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An Evaluation Of Assigning Written Homework For Industrial Arts Courses In Junior And Senior High Schools

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AN EVALUATION OF ASSIGNING WRITTEN HOMEWORK FOR
INDUSTRIAL ARTS COURSES IN JUNIOR
AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

PRAIRIE VIEW AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
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In the thesis title, an evaluation of assigning written homework for Industrial Arts courses in junior and senior high schools deals with the opinions of various junior and senior high school teachers concerning written homework. Information from questionnaires was compiled, and data was analyzed and interpreted. The results were recorded; conclusions were drawn; and, recommendations were made, as a result of the complete study.

AN EVALUATION OF ASSIGNING WRITTEN HOMEWORK FOR
INDUSTRIAL ARTS COURSES IN JUNIOR
AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

A Thesis

by

Lee Wilton Baty

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A Thesis

by

Lee Wilton Baty

Submitted to the Graduate School of
Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

August, 1969

Industrial Education

DEDICATION

To my parents, the late Mrs. Gladys Carter Baty, and Mr. Austin Henry Baty, whose prayers and tender encouragements gave me a strong determination to continue on to attain such goals.

L. W. B.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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L. W. B.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A particularly thorny problem is the old one of homework. This is an area in which there is much misunderstanding; teachers, students, and parents rarely see eye-to-eye. What should you tell parents about homework? Homework, by definition, is a task motivated or initiated in the classroom, performed outside of regular school time, which enriches, extends, stimulates, or strengthens learning directly related to classwork.

"A child's success in school depends largely on how he does his homework," says Dr. Theisen.¹ Parents should aim to give the kind of help that encourages a child to succeed on his own. This is not as simple as it sounds. Many sincere parents are puzzled about homework. They are fearful of helping incorrectly; for example, they are fearful of using outdated methods of reading or problem-solving in arithmetic. Parents are

¹ Josephine M. Purtell, "What Shall We Tell Parents About Homework?", Catholic School Journal, LXV (January, 1965), pp. 21-22.

fearful of helping their children too much with their homework. As a result of parents helping them too much, the children will become dependent upon the parents and will not do anything themselves.²

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to collect and present data relative to the opinions of teachers of Industrial Arts concerning assigning written homework.

In making this study, data was sought which would assist in answering the following questions:

1. Do you assign written homework?
2. How often should written homework be assigned?
3. To what degree expended by the teacher in assigning homework is justified by student participation?
4. To what degree should students be allowed to work on assignments of their own interests?

It is imperative that social institutions in a democracy have a worthwhile purpose. In determining the direction or goal of Industrial Arts in a dynamic society,

²E. H. Hanson, "What About Homework?", National Education Association Journal, LVII (January, 1968), pp. 32-34.

the needs, abilities, and interests of students are paramount. The needs of the individual must be served if education is to be of maximum assistance. To be able to supply these needs, various studies are constantly in progress to determine specific areas in which aid will be needed in rendering a better vocationally-prepared graduate.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The problem grew out of a discussion between various teachers of Industrial Arts and parents about written homework in Industrial Arts courses. There were many parents who felt that the teachers gave too much homework to students for this kind of course because they thought that, for Industrial Arts courses, students did not have to do anything but make some kind of project and written homework was not necessary. Parents felt that the written homework conflicted with the child's social and economic status because, in many cases, the students had to work in order to help support the family or for some other reasons. In addition, parents felt that some teachers assigned written homework too often and made assignments too long and insignificant.

Still others felt that homework should be standardized, that is, a teacher could only assign so many given assignments in a week, month, or semester. Some thought that if each teacher in every course made an assignment, the child would never have the opportunity to get out all of the assignments; on the other hand, how would the child know what assignment to get out? There were others who thought that Industrial Arts teachers used written home assignments as a means of some sort of punishment to students for some of their misbehaviors which may or may not prove to be good.

HYPOTHESIS

Written homework is a means of stimulating interest in class and may provide new learning experiences.

