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A Qualitative Phenomenological Study on Elementary School Teachers' Past and Present Perceptions on Homework and How Those Perceptions Influence the Type of Homework They Assign to Their Students Today

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A Qualitative Phenomenological Study on Elementary School Teachers' Past and Present
Perceptions on Homework and How Those Perceptions Influence the Type of Homework They
Assign to Their Students Today

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study is going to explore the perceptions of teachers on different topics such as their views of homework when they were students themselves, what type of homework they assign to their students today, and how they implement or suggest implementing effective homework strategies. It is hypothesized that most teachers would have had a positive view of homework when they were students to even become a teacher in the first place. Also, it is predicted that most teachers assign more pen-to-paper worksheets instead of projects or discussions. This study will look to see why teachers do not assign the more beneficial type of homework and how their perceptions of homework influence the type of homework they assign now.

Keywords: homework, teacher, perceptions, views, effective, strategies

Introduction

Elementary school students are being sent home with packets of worksheets to complete as homework almost every week for every year they are in school. Even in the grades where they are first learning to recognize words, students are expected to be able to read instructions and thoroughly complete each worksheet by the next day or by the end of the week. Student feedback explains that they dislike the amount of work they are given and they see no purpose in sitting for hours “practicing” concepts (Wilson & Rhodes, 2009). Most parents, although advocates for homework, would agree that there needs to be a line drawn between just the right amount of practice and too much busy work (Ohanian, 2007). Many teachers try to appease the “mandated policy” implemented by the districts, but need to start considering different ways to make homework less pen-to-paper and more collaborative and engaging (Sadlier, 2011). If students continue to receive packets, they are more likely to lose the drive to do their homework and begin to not turn it in. By receiving an incomplete, the students’ grades have the potential to suffer as a result. As teachers, we need to encourage discussion, expression, and motivation so that students will want to do their homework and learn what they need to while having fun.

The struggle that most teachers face is the balance between what they want to do and what they can do. From what I have observed, it seems that most teachers want to assign projects and facilitate discussions, however, they say it is easier to check for understanding and grade with physical paper such as worksheets. The current study will look at why teachers assign mostly worksheets even when they believe that more interactive assignments are more beneficial. The study will go back to the root of the problem: when teachers were students themselves. The gap that exists in literature is the lack of the actual perceptions of teachers on homework and their reasoning behind assigning the types that they do. The problem being

addressed in this study is the disconnect between what teachers want to assign and what they feel is easier and what is expected of them. The study hopes to gain insight on the views that teachers had on homework when they were Elementary students and how those views affect the type of homework they assign as teachers.

The purpose of this qualitative study is a to get a deeper understanding of why teacher assign the homework that they do. Through interviews and observations, this study will seek teachers' perceptions on homework from when they were in primary school, how their views have changed through getting their credentials, and what they wanted to assign versus what they actually assign currently in their classrooms. Since research has shown that homework is indeed beneficial to student learning, this study will ask teachers their opinion on how they currently implement effective homework strategies or what they will do in the future (Sidhu, Fook, & Singh, 2010).

This study is needed because there is little to no research done connecting the teachers' views on homework when they were students to their views on homework now. By looking at teachers' changing or unchanging perspectives on the subject and comparing them to their strategies now, the study will see where the disconnect lies and where improvements can be made. Also, by exploring their perceptions on homework, we can see why they give the types of homework they do.

The research question of this qualitative study is: How do primary school teachers' perceptions of their homework when they were students influence the type of homework they assign in their classrooms today? Implications for this study may include using this as a tool for principals to use as part of the interview process. By asking questions about the applicants' experiences as a student and about the homework they intend to assign, the person hiring new

teachers can gain additional insight on the connection between the two phenomena. Another use for this study is for educators. They can use the study to help reevaluate their views on homework and reflect on their experiences not only as teachers but as past students as well. They can start to see a connection between their changing perceptions and discover ways to improve their current teaching philosophies.

Literature Review

Homework is one of the many hallmarks that exist in the public school system. These daily and weekly assignments that students are expected to take away from school and complete at home allow for accountability when it comes to their independent work. Most of the research shows that homework is beneficial and needs to stay a large part of the academic regime. While looking at homework, one needs to take into consideration not only the students, but also the teachers and parents since they are involved as well. Surveys have been given and interviews have been conducted asking parents, students, and teachers their views on homework. The consensus is that homework has the potential to be one the most beneficial aspect of school. However, most teachers often give it as busy work. This study investigates teachers' perceptions on homework while considering the perspectives of students and parents in order to find ways to make homework more effective.

