individual examination have the highest share in the primary cycle (40.8%) versus the less level for classes XI - XIII (14.9%).

In the gender analysis of these answers, we obtain a similar ranking in the two categories: frontal verification (55.8% girls versus 50% boys); checking only some students by random, (27.5% vs. 29.7% boys); individual verification (16.7% girls versus 20.3% boys). Function by the residence environment, the three types of assessments have the hierarchy is: rural: 54.6% - 21.1% - 24.3% and urban:

53.1% - 30.2% - 16.7%). It can observe that in rural environment teachers check more the individual homework than in the urban schools.

Through corroborating the data obtained, we conclude that both teachers and students assert the same fact, namely that the frontal verification predominates in about 53% of answers. Teachers declared that more check the homework to individual way than random, while the pupils say that teachers make the verification of just some students; after follows the individual check. For small classes, individual verification is almost the same as frontal check (~ 41% vs. 47%). As the responding pupils' age grow, the share of random checking of themes increases and the weight of the individual check decreases.

6.3. Reporting on the way to check homework: discussing with students the difficulties, checking of notebooks, written assessment or Oral Diagnostics

Teachers' responses show a balance between discussing with the students about the difficulties and clarify it, verifying of notebooks and oral verifying them, respectively 35%, 37% and 22%. The assessment of the homework through the written tests has a slight share, only 3%.

Depending on the specificity of the disciplines, we find that in the primary cycle, the verification consists mostly of checking of homework notebook (almost 62%) and discussing of the difficulties - 26%. To the real disciplines, 53% of teachers responded that they were discussing difficulties with students, 27.5% checked the notebooks and 12.30% check through oral proof. To mother tongues and modern languages, there is some balance between checking the notebooks (29.9% vs. 21.8%), discussing of difficulties (30.8% versus 26.8%) and oral verifying (35% vs. 47.4%), which is slightly higher. The evaluation tests have low weights: 1.5% - primary; 4.7% - Mathematics and Sciences; 2.1% native language and 1.2% modern languages.

The analysis in function of the residential environment shows that in the rural area the control of the homework notebooks (42.8% vs. 33.6% urban) prevails, and in the urban area prevail the discussion of the difficulties encountered (37.1% vs. 32.2 % rural). Oral verification is performed in similar percentages (20.4% sat vs. 21.9% city). The assessment tests are practiced at 2% in the village and almost double - 3.8% to the city

To the primary school, the emphasis is on controlling the notebooks (70%) and decreases for the written tests (14.6%) and discussing of the difficulties (13.4%); for the item "teachers listening us from the homework", we have 2.5% of this age group. In gymnasium and high school, the emphasis on examining of the notebooks decreases progressively, to 31.3%, while progressively increasing for written tests (34.7%) and discussing difficulties (30%). It is noted that at high school, the values are fairly distributed between discussing the difficulties encountered, controlling of notebooks and written assessment.

If there is a gender analysis of the answers to this question, there are discrepancies of about 10 percent between results, probably due to different perceptions. Thus the girls answer that the checking of notebooks is 32.7% (versus 45.4% boys), written tests - 30.1% (versus 23.6% boys), discussing of difficulties - 34.1% (versus boys 26.6%) and the oral assessment of homework is 3.1% (vs. 4.4% for boys).

The responses given by teachers and students are similar, but the different percentages are questionable because only one response was requested, one that the respondent considered the most appropriate, so is subjective. We take into account that classroom practice demonstrates that a teacher

applies several forms and ways of evaluation. Students generally answered, depending on the teacher who directly marks their existence, not having the opportunity to refer to each teacher / discipline separately.

7. Conclusion

The conclusions about the homework research are grouped around:

- time (in the next hour, after several hours, there is no time / usually do not do the themes verification);
- the form of checking the homework (front, individual, random);
- the modalities of how are check of homework (discussing difficulties encountered with students, verifying the notebooks, evaluation tests, and verifying);
- the modalities of how are ways to capitalize the homework by teachers.

There are small differences between the answers coming from rural teachers - where it is granted more importance to the individual examination of the theme, at the next hour. Depending on specialty of teachers, preferences for ways to check your homework can be differentiated. Homework is capitalised by teachers towards more for feedback on student learning than to improve their own work.

From the analysis of the responses received from students and teachers, which refer to time, it turns out that the majority of teachers check the theme in the next hour. The fact that some teachers admit that they do not have time to check homework, as well as students who say that they are not checked, are considering the possible factors that could influence this process: the number of students in the classroom, the lack of motivation of the teachers, the burden with various stressful tasks.

Regarding the form of assessment, the front check is predominant, according to both teachers and students. Regarding the way of verification, teachers' answers show a balance between discussing the difficulties encountered with the students, verifying the notebooks and the oral verification. The students responded that the check was made in a large percentage by discussing the difficulties encountered, checking the notebooks and evaluating on paper.

7.1. The conclusions referring to time of check

According to the students and the teachers, the homework check is done mainly in the next hour, a valid observation for all levels of education and the subjects studied (mathematics and natural sciences, native languages, modern languages). A small part of the teachers admits that they do not have time to regularly check the themes, which is confirmed by the "do not check" answers from the students. A possible explanation could be obtained by analysing the factors that influence this process, for example: the number of students in the classroom, overloading teachers with administrative tasks, etc. Through corroborating the data obtained from teacher and student responses, we find differences between the way teachers and students perceive the theme of homework. While teachers have a broader insight into homework, including examining the written themes, lessons learned, and projects, students tend to consider the homework as just written tasks.

7.2. The conclusions referring to form of check

Corroborating the data obtained, we find that for more than half of respondents, students and teachers, frontal verification is predominant. The following two options for teachers are individual check and survey-based. For students, the following two options are "checking only some students", followed by individual checking. For pupils and teachers in primary education, individual check and frontal check have the same relevance. On the basis of the answers formulated, we can see that as the age of the pupil respondent increases, the weight of the individual verification decreases.

7.3. The conclusions referring to the modalities of how are check of homework

In primary education, the emphasis is on the control of the notebooks, followed by scrutinizing written tests and discussing difficulties. The fewest answers are for the "listening to us from the themes". In gymnasium education, there is a reversal of practices in relation to those in primary education. Thus, there is a strong interest in discussing homework problems and verifying the topics through written testing, while checking the notebooks decreases. In high school education, percentage of responses is distributed somewhat balanced between response variants to discuss difficulties encountered, control of notebooks, and written homework tests. From the point of view of the specialty, the following tendencies are emerging: to the mathematics and natural sciences predominate in discussing with students the difficulties encountered; to mother tongues and in modern languages, there is some balance between the three types of verification (discussing of difficulty, verifying the notebooks and oral verification it with emphasis on the latter), and written tests have less percentage. When it analysed students' responses from a gender perspective, there are significant discrepancies - about 10 percent - between girls' and boys' answers.

7.4. The conclusions referring to the capitalizing of homework by teachers

In didactic work, homework is being used by nearly three-quarters of teachers to provide feedback to students about learning. The use of homework as a form of feedback for the teacher's own activity is found in over one third of the teachers' opinions. Giving students' grades / notes for themes and collecting information to give feedback to parents is reported as the practice of no more than a quarter of respondents (the lowest percentage is seen in primary education).

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