ASSUMPTIONS

The writer has made the following assumptions:

1. The student may learn faster and with greater interest as a result of being assigned homework.
2. Written homework is justified.
3. Written homework is conducive to worthwhile learning.

4. Written homework is a means of developing study habits.
5. Written homework may encourage the students to read beyond the regular course requirement.
6. Written homework is a means of developing research techniques.
7. Written homework is independent study and the instruction is individualized.

DEFINITION OF TERM USED

The term "homework", as used in this study, concerns itself with a task motivated or initiated in the classroom, performed outside of regular school time, which enriches, extends, stimulates, or strengthens learning directly related to classwork.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to seventy-four (74) Industrial Arts teachers concerning written homework in Industrial Arts courses in twelve (12) junior high schools and ten (10) senior high schools in the Dallas area.

This study does not include technical high schools and the questionnaires that were sent out represent sixty-four per cent (64.0%) of the returns of the questionnaires from the Dallas schools to whom questionnaires were sent.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The following steps were utilized as a method of procedure in gathering and compiling data presented in this study:

1. A questionnaire was designed.
2. Seventy-four questionnaires were mailed out to Industrial Arts teachers.
3. Information from the questionnaires was compiled.
4. The data was analyzed and interpreted.
5. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Most experienced teachers have heard parents complain that their children spend hours over homework and, yet, come home with low grades. An alert parent can help to spot a student's weakness in study skills such as selecting main heads and subheads, adjusting, reading speed as to purpose and content, taking notes, outlining, and summarizing.

Dr. Theisen³ offers four general suggestions for parents on the problem: (1) show an interest in the child's schoolwork; (2) understand the school's homework policy; (3) set up proper home condition for study, and (4) encourage the child to develop good study habits.

At what point does a parent give too much help? Parents must not actually do the homework. Educators agree that this does more harm than good. A youngster's marks may go up temporarily if he hands in homework done by another, but he soon falls behind if he does not

³Ibid.

understand the material. Parents may give suggestions, but they must avoid doing the child's thinking for him.

REASONS FOR HOMEWORK

And now teachers, how about a little homework.

1. It can provide experiences and activities that contribute to the child's total development.
2. Homework encourages supplementary reading and research.
3. It helps to develop initiative, self-direction, and a sense of responsibility.
4. It should generate interest in doing individual work geared to the needs, desires, ability, and environment of the pupil.
5. Homework develops an awareness of resources available in the home, neighborhood, and community.
6. It extends and broadens classroom learning.
7. Homework gives practice in skills learned in the classroom and strengthens them.⁴

⁴"Succeed in Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, LXVII (January, 1962), p. 160.

One reason for thinking that discussion about homework will subside, with increased federal and state funds for schools, is that there are more existing things about which to talk. Racial integration and possible federal control through grants, are high on the list. Individual states are concerned with recently established community colleges, system-wide re-organizations, "bussing" children about school districts, student demonstrations on college campuses, etc. But, if America continues to look upon both home and school as basic institutions in developing children up to middle adolescence, relationships between homes and public schools will continue to be important in the development. Homework may be significant in those relationships.

Any complex society must recognize several types of differences among homes. Partly because of welfare programs and partly in spite of them, but largely regardless of them, some type of family group will continue to exert considerable influence on American children.

Homework potential is important in the situation described. Parents largely encourage their children in learning, and devote time and energy to helping them with specific tasks. Parents also sacrifice personal convenience

to provide the children with suitable learning facilities at home. Children in situations of this kind are cheated by the school when it is unwilling to offer them and their parents guidance on learning activities which might be carried on at home. Probably, many children of this kind suggested are forced to spend hours viewing television because of nothing else to do.

Educational televisual viewing could be expanded to provide more for children than it does, but with America's conception of free enterprise reflected through advertiser dominated broadcasting, the prospects for extensive television programs for children seem remote. One outcome of automation, and other developments which increase is the total excessive amount of leisure time available to the American people. It seems that research and technology in material production have been revolutionized faster than concepts of personnel needs. Another influence is the choice which has prevailed in America with a growing culture lag in educational programs and the fumbling procedure by which young people enter upon particular vocations.