Parents' Expectations and Responsibility in Homework

From my experience, parents play a huge role in their child's academic success. Much of the educational community would agree that parents are "where it all begins" and that a supportive parent will produce a focused and high-achieving student (Korkmaz, 2007). The term "homework" literally means work being done at home, which is where the parents are. If the parents are involved and offer help, the child will most probably succeed. However, it seems the opposite occurs when the child is neglected. Ishihara-Brito (2013) said that even though some parents want to help, they are unable due to their lack of knowledge or level of education. In those circumstances, even the most caring, helpful parent would not seem to be of much help unless they themselves have an educated background. Another issue arises when the parent is negatively involved and asserts their low expectation of their child (Silinskas, Kiuru, Aunola,

Lerikkanen, & Nurmi, 2015). When the parent constantly underappreciates the child's efforts and views their child as being slow or lazy, the child most probably suffers academically and emotionally as well. If a child does not feel comfortable at home, how can they be expected to complete lengthy assignments each night?

It is common notion in society that parents are expected to provide a safe and encouraging environment at home so that their children can thrive. Matei and Ciascai (2015) said that parents need to push their children to do their homework and assist the teachers in maintaining students' accountability. One way that was found successful was the implication of "web-based" communication (Portier, Peterson, Capitaio-Tavares, & Rambaran, 2013). If a parent can see the progress, grades, and nightly homework of their child, it is easier to keep everyone accountable and preserve inclusiveness in all parties. It also perpetuates more involvement in the child's academic success.

Sometimes parents are unaware that their absence or neglect has an important implication on their child's success. From what I have seen, it is the teacher's job to attempt to create and uphold "partnerships" with their students' parents. Perhaps by getting family phone numbers and email addresses and sending frequent take-home notes, a teacher can reach out to the parents to show they want them to be involved in their child's work. Frequently asking for parents' help and feedback is also a way to engage in a "partnership". If parents can be open with the teachers and tell them when homework is "too busy" or "to much", a beneficial bond can be formed (Sadlier, 2011). When parents, children, and teachers all work together within a united system that values mutual trust and collaboration, the students are most likely to reach their full potentials.

Students' Perceptions on Homework and Achievement

Research has been done to see why students are less likely to not complete the homework they are assigned. Some reasons could be that they are not motivated or that they are too busy to do hours of homework each night. Wilson and Rhodes (2010) did a study where they gave out surveys to see what students said was the reason for their incomplete homework. Many students said it was because they did not see any purpose in homework and that it was too much work to do in one night. Another study was done where they evaluated students' emotions during classwork versus homework. It was revealed that students are more anxious, angry, and bored while doing homework compared to when they are doing classwork (Goetz et al., 2012). Homework was also seen to be taking over students' out-of-class time and interfering with family life. One mother that was interviewed said, "When whole families feel stressed over a child's homework" and it gets in the way of their time together, "then there is too much homework" being assigned (Ohanian, 2007, p. 42). So if the child sees no purpose or feel overwhelmed with the amount, they may be more likely to decide not to do their homework all together. If students start to refuse to do their homework, their overall grade and academic achievement are more likely to be compromised.

Although students are more likely to see the negative side of homework, most can appreciate the benefits. It is commonly known that homework is required and that students need to do it in order to succeed in school. Also, most students are motivated to learn and find some sort of purpose in practicing concepts they are taught outside of the class. Even if this positive outlook is more likely to be uncommon, there still exists some students who like homework because it gives them the opportunity to apply their skills and show what they know in a personal, individualized way (Bempechat, Li, Neier, Gillis, & Holloway, 2011).

Bempechat et al. (2011), Goetz et al. (2012), and Wilson and Rhodes (2010) conducted research where students were interviewed to give their opinion on how they want homework to be assigned. To the students, the most important element was having clear explanations and demonstrations of what was expected of them when it came to their homework. Many students favored project-based work to worksheets. Also, they preferred the classroom to be a “safe place” for them to work out any mistakes they made before turning in an assignment for a grade. The last suggestion students had was to allow them to start homework in class. This time in class will allow them to ask questions about the homework and get the opportunity to see examples of what may be in the homework (Sidhu, Fook, & Singh, 2010). For those students who may get little to no help at home, a designated time to start homework has the potential to be extremely beneficial.

