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Pitambar Paudel 
Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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Supporting Homework: Reverence or Profanity on Students' Academic Achievements

Pitambar Paudel

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Abstract

The role of homework in students' academic achievement has become matter of discussion for the decades. In this sphere, this research tried to investigate the role of homework in students' academic achievement from learners' perspectives with sequential explanatory mixed research design. Survey questionnaire and unstructured interview were used as the tools of data collection and 400 secondary level students from both public and institutional schools from a district of Nepal were the sample population. Two datasets; quantitative and qualitative were collected and analyzed sequentially. The findings of the research reveal that homework can enhance students' academic achievement but the traditional type and amount of homework assigned, and the less support from their teachers and parents promote plagiarism and demotivate learners in doing it for their own sake. The findings suggest that homework should be for students' leaning which is possible when they are intrinsically motivated in doing it.

Introduction

Homework is an outclass task assigned to the students by their teachers as an elaboration of classwork. It is also school work that the students are required to do at home. Homework is educators' assign work for the students to do during the non-school hour (Cooper, 1989). Similarly, Hellsten (2000) states, "Homework is schoolwork, which is carried out outside of lesson period" (p. 120). Homework is taken as the hybrid form that remains in between school and home, work and play, task and time (Arundel, 2021). Many parents and educators believe that homework is a means of succeeding in academic excellence and reflecting self-discipline and good teaching.

Despite the prevalence of homework as a common practice in the education system in the world, it has become a debatable issue at present since the educators put their views both in favor and against it. Children who spend more time on homework do better in school that increases their academic excellence (Milbourne & Haury, 1999). Similar to this, Ellsasser (2007) argues that well-planned and managed homework can be an effective means for students' success. Homework can establish a cordial relationship between school and home engaging learners to be the advocators of their own learning (Iverson & Walberg, 1982; Esan, 1996; Chen, 2009; Oluwayemi, 2010). Homework reinforces skills, concepts and information learned in the classroom and makes learners independent to learning and self-disciplined. In this context, Bishop (2008) states that homework teaches the students to concentrate, write reports and spend time alone and develop a curiosity to be a conscious learner.

In contrast, the anti-homework movement had been started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the USA (Eren & Henderson, 2011). Homework is mostly done at home to ensure that students can pass the exam with good marks. They rote and copy from some resources and paste them into their exercise book. It does not focus on the creativity, productivity, and critical abilities of the students. So, Haddock (2006) asks to abolish homework claiming that it is rote, grind work, designed to take up children's time without offering tangible benefits. Homework has little educational value for young children and it has a negative effect on learning (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kohn, 2006). Homework is generally associated with the best intention of the teachers, but it may cause conflict between school and home lacking shared agreement among the parents, teachers, and students. Homework these days is taken as pointless, mindless, and discourages learning creatively and critically (Galloway et al., 2013; Parker, 2014). Pinsker (2019) argues for blended mode of homework for effective learning. The claims and counterclaims on homework reflect that there are different perspectives and practices on it.

As an educator, I had an informal talk with a student on Facebook messenger during her Dashain festival [The greatest festival of Hindus in Nepal in which students get 15 days of holidays] vacation (September-October, 2020), she concedes that her vacation was beyond happiness. When I talked to her about homework, she stopped me and told not to ask about homework and test. Her statement inspires me to investigate how the students perceive homework. In the conversation, she added that she was not getting an opportunity of enjoying the festival and vacation with the relatives and friends due to homework. Her account insists whether homework is demotivating and inappropriate for the learners. At the same moment, I also had an informal talk with a teacher from a public school (in October 2020), who claims that they give homework for the sake of students' progress, develop their critical and life skills, and develop good work habits and motivation in learning. When I shared the story of the student whom I talked with, he agreed that homework could be overloaded because they had to do the homework of 7-8 subjects, but students might not be demotivated on it. The debate among the educators, and the accounts shared by both the student and the teacher inspire me to carry out the research to investigate whether homework is reverence or profanity on students' academic achievement from the students' perspectives.

Review of Literature

Catering students with homework for their educational excellence in one of the strategies usually practiced in the educational system from past to present in the world. Before the 20th century, homework was taken as a means to keep students in disciplined (Cooper et al., 2006). Homework could keep the mind exercised and support the students to memorize the important information. Cooper (1989) concedes that homework was believed to be a suitable home activity, and was popular and favorable among educators. But the dawn of the 20th century has brought opposing views on the role of homework in students' learning. Homework was described to be a waste of time and energy of the students (Hayward, 2010). At that time, homework was treated as unhealthy for students and some people asked to forbid the students from carrying textbooks at home by the law (Bryan & Sullivan-Burstein, 1998). The anti-homework sentiment remained till 1940s. However, the launch of Sputnik Satellite by Russia had increased positive public opinion towards homework though Americans were still against it (Cooper et al., 2006; Hayward, 2010). People's focus towards homework was to support the students to get more knowledge faster, better and thoroughly.