Another item grows out of the foregoing ones. It concerns a narrowing of what is called vocational choices.

In accord with social psychology and the American concept of freedom, there will be an effort to make the narrowing gradual and painless. A culture does not necessarily develop its greater strength or make progress through forcing its greater efforts on the least competent, least eager, and least well-equipped, and encouraging the more competent, willing and better equipped to dally and drift. Some concepts of democracy and humanitarianism could be more realistic in their views along the lines indicated.⁵

Homework assignments furnish upper elementary and secondary school teachers one of their best opportunities for meeting individual needs.⁶ But, too often, teachers ignore this opportunity. Instead, the same assignment is given to all students in the class, despite their different abilities and interests. Even then, the assignment is often presented poorly. Too frequently the assignment is something shouted at the students as the bell rings at the end of the period.

⁵Albert D. Waterman, "Homework Curse or Blessing," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, XLIX (January, 1965), pp. 42-46.

⁶A. W. Martin, "Homework with A Purpose," Instructor, LXXV (September, 1965), pp. 13-14.

As the matter of homework assignment is inspected, one needs to remember a prime fact about learning. It is that education cannot be poured into a student. He is not an empty bucket to be filled at the teacher's will. Instead, the student is a very active organism trying to fulfill his needs. He pays attention and learns those things that he sees as helping him meet his needs and he ignores those things for which he sees no personal use. Likewise, he rejects them.

Therefore, if it is agreed that students work diligently only on those tasks which they are convinced will benefit them, the wise teacher is the one who takes time to make sure pupils see how the assignments they are given are really worth their efforts. Although, in class, pupils receive a stimulus to learn from their schoolmates and the teacher, some of the most important learning occurs when they work alone at home to solve problems they have accepted as being worthwhile.

Here is the way one high school chemistry teacher attempted to (1) suit homework to individual abilities and interests, (2) make certain the assignment was understood, and (3) convince the students that the task was

worth their effort so that they would pursue it with a will.

The day before the assignment was given, the teacher had prepared a duplicated instruction sheet which contained a space at the top for the student's name, three columns of suggested chemistry topics, an explanation of the criteria the teacher would use in evaluating the completed reports, and the date the reports were due. This was to ensure that every student would clearly understand what was expected of him.

The following day, the teacher did not simply hand out the assignment sheets and expect he had thus done his job. Instead, he dedicated a major portion of the class period to the assignment, for he considered this assignment important and he wanted to make sure it had a good chance of succeeding. So, he opened the period with what he considered a pep talk that he hoped would explain the purposes of the assignment and would stimulate student interest and a desire to do the job well.

After answering several students' questions about this aspect of the assignment, the teacher drew their attention to the set of criteria he would use for judging the quality of the final reports. The criteria

(in the form of questions) included: (1) Was the problem or question posed by the topic answered satisfactorily? (2) Was information drawn from appropriate sources, and were these sources identified in footnotes and bibliography? (3) Was the explanation clear; that is, did it move from one logical step to the next? (4) Did the explanation stick to the main problem, or did it wander off? (5) Was the explanation illustrated as needed? (6) Was the paper in neat form and correct English?

The teacher explained each of these points, giving examples from former years to clarify what mistakes to avoid. He explained that some criteria (such as 1 and 2) would count more heavily than others (such as 5 and 6) toward the final mark.

To clarify the assignment further, the teacher passed to the class some of the better papers handed in to fulfill this assignment during the three previous years. This, he thought, would give them a clearer idea of what was expected and would enable them to try judging these sample papers according to the six criteria.

This process, and the students' questions that accompanied it, took up the major portion of the chemistry

period. After class and after school, the teacher was available to give further advice to individuals who requested it.

CHAPTER III

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The general essence of this evaluation was to show factual data, as related to the teacher's evaluation of assigning written homework for Industrial Arts courses.