Teachers’ Role and Viewpoints on Homework

Whether teachers want to assign fun activities or not, most circumstances seem to force them to comply with different districts’ mandated homework policies. One example is the “Ten Minute Rule” where you multiply the grade level by 10 and the product is how many minutes per night each student is expected to spend on their homework (Sadlier, 2011). Also, many teachers find that they have no choice but to give worksheets and packets because not only do administrators seem to expect daily assignments, but parents do as well (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010).

To help balance out the amount of paper-based homework, Cummins-Sebree and White (2014) suggested that teachers implement a strategy called the “flipped-classroom”. This is where students are expected to learn the material at home and then come back and apply their knowledge in projects and discussions in class. By assigning videos to watch and textbooks to

read at home, a student will have more time for applying their newly learned skills in class. Also, more time for discussion and activities will most likely keep more students engaged and motivated to come to class prepared so they can participate in the fun. Although most of the research done with flipped classrooms is done in college settings, some strategies could be adapted to primary school classes.

From my observations, teachers know that homework is important. Most know that “practice makes perfect” (Kaur, 2011). Many teachers also know that planning curriculum and homework is extremely time consuming and unpredictable. With trying to balance the mandated time policy and parents’ expectations, teachers seem to try their best to appease everyone. Through classroom observations, I see how it could be difficult to assign any out-of-class projects, especially to younger students, because of the possibility of a lack of supplies or resources that some may have at home. It seems that in a time where it is more likely to be beneficial to assign activities and projects, it is more practical for assessment, time, and requirement if homework is the standard pen to paper worksheets.

How Can Homework Be More Effective?

Recently, many teachers seem to primarily assign homework that “only involves paper and [a] pencil”. It is commonly seen as “busy work” employed to appease a district policy (Kaur, 2011). To help steer away from the overuse of worksheets as homework, Sadlier (2011) suggested that teachers start reevaluating their views on homework and finding ways they can make the assignments more engaging. Sadlier said teachers should always keep “the point” of homework in mind. Teachers should remember that the purpose of homework is to strengthen skills and enhance independence, and they should assign homework for those intentions.

Some ways that teachers can help break the mold of recent homework trends is to reconsider the way they plan, assign, and give feedback on homework. By determining the main concepts that need to be taught or “questions” that need to be answered, a teacher can zone in on one topic at a time and elaborate on it with projects, discussions, and activities. After establishing these main ideas, teachers can utilize “backwards planning”. This is to use the “essential question” as a guide and plan lessons and activities off that question or idea (Sadlier, 2011). When assigning homework, teachers could possibly not focus on the quantity but look for quality instead. Story telling, picture drawing, or interviewing relatives could be a way for students to think “outside of the box” and produce rich, quality work. Also, giving students feedback on every assignment, good or constructive, can allow the student to fix what is needed and give them the opportunity to improve their skills.

Another important way to make homework more effective is to possibly allow students to see their own progress and regulate themselves. Carr (2013) said that one of the benefits of homework is the “acquisition of self-regulation”. By allowing students the opportunity to manage their own time, learn from their own mistakes, and handle their own emotions and motivations, they are most probably going to become stronger learners. Also, by making sure each student knows where they stand and how they can improve, the teacher is putting their academic progress in perspective, allowing them to grow at their own pace. If students know exactly what they can work on to become more successful, with the help of the teacher, each student is more likely to reach that success.

Conclusion

It is important to look at the perspectives of parents, students, and teachers on homework in order to find ways to make the work students do outside of the class more enriching and

interactive. By looking at what teachers are currently doing and how that is affecting the students, we can see what needs to be changed to enhance the students' learning experiences. A way to discover why teachers may assign the work they do is to go back to when they were students themselves and investigate their perceptions of homework back then.

Methodology

Overview

I interviewed teachers in California Elementary Schools to explore what they thought of homework when they were in Elementary school and how that affects the type and amount of homework they assign to their class.

Type of Design

The type of design that was used in this study is qualitative phenomenological. This means that the study explored each participant's experiences pertaining to the topic of research. Also, the study looked for commonalities among participants to discover themes within the experiences. This type of design involved one-on-one interviews with questions related to the phenomenon being research.

A phenomenological design is fitting for this study because I wanted to "describe the essence" of assigning homework and how it relates to the teachers' perceptions (Creswell, 2014). The teachers were asked a series of questions pertaining to their experiences as a past student and as a current teacher. Based on their answers, I derived a conclusion about the homework assigning process.