Interestingly, in 1960s and 1970s, again strong feeling against homework increased believing it as unnecessary pressure to the students for preventing them from accomplishing other aspects of life (Gill & Schlossman, 2004; Deets, 2015). The value of homework on students' physical and mental growth and development was highly criticized. However, with the end of the 20th century, public opinions and educators' practices got shifted the type and amount of homework rather than discussion about its value (Corno & Xu, 2004; Deets, 2015). The focus was on the worth of homework for quality life through quality education.

People's concentrations were more on their students and the stress that they have been feeling due to the educational practices with the advent of the 21st century. Mixed feelings of both the parents and educators on the role of homework for students' academic career boosting have been emerged. In this context, Baines (2007) argues that the recent discussion has focused on the idea that more homework, more time at school, more tests and more technology in education. The effect of homework on students' academic achievement has been an investigation and continues to be a debatable issue among educators, parents, policy makers, teachers and students.

Researches on homework reflect both positive and negative evidences on students' achievement. There is no conclusive evidence to show that homework increases students' academic achievement and vice-versa. Some studies show the positive effects of homework only for certain students in certain conditions while the other studies show no effect, and some reveal negative effects (Trautwein & Keller, 2003; Kohn, 2006). Studies have shown that older students get more academic advantages from homework than do younger students, but the trends of giving homework is to the youngsters (Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2001). From a research, James- Burdumy et al. (2005) conclude that homework can improve students' motivations and work habits which in course are the aspects of academic success. The studies assure that the students who were given homework had higher level of academic achievement than those who were not given any homework (Cooper & valentine, 2001; Trauwein & Koller 2003). Similarly, Ramdass and Zimmerman (2011) and Núñez et al. (2015) from their research provide that students' self- regulation can be promoted through homework. Homework is connected with child-parents' relationship. The homework which is with parents' children's interaction results more academic achievement of the students rather than the solo activity of the students. The solo activity of the learners has negative impact on their learning (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 2000; Van Voorheis, 2003). However, Trautwein et al. (2002) state that homework is double sword in students' academic achievement and child parents' relationship. In the same vein, Warton (2001) states that homework impacts students' emotional and creates conflict between parents and them.

Moreover, Paudel's (2012) study shows students unwillingness to do homework but they do it only to satisfy their teachers. In contrast, Malla (2016) from a research concludes students' eagerness in doing homework if their home and community factors are in right order. Opposed to this, homework prevents learners from life learning experiences and isolates them from social activities (Campbell, 2016). Further, homework gives less free time and fewer opportunities for more innovative experiences, instead, it increases anxiety and depression (Pressman et al., 2015; Courtney & Nix, 2018). The beliefs and disbeliefs on the role of homework solicit the need of further investigation on it.

As the global trend, students are given homework at all the levels of education in Nepal. Students' achievement

is affected by how they feel about the activity in which they are engaged in. I found many students spend their out school time mostly in doing homework. The curricula also require students to do homework to meet the requirement of internal examination (FOE, 2015; CDC, 2020). The compulsory provision of homework makes the students oblige to do it. But no research reveals whether the students have positive or negative perception in doing homework in secondary school education of Nepal. Moreover, I also experienced that in each class, there are students who are highly achieving but they do not do/ complete homework and vice-versa. Preparation, practices, participation, personal development, parents-teacher interaction, parents –child relation, and peer communication are the basic purposes of homework (Epstein & Voorhis, 2001). In a research, Wiggins and Vander Hoof (2021) claim that online homework assignments were highly motivating to the students and they did all the assigned tasks on time because they realized the benefits of home assignments for their academic enrichment. Similar to this Lenz (2010) concede that students were willing to get higher homework grades engaging themselves in doing online homework rather than doing paper homework. Moreover, the nature of homework also determines the students' motivation in doing it. Collaborative graded homework can be more effective for students' better performance than the solo assigned homework (Songsirisak & Jitpranee, 2018; Karadimitriou, 2016; Emerson & Mencken, 2011). These accounts reveal that if the students take homework as a tool of their progress and development, and they find it as per their interest, they are motivated in doing it. Homework can be beneficial to the students if the teachers understand their level and interest and assigned the task accordingly. Homework is highly appreciative and beneficial for those students who had poor performance initially in increasing their performance (Grodner & Rupp, 2013). Homework can be a transformative tool in students' academic development.

The students should understand the purpose of homework that they are provided with and they need to have affirmative motivation and eagerness on it for better achievement. In these contexts, this research is an attempt to investigate students' perspectives on homework which is different from the previous studies in terms of its context, problem, objectives, methodology, and findings. Moreover, this research has made an attempt to investigate students' perspectives on homework based on the framework of overall perception, homework for academic achievement, subject based perception, homework and its relationship with different aspects and the challenges associated with it.

Method

To get the set objectives of the study, the following methodology had been used.

Research Design

Sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was employed in this study. The sequential explanatory mixed methods design incorporates quantitative and qualitative approaches in two consecutive phases within one study. The quantitative method is conducted in the first phase then only qualitative approach using thematic analysis (Wipulanusat et al., 2020). The results of quantitative and qualitative data were interpreted in discussion.