It was interesting to note that the analysis of this investigation showed that teachers from junior high schools had more interest than senior high school teachers, based upon the results of the returns of the evaluation.

The school composed chiefly of classrooms is obsolete. In schools of the future, upwards, one-half of the students' time will be spent in the library, in science and industrial education laboratories, or in other work rooms where they can search for knowledge, analyze data, reflect upon the ideas which they are encountering and put their conclusion in writing.

Because of this trend, the teacher's thinking concerning homework in Industrial Arts and the nature of its courses is reflected in Table I on the following

page. Of the teachers surveyed, thirty-eight or (76.0%) assigned written work, while only ten or (20.0%) were against it, and two or (2.0%) made no reply.

This factor leads to the problem at present. Equipment and school space is greatly taxed by recent increase in student load. School laboratory equipment shortage is a problem from the point of view of original cost, plus the fact that increased student usage wears out the equipment more rapidly. As students and community pressures on the schools increase, a more efficient use of school facilities is demanded. Classrooms and laboratories dare not lie idle for long periods of time.

Of those teachers who indicated that they assigned homework, it was interesting to note the justification and the frequency at which they assigned the work. According to the answers given on the questionnaire (see Table II), teachers indicated a "high" degree or (78.0%) justification in assigning homework; on the other hand, teachers who opposed assigning homework indicated that because of the nature of Industrial Arts courses, students

TABLE I

TEACHERS' EVALUATION CONCERNING HOMEWORK

Reason Checked	For Homework	Number	Per Cent
A	Stimulate Class Interest	10	26.4
B	Help Students Come in Contact with Unexplored Information	11	28.7
C	Increase Ability to Read and Research	5	13.2
D	All Material Cannot Be Covered in Class	10	26.4
E	Help Evaluate Progress	2	5.3
Against Homework			
A	Subject Does Not Lend Itself to Written Work	8	66.7
B	Too Much Time Spent; No Time to Evaluate	1	8.3
C	Not Enough Effort in Work	1	8.3
D	Have to Purchase Special Material	0	0.0
E	After School, Time Should Be Devoted to Family Life, Church, Recreation and Social Life	2	16.7

tend to forget assignments, and students need some time off as their reason. Therefore, special emphasis should be placed upon individual flexibility in the instructional programs and activities.

Many schools, however, now recognize this and are reducing the amount of time spent on lectures and homework, and increasing the time devoted to individual study at school. Since there are many components to individual study, it is suggested that homework be treated as one of these components, and that when homework assignments are made, account should be taken of the limitation related to study at home.

Table II will give the teacher's opinion concerning the justification and frequency of assigning written homework.

Vast changes will be made in goals, patterns of instruction, organization of staff and curriculums, and in the use of resources. Therefore, facilities must be constructed that will lend themselves to changes not yet predictable. Design concepts should provide specific and multi-functional use of spaces constant with educational programs. An educational program of vocational

TABLE II

JUSTIFICATION AND FREQUENCY OF HOMEWORK

Justification	Number	Per Cent	Frequency	Number	Per Cent
Very High	1	2.7	Real Often	3	7.6
High	19	50.0	Often	17	44.8
Moderate	8	21.0	Sometimes	9	23.8
Little	8	21.0	Where Need Arises	5	13.2
No	0	0.0			
No Reply	2	5.3	No Reply	4	10.6

technical content should produce self-education and responsible workers.

Table III indicates the teachers surveyed and their evaluations concerning the type of homework and the amount of student involvement. Of the teachers who approved of homework, it was noticeable that (19.0%) indicated research and reports from text books as their basic requirements for homework assignments, while essays and experimental exercises were the least important of the assignments given. Therefore, schools should provide opportunities, space, and resources for independent work and study. The relationship should be such as to encourage and promote individual responsibility.

Educators recognize homework as a simple reinforcement of learning gained at school. In an affluent society, many parents are willing to provide private lessons for their children in many interest areas. The number of communities which offer a few concerts and other cultural endeavors each year is increasing. Yet, many students find it impossible to attend these activities because of homework assignments or examinations scheduled without regard to other community activities.