I did a qualitative phenomenological study because I wanted to interview teachers on their past and present perceptions. I wanted to here in-depth explanations and first-hand accounts about their experiences with homework. I also wanted to hear their opinions and reasoning behind why they assign the homework that they do. Since all of my participants were teachers and experienced the same phenomena, I wanted to use my data to compare and contrast the experiences and thoughts of each individual person. I learned that I was able to find commonalities and differences between all of the participants.

Population and Sampling

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 California Public Elementary School 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers who have been teaching for at least five years. I had three 3rd grade teachers, two 4th grade teachers, and one 5th grade teacher. All of my participants were females and had been teaching for at least five years. I went through the Principal of the school to retrieve an email list of teachers who were willing to participate in my study. The study focused on grade levels 3 to 5 because at these grades more advanced, extensive work is being assigned and more thought-provoking or individualistic projects and discussions are being set up. At these grade levels, most students are beginning to acquire their own thoughts and opinions and can adequately express them in their homework.

As a qualitative design, interviews are essential and necessary for this study. Since qualitative studies are based off narratives and spoken testimonies of experiences and thoughts, interviewing the participants is a great way to obtain such information. Where a survey is based on written statements, interviews allow participants to elaborate on topics they may be passionate about. I did semi-structured interviews because, as a beginner researcher, this type allowed for the flexibility for me to ask certain questions but also allowed the participant to extend their responses if needed. The more a participant speaks, the richer their data will be because the more information I will have to work with. The teachers often went off on tangents and spoke about experiences unrelated to the questions being asked. However, I was able to get the information I needed to analyze my data.

Data Collection & Analysis

The data was collected through interviews, interview notes, and audio recordings of the interviews. The interviews ranged from 10 to 20 minutes. The interviews consisted of 7

questions regarding experience as a student, experience as a teacher, type of homework assigned as a student, type of homework assigned to their current students, and their view on the purpose of homework. Interviews were audio recorded to make data analysis easier and more valid.

The data collected from the interviews was analyzed by putting the teachers' thoughts, experiences, and suggestions into a certain number of themes. I transcribed verbatim each participant's interview. I looked at all of the data as a whole and came up with generalizations from the experiences of all of the teachers. I looked for similarities and differences among the participant's responses. I then separated and organized the data into 6 themes. Some of the themes include experiences as a student, reasoning behind planning assignments, and parent involvement.

Credibility, Validity, and Ethicality

To ensure credibility and validity, I followed the research process, addressed a present gap in the literature, and controlled my own biases by asking questions that were straightforward and unpersuasive. I also triangulated my data into themes based on the evidence, such as experiences and thoughts, of the participants, not of my own.

To ensure ethicality, I kept the audio recording data locked in a password safe application on my smart phone. I did not deceive my participants. Also, I used the data as intended and kept names, schools, and exact experiences confidential by changing the names of all information reported.

Results

Data Analysis

I analyzed my data into 6 themes. After analyzing my data, I found that I did not completely gather the information that I intended to. I realized that my interview questions focused more on the types of homework and why teachers assign homework and less about their past homework perceptions. Another finding that was interesting was that most of my participants did not remember doing homework. They mentioned that they most definitely did not have as much as they assign now. Parent support or a lack of parent support was an idea that was stressed in multiple occasions. I learned that teachers still struggle to create partnerships with parents to help the student succeed academically.

Theme #1: Most Frequent Types of Homework

Homework is given in many types of formats. Most teachers assign packets and “pencil and paper” worksheets (Kaur, 2011). However, sometimes teachers do not see these as the most effective. It is important to know what types of homework teachers give most frequently because that shows how they are allowing their students to enhance their skills outside of the classroom. Teachers may say that they wish they gave more projects and discussions, however it is what they most frequently assign that determines what they are actually doing in the classroom today. To sway away from the status quo, many teachers are also starting to “give students choice”. This allows students to choose activities and work that interests them (Sadlier, 2011). By seeing what are the most frequent types of homework given to students, we can see where we can improve our homework strategies and help implement more meaningful and beneficial work.

Most of my participants give math and spelling homework, both in worksheet form. They said they usually go over the math concepts in class and that the homework looks exactly like the

problems they review. For spelling, teachers most frequently had students spell the words, put them in ABC order, and use them in paragraphs. Homework was given daily and was in worksheet or packet form almost every single day. Mrs. F stood out because she gave her students the choice to do at least 4 activities out of a homework menu. She gave them a sheet of paper with 16 to 20 activities listed that ranged from pencil and paper, to art-based, to discussions and interactive projects. The students were given the choice to do the activities they were the most interested in because she believed that variety and control over their work would give students more motivation to want to do the homework outside of school.

Theme #2: Teachers' Reasons for Assigning Homework

Most districts mandate the assigning of homework in their curriculum, so many teachers do not have a choice. However, teachers do have the choice for what types of homework they assign and an underlying reason for assigning that type to their students. As the reader saw in Theme #1, most teachers assign worksheets and packets. However, there is a question of why these teachers choose to assign these types of homework every day. Teachers have various reasons for why they choose to assign the homework they do. Kaur (2011) says that homework is given as practice and to enhance skills. Saam and Jeong (2013) explains how homework actually “provides feedback to students and teachers”. This feedback can provide information about what students are struggling with.

All of my participants agreed with those reasons for why they assign homework. Some said that they believe it is “extra practice” and that it “supports classroom learning”. Mrs. E made a good point about how homework can tell a teacher whether or not students can do these skills “on their own”. A reason for assigning homework is for teachers to see that students can do the

skills independently outside of school. If students are struggling with concepts, the homework can share what the students have mastered and what concepts need additional help.

Theme #3: Punishment for Not Turning in Homework

Some teachers punish their students when they do not turn in homework and some do not. Punishment is a form of discipline in the classroom used as an attempt to get students to turn in homework. A reason for punishment is to instill the idea that homework is important and that consequences might push students to be more accountable. However, some teachers do not believe in punishing students because some factors that lead to incomplete work may be out of the child's control. Bempechat, Neier, Gillis, and Holloway (2011) explain when punishment or consequences are not in place, students feel even less motivated to turn in their work. This might be because they see no reason to do their work and know nothing will happen if they do not. Since the views on punishment are seemingly split among teachers, this illustrates a lack of clarity and congruity in teaching practices and discipline among the field of education.

My participants' views on punishment differed. Some did not have any punishment in place at all. Their reason was that they are "lenient when it comes to not turning in homework" because they think homework is just a tool, not a necessity that warrants punitive responses. Some teachers said they do not like to give punishment at all because they find no need to create a sense of fear or shame for those who had no chance to complete homework because of home life or family issues. On the other hand, some teachers gave recess detention or took away free time for students who did not turn in homework. These teachers said they mostly gave the students a chance to complete homework in class, but that the students needed to know that homework was an expected chore that needed to be completed daily. Their reason was not so much to benefit themselves as teachers, but rather to help the students become more accountable

and responsible for their work. Even if they had to “take away time with the teacher” or “have them serve” time in detention, they needed to emphasize the importance of accountability, especially in the older grades.

Theme #4: Why Students Do Not Turn in Homework

As the reader has seen in Theme #3, sometimes student do not turn in homework even when there are penalties in place. Under further investigation, it was determined that there are many reasons why some students do not turn in homework. One reason could be that students see little to no purpose to homework (Wilson & Rhodes, 2010). Those who do not get support or encouraged to do well in school could possibility see little importance in school and homework. They may view outside work as busy work and additional stress. Another reason could be that students are too busy and stressed with extracurricular activities that they have no time for homework (Brown, Nobiling, Teufel, & Birch, 2011). Sometimes students are given so much homework that they miss out on the fun activities they could be doing outside of school. Reversely, some students may be overbooked with extracurricular activities that when they come home, it is too late or they are too tired to focus on work from school.

My participants supported those ideas and also contributed some new considerations. Some teachers said that “forgetfulness” was a main reason for why students were not turning homework. They were simply “not listening” to instructions or did not write their homework in their agendas. When the students went home, they did not know what to do, and therefore did not do it. Another excuse was students’ “difficulty following a daily routine”. As mentioned previously, homework is a tool that not only practices academic skills, but also accountability and responsibility skills because students are required to remember to bring it back daily. Some

students do not have the capacity to remember daily routines, and therefore are not turning in homework.

Theme #5: Parents' Involvement with Homework

Parent involvement includes the actions and attitudes of parents that contribute to their child's academic success. Korkmaz (2007) says that parents need to be supportive and encourage their child in the home. This can include helping them with homework, making sure they have the supplies needed, and giving them affirmations of encouragement and love. Ishihara-Brito (2013) explains how when parents do not have content knowledge there can be obstacles when it comes to helping children with homework. If parents did not receive a formal education or if they are struggling to understand new systems, such as the Common Core, they often have troubles while attempting to assist their children with their homework. Especially in older grades when curriculum gets harder and more complex, students may be left on their own to figure out challenging assignments. This means that even the most supportive parent could possibly not be able to offer help because of his or her own lack of knowledge.