It is recognized that the school, however, cannot curtail its program to accommodate all community events, but it does seem logical and desirable to honor a few major informal educational events each year. Table IV indicates teachers' evaluations as to the coordination of work and the giving of extra credit because of the above reasons.

Of the fifty teachers surveyed, it was found that fourteen or (28.0%) coordinated their homework assignments with other teachers, while twenty-eight or (56.0%) made their assignments at random, with no regard of other student commitments, and eight or (16.0%) made no reply. Also, twelve or (24.0%) of the teachers gave extra credit, while twenty-six or (52.0%) did not, and twelve or (23.0%) made no reply.

This, perhaps, accounts for some students' seemingly not wanting or not putting enough time in Industrial Arts courses. Too much time spent on assignments will automatically discourage students from doing any of the assignments, or they will wait until the last minute and copying something from the text or some other related source.

The following statistics were compiled in relation to the following questions:(1) Should homework be just

TABLE III

TYPES OF HOMEWORK AND STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Types	Number	Per Cent	Student Involvement	Number	Per Cent
Essay	4	10.5	Very High	9	23.5
Experimental	4	10.5	High	18	47.3
Book (Text)	14	36.9	Moderate	3	7.5
Field Trips	9	28.6	Little	3	7.5
Research	5	13.2	No	0	0.0
No Reply	2	5.3	No Reply	5	13.2

TABLE IV

TEACHERS' EVALUATION AND EXTRA CREDIT

Coordination	Number	Per Cent	Extra Credit	Number	Per Cent
Yes	14	28.0	Yes	12	24.0
No	28	56.0	No	26	52.0
No Reply	8	16.0	No Reply	12	23.0

a continuation of class work? and (2) Should homework be material that students are capable of doing on their own? Twenty-two per cent (22.0%) indicated positive and (78.0%) indicated negative; (100.0%) indicated positive with none replying negative or no reply, respectively.

Another question, "Should homework be grouped" revealed that (51.0%) indicated positive, (45.0%) indicated negative, with only (4.0%) giving no reply. Those answering positively based their answers on the factors listed on the questionnaire: (1) a wider variety of information; (2) gives each student a part of the responsibility. Those answering negatively based their answers on the following factors: (1) Slower students tend to let the smarter students do the work, and (2) It is hard to check the individual student's progress as he answers.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the information resulting from the statistics gathered from the data, the writer would like to make the following observations. What is needed is a sensible re-evaluation of the role of education in the American society and a decision concerning the respective roles of formal and informal agencies. School facilities, under the leadership of building principals, must make some policy decisions with regard to homework and its place in the learning process. This is appropriate and necessary subject matter for professional staff meetings. Decisions should result in the establishment of policies regarding homework, and these policies should result from serious consideration of the following questions:

1. What should be the relationship between formal and informal educational activities?
2. What values may be expected from formal educational activities?

3. Should the school be concerned with the special interests of youth?
4. Is independent study a legitimate and high priority means of achieving educational goals?
5. What types of independent studies are best pursued in the school environment where teachers, equipment, and materials are readily available?
6. What types of independent studies are best pursued effectively at home without seriously handicapping the student?
7. Is it possible, and desirable, to plan assignments in such a way that foundational and reinforcement work are completed at school under the direction of the staff and reading and other enrichment assignments are handled as homework?
8. Is it possible and desirable to eliminate homework assignments of a class or group nature?
9. Is it possible to secure staff agreement concerning the amount of time a student should be

expected to spend on school work after leaving the school each day?

10. Are parents entitled to a written policy statement on homework? Would this help reduce some of the criticism directed at the junior and senior high schools?

Formal schooling is not all of life, nor is it the sole method of preparing for adulthood. Some would even press for a bit of leisure time for youth, arguing that it is essential to reflective and creative thinking. Certainly, this is a time to reflect upon the kind and amount of homework being assigned and to engage the secondary school staff in the process of evaluating the role of homework in the total process of education.