My participants contributed various views when it came to parent involvement. Some said they think their students' parents are supportive, and some said they think they are not. The ones who believed they had students with supportive parents said that they were "lucky" because in some years parent support is not so abundant. Mrs. B gave an encouraging statement about parents involvement with homework. She said, "If the parents are helping them at home, then they're hearing it from somebody else. They saw me do the lesson...and then hopefully mom or dad can offer something." If students are getting help from all parties, they have a better chance of mastering the skills quicker because of all of the help and exposure to the material. On the other hand, some teachers believe that a lack of parent support is the reason for why students do

so poorly in school. Mrs. E said that she believes students do not turn in homework “because they don’t have the parent help.” This can be detrimental because while other students are progressing, students with no support are not getting as much practice and have a lesser chance of mastering the skills. Mrs. C discussed the idea when parents cannot help with homework by saying, “If your parents can’t help you and you’re stuck, then what are you going to do?” She empathized with those students and also supported the idea that parent involvement is a huge factor in student success.

Theme #6: Teachers’ Views on Homework as Students

The main topic of my research was whether or not teachers’ past perceptions have any connection to their current homework practices. It was determined that many teachers have similar perceptions, but different experiences when it comes to homework as a student. Teachers’ past perceptions of homework indicate how they felt about it when they were primary students themselves. Sidhu, Fook, & Singh (2010) say that most students have a “positive attitude towards homework”, but also see it as busy work. Goetz et al. (2012) explain how emotions such as “anxiety, anger, and boredom” are commonly associated with the perceptions of homework. Investigations were done to see if teachers were going to have positive or negative views towards homework when they were in primary school themselves.

It would be assumed that teachers had positive views towards homework and that they were relatively good students based on the fact that they came back to a school and choose this career path. My participants shared that they had neutral feelings towards homework, but were good students in the past. Some participants had seemingly more positive experiences than others. Mrs. F said that she was “one of those kids who loved school and I got my work done.” Mrs. C said that she “loved homework” and that it was “something that kept me busy...” On the

other hand, Mrs. D and Mrs. B said that homework was just something they had to do and that it was pretty boring. However, a majority of my participants said that they did not really remember doing homework. They expressed how times have changed in regards to the amount of homework that is assigned today. They said that if they were given homework at all, it was nothing like the amount that they give to their students today.

Conclusion

Key Findings of Study

Through research, it was determined that teachers are in fact assigning more packets and worksheets most frequently. There was only one out of six participants that strayed away and gave students a choice in their homework activities. Another finding was that even though most teachers had high rates of completed homework, they still found that students were not turning in homework. Even if they took away free time or gave recess detention, students were still being forgetful and irresponsible for their work. Also, students were found to not have the most support when it came to parent involvement. Those students were directly affected by the lack of support and were not academically succeeding as a result. There were many stressors when it came to homework. After viewing responses, it was questioned whether homework was really beneficial and worth some of the struggles that it causes in today's classrooms.

As expected, teachers had neutral or positive views towards homework when they were students themselves. None of my participants had a dislike for homework, and they all saw the importance of it. This may explain why they decided to become teachers in the first place. They did say, however, that they did not like having to constantly assign homework, especially worksheets and packets. They said that parents and administrators expected them to send home these structured packets and that parents actually complained when they tried to do creative formats such as homework menus. Teachers stressed that they do remember what it was like being an Elementary School student, and even when homework was less in amount, they were still impacted. They expressed how if they were stressed back then that they cannot even imagine how students must feel today. It was concluded that teachers will be more empathetic when it

comes to assigning homework and reflect on how their past perception influence their present actions.

What Was Learned

Through my research study, I learned what it takes to conduct a formal research project. I learned how to conduct research, how to follow a formal process, how to collect and analyze data, and how to conduct interviews. I learned more about data analysis by having to go through the transcribing and coding processes to discover themes within my research. I also learned more about the topic of homework and read the literature that provides many different perspectives. I also gathered information and first-hand experiences about teachers' opinions and past views on my topic.

Even though I did not completely answer my research question, I found some interesting information about how teachers view homework and why they assign it. I will use the information I learned and be more reflective when I become an Elementary School teacher myself. I will consider my viewpoints and experiences regarding homework and try to empathize with students while assigning it. Also, by hearing that students have other stressors than the work outside of school, I will try to make homework as beneficial and meaningful as I can so that students can have time to do other fun and family activities.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations within my study could include making assumptions and concluding misunderstood information, asking ineffective or confusing questions, or not getting a more diverse sample from teachers of other schools. Teachers may have explained an experience that they had and I may have looked more into it than I was supposed to. As much as I tried to contain my own biases, I may have influenced my analysis by comparing my experiences with

those of my participants. Also, as much as I tried to have straightforward questions, perhaps the way I phrased them may have caused teacher to answer them in a certain way. If I asked about positive aspects, teachers may have wanted to sound better and answered in a more positive way as a result. All of my participants were from the same school and most of them had been teaching in Redlands for many years. Perhaps if I had a more diverse sample of teachers from other schools or cities, I would have found other information.

Implications for Practice

Homework is an essential tool used in classrooms to help students practice skills outside of school and give teachers feedback on what students can do on their own. As a future teacher, I was interested in the different reasons why teachers assign the homework that they do. I wanted to know whether or not their past perceptions had any affect on their perception now. After conducting my study, I use my findings to be more mindful of how I assign homework when I become a teacher myself. I will reflect on my past perceptions and try to empathize with students while planning homework. I will try not to just mindlessly follow mandated policies, but instead really analyze what I want to assign and why that type is the most beneficial for my students.

Teachers and administrators can also use my study to reflect upon their own perceptions of homework and hopefully reevaluate the homework policies we see today. If they can remember how they viewed homework as a student, perhaps they can also be more empathetic with how they structure policies that affect students' daily lives. The amount of homework given to students today is only going to increase unless educators become more introspective on how homework influences the success of students and teachers. Once connections can be made between people's past and present perceptions of homework, there may be a chance that we can

find ways to make homework more meaningful and beneficial to students. This may start with evaluating the seemingly ineffective policies we have today.

Recommendation for Future Research

If I were to continue my research on this topic, I would want to interview more participants and ask more effective questions on past perceptions and views on homework. A lot of teachers related their past views of homework to reasons why they assign homework today. However, I would want to further my research by investigating more into what it was like for them to be an Elementary School student. I would inquire about what kinds of homework they were given and what different emotions they had while doing homework as students. With consent, I would also want to include the perceptions of parents and students as well.

Future research could add to my study by also looking at the direct comparison between teachers and students perceptions on homework. They can look into how teachers view homework presently and how their students view the homework they are being assigned. If there are links made between those perceptions, perhaps the teachers can be more reflective about how their strategies are affecting their students. By looking into that connection, we may be able to find even more effective homework strategies that we can implement in classrooms today.

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Appendix A



Consent to Participate in a Research Study

(For use with adult subjects only)

What follows is a consent form that explains what will be happening if you choose to participate in this research study. The first section (Investigator Information) should have been completed by the investigator. If this section is incomplete, do not continue with the study. The information you need to provide begins on Page 2. Please read each section carefully.

Investigator Information (to be completed by Principle Investigator)

IRB approval number: N/A – Purpose of research is to fulfill capstone course requirements only and results of research will not be shared for reasons beyond this purpose.

Title of project: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study on Elementary School Teachers' Past and Present Perceptions on Homework and How Those Perceptions Influence the Type of Homework They Assign to Their Students Today

Name of principle investigator (PI): Jennifer Salazar

Email of PI: Jennifer_Salazar@redlands.edu

Telephone number of PI: 909-327-7030

Department or major of PI: Liberal Studies & Psychology

Position held by PI:

- fulltime faculty
- part-time faculty
- visiting faculty
- adjunct faculty
- administrator
- staff
- student

If PI is a student or staff, complete the remainder of Investigator Information, otherwise go to next page.

Name of faculty or administrator sponsor: Marina Gillmore

Email of sponsor: Marina_Gillmore@redlands.edu

Telephone number of sponsor: (760) 902-2377

Department or office of sponsor: Liberal Studies

Position held by sponsor:

fulltime faculty

part-time faculty

visiting faculty

adjunct faculty

administrator

General information about research studies

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Whether you do is entirely up to you. You may refuse to participate, or you may stop participating at any time for any reason without any penalty.

Research studies are designed to gather new information. This new information might help someone in the future. You might not receive any obvious or direct benefit by participating in this study. In fact, there might be risks to being in a research study. If there are, this information and other information about this study are described below so that you can decide whether you want to participate in the study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the investigator(s) named above, or staff members who assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of teachers on different topics such as their views of homework when they were students themselves, what type of homework they assign to their students today, and how they implement or suggest implementing effective homework strategies.

Number of people participating in this study

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be one of approximately six people who will participate in this study.

How long this will take (i.e., duration of participation)

If you choose to participate in this study, your involvement will take about 20 minutes.