When homework assignments put an average student against a gifted one without benefit or organized school facilities, it is rightly judged a curse. But, when homework is assigned on the basis of individual interest, permitting students to make maximum use of expanding library materials, it is indeed a blessing.

No one seriously questions the value of homework at a time when the amount of knowledge is increasing at an

unbelievable rate. But, this in itself is hardly sufficient to support the notion that the young should be scheduled with fifty-five (55) to sixty (60) hours of school work per week. Much of the criticism which is directed at homework today is aimed at that part of the educational program which the student is expected to complete away from school. In this situation, the student often needs help and help is not always available. Also, some teachers require more than their fair share of student time. Both of these situations are easily eliminated, yet they persist. Perhaps, this is due to educators' recognition of homework as simple reinforcement of learning gained at school. It could and should be more than this. Homework, when assigned, should be viewed as an integral part of school work. It provides one means of meeting the need for individual study. But, individual study should be recognized as a fundamental pattern whereby the individual achieves self-realization. This requires formal organization and is best learned at school.

Many schools now recognize this and are reducing the amount of time spent on lectures and increasing the time devoted to individual study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this evaluation seem to justify the following recommendations:

1. That a study similar to this should be made of all junior and senior high schools within a district, so that a more complete picture of the field's work requirement may be obtained.
2. That schools should become more concerned about the special interest of their youth.
3. That teachers should be concerned about the relationship between formal and informal instructional activities.
4. That independent study is legitimate and high priority should be given to this mean of achieving educational goals.
5. That more plans be formulated in such a way that foundational and reinforcement work can be completed at school.
6. Staff agreement be secured concerning the amount of time in which a student's reinforcement work can be completed at school, if any.

7. Inform parents in a written policy statement of homework.

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A P P E N D I X

QUESTIONNAIRE

The knowledge gained from this survey will aid in determining what type and amount, if any of written homework should be assigned in Industrial Arts courses.

Sex: M F (Circle one.)

Teaching experience: (Circle one.) 1 to 3 4 to 7
8 to 12 Over 12

Subjects and grade(s) you now teach:

_____ Subject(s) _____ Grade(s)

1. Do you assign written homework? _____ Yes _____ No

If Yes, check reason(s).

- _____ A. Stimulates class interest.
- _____ B. Helps student come in contact with information that otherwise might be unexplored.
- _____ C. To increase ability to read and research.
- _____ D. All material cannot be covered in class.
- _____ E. Helps evaluate progress.

If No, check reason(s).

- _____ A. Subject area does not lend itself to written work.
- _____ B. Too much time unwisely spent, and not enough time to evaluate.

- _____ C. Students do not put enough effort in work.
- _____ D. Students would have to purchase special materials.
- _____ E. Students' after school time should be devoted to family life, church, social activity, and recreation.

II. How often should homework be assigned? (if you answered Yes to Question 1).

_____ Real often (1 to 2 per week), _____ Often (1 per week), _____ Sometimes (3 times per semester), _____ Seldom (1 per semester), _____ When need arises.

_____ A. Should homework be grouped? _____ Yes
_____ No

Yes: _____ 1. A wider variety of information.
_____ 2. Gives each student a part of responsibility.

No: _____ 1. Slower students tend to let the smarter students do the work.
_____ 2. Hard to check individual student progress.

_____ B. Do you prefer weekend assignments? _____ Yes
_____ No

Yes: _____ 1. More time available.
_____ 2. A better chance to accumulate needed information.

No: _____ 1. Tend to forget.
_____ 2. Need some time off.

III. To what degree, expended by the teacher in assigning homework is justified by student participation.

_____ Very High _____ High _____ Moderate
 _____ Little _____ No

A. Should extra credit be given for homework?

_____ Yes _____ No

B. Should work be just a continuation of class work that can be done outside of class?

_____ Yes _____ No

C. Should work be material that students are capable of doing on their own?

_____ Yes _____ No

D. Do you coordinate work assignments with other teachers?

_____ Yes _____ No