What will happen if you participate in this study

The researcher will ask you a series of questions about your views on homework and the type of homework you assign to your students.

Possible benefits of participating in this study

As mentioned above, research studies are designed to gather new information. This new information might benefit someone in the future. There might not be any obvious or direct benefit to you personally if you choose to participate in this study.

Possible risks or discomforts related to participating in this study

It is possible that there are unknown risks or discomforts. Please report any problems immediately to the researcher.

Videotaping

You will not be videotaped.

Audiotaping

You will be audiotaped.

Protecting your privacy

People who participate in this study will be identified in any report or publication about this study. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University of Redlands, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

What will happen if you experience any problems or discomforts during or after your participation

Anything you do, including participating in research, carries with it some chance that something problematic or unwanted may happen. This may include risk of personal injury. Despite all of the precautions, you might experience an unwanted reaction or injury related to participating in this study. Although the researcher may direct you to medical, psychological, or other services, any costs related to such problems are your or your insurance company's responsibility. However, by signing this consent form, you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Compensation for participating in this study

You will not receive anything for participating in this study.

Costs of participating in this study

With the possible exception of any time off from work you choose to take and transportation costs, there are no obvious costs for participating in this study.

Questions about this study

You may ask and have answered any question about the research. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact the Principle Investigator (PI) or faculty or administrator sponsor (if the PI is a student). The contact information is listed on page 1 of this consent form.

Questions or concerns about the investigators, staff members, and your participation in the study

This study was not approved by the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions about your role or how you were treated by the research personnel, you may contact the Chair of the IRB at francisco_silva@redlands.edu or by telephone at 909-748-8673.

Participant's Agreement

I, _____ ,
Print Name Above

have read the information presented above. I have asked all questions I had at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant	Date

To be completed by researcher:

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix B

Project: Teachers' Past and Present Perceptions on Homework

Place: Kingsbury Elementary School

Interviewer: Jennifer Salazar

Name & Position of Interviewee:

Date & Time:

Thank you for participating in this interview. Please be assured of the following: (a) your participation is voluntary; (b) you may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reason and without penalty; and (c) the confidentiality of all persons participating in this study is assured.

Description of Project: This study is designed to investigate teachers' past and present perceptions of homework. The central research question of this study is: How do primary school teachers' perceptions of homework when they were students influence the type of homework they assign in their classrooms today?

Questions

Present:

(The first few questions I will ask about your present homework strategies.)

1. What type of homework do you assign to your students most frequently?
 - a. Worksheets? Projects? Or reading?
2. Can you explain your reasoning for assigning that type of homework?
3. If you could estimate, about what percentage of students normally complete their homework on a daily basis?
 - a. More or less than half? 100%?
 - b. What factors do you think contribute to that percentage?

Past:

(The next few questions will require you to think back to when you were an Elementary School student yourself. I will ask about your past homework perceptions.)

4. Did you like or dislike doing homework as a student? Please elaborate why.
5. Can you talk about a fun homework project or activity that you remember doing?
 - a. Why does that stand out to you?
6. In general, what do you think the purpose of homework is?

Is there anything that I did not ask about that you would like to elaborate on?

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for participating in my research study. Again, your information will be kept confidential and you are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Appendix C

Kingsbury Elementary School
600 Cajon Street
Redlands, CA 92373

To Whom It May Concern:

Jennifer Salazar is an undergraduate student at the University of Redlands. She has proposed a research project as part of her senior capstone seminar in Liberal Studies. The research project is entitled "Teachers' Past and Present Perceptions of Homework." I understand that, pending approval, all data for this study will be conducted during the fall of 2016.

I am aware that her project involves teachers in our district and will be conducted in a setting of the teacher's convenience, outside of class time in a way that does not interfere with any instructional time during the school day. I also understand that data collection will involve teacher interviews to be conducted in the natural setting of the school where the participants work and will be used to gain insight on teachers' perceptions of homework. A sample size of six participants is sufficient to meet the qualitative needs of the study and to examine teacher perspectives on the research subject because the researcher is targeting a small population.

I understand that participant participation is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time. All data collected by the researcher will remain confidential according to the strict confidentiality guidelines of the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board. I also understand that this research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Marina Gillmore, faculty sponsor of the research. Further, I recognize that the purpose of this research is solely to fulfill the class requirements and that results from the study will not be shared beyond the scope of what is required to complete her capstone project.

I support these planned activities that involve the full consent of all participants in a professional manner.

Sincerely,