Participants

The participants were 400 secondary level school students from five schools (3 public & 2 institutional) of Nepal (i.e. 80 students from each school). Among them, 280 were females and 120 were males. The students were selected using simple random sampling procedures and the schools were selected through purposive non random sampling method. Among the selected participants, 10 (2 from each school) were randomly selected for the interview.

Instruments

This study employed a set of structured and semi structured survey questionnaire for qualitative data collection and unstructured interview protocol for qualitative data collection. The questionnaire was validated by an experienced English language professor teaching at a university of Nepal.

Data Collection Procedures

After selecting the schools, the researcher visited them separately and selected the participants from secondary school level (grades 9-12), 20 students from each class. The participants were explained the purposes of the research, then the questionnaire was administered. They were asked to complete the questionnaire honestly within an hour. After collecting the responses of the participants, the selected students were interviewed spending 2-3 hours in each school. The interviews were audio recorded in cell phone and note was also taken for making analysis easy and comfortable for the researcher and not to misinterpret the actual responses of the participants.

Data Analysis

The collected data through survey questionnaire were analyzed by using simple mathematical notion percentage, and the qualitative data collected through interviews were transliterated, coded, categorized and analyzed textually. The two set of data (quantitative & qualitative) were interpreted in discussion.

Results

Since this research employed sequential explanatory mixed methods design, the presentation and analysis of the results have been done into five different parameters. The results of quantitative data have been presented first immediately followed by qualitative in each parameter.

Students' Overall Perception on Homework

To determine the learners' overall perception on the role of homework and their practices on it, a set of questionnaire consisting 10 statements was asked. Each statement consists of four Likert scales. All the

participants responded to these statements on four Likert scales dealing with different aspects of homework ranging from extremely agreed to disagreed, which is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Overall Perception on Homework

| Statements | Frequency of Responses in Percentage (%) | | | | |
|---|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Total |
| I am interested in doing homework | 2.5 | 4.5 | 87.5 | 5.5 | 100 |
| I always do my homework | 70 | 12.5 | 5 | 12.5 | 100 |
| I usually complete my homework | 66.5 | 25 | 2.75 | 5.75 | 100 |
| I experience homework is extremely importance for me | 15.25 | 62.5 | 13.5 | 8.75 | 100 |
| I do homework to satisfy my teachers and parents | 30.5 | 44.5 | 5.25 | 19.75 | |
| Homework fosters my progress | 43.75 | 37.5 | 0 | 18.75 | 100 |
| Homework assigned to me every day fits my speed, skill and ability | 0 | 2.5 | 75 | 22.5 | |
| I am overloaded with the homework assigned every day. | 100 | | | | |
| Homework should be given every day in the manner as it is given in these days | 0 | 5 | 92.75 | 2.25 | |
| Homework should not be given to the students | 25 | 22 | 28 | 25 | |

[Note: 1= Extremely agreed; 2=Agreed 3= Extremely disagreed, 4= Disagreed]

Table 1 displays that majority of the participants (i.e. 87.5%) were strongly disinterested in doing homework and 5.5 % were disinterested (Item1). Similarly, a few participants (2.5%) were strongly interested and 4.5% were interested in doing homework (Item 1). Though majority of them were disinterested in doing homework, 82.2% of the participants always did their homework while 17.5% of the participants did not always do their homework (Item 2). The data reveal that 91.5% of the students usually completed their homework and 8.5% did not usually do it (Item 3). Furthermore, the table reveals that 77.75% participants experienced the importance of homework for them (Item 4) and 75% stated that they did homework for satisfying their parents and teachers rather than for their own shake (Item 5). Moreover, 81.25% agreed that homework could foster their progress however all the participants (100%) extremely agreed that the homework that was given them was overloaded. The table further shows that 97.5% participants reported that homework that was provided them did not fit their speed, skills and abilities and 95% did not like the way/manner that the homework was given to them. Similarly, 53% of the participants were in favor of giving homework while 47% were against it.

The results through unstructured interview revealed that homework plays important roles in learners' academic success but the learners are not interested to do it even if they did it due to the fear of their teachers and parents. All the participants felt bored with homework because of its content, teachers and parents support and the load that gave to them. Sharing the experience, S6 conceded that he knew the value of homework but the way that he was given him discouraged from doing it. This implies that students were demotivated in homework despite its significant value in their academic career. In this context, S2 stated, "I personally do not pay any attention in doing homework because of the type and amount of the homework given to me". However, one of the participants (S4)

disagreed with these accounts and stated that if the homework was not given to him, he could use that time freely in creation and other activities that could be boon for developing creativity, criticality and extra ability beyond bookish knowledge. In the same vein, S8 stated that he did not believe that homework fostered his progress because he thought that progress does not mean just reviewing the course and obtain good marks in the examination. These accounts imply that the nature of the given homework that was overloaded and was out of their skill, interests and abilities, is the sole cause of learners' disinterest and demotivation towards homework.

Homework for Academic Achievement

A set of five statements was asked to investigate the learners' perspectives on homework specifically in their academic achievement. All the participants responded to these statements on four Likert scales dealing with different aspects of homework in their academic achievement ranging from extremely agreed to disagreed, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Perspectives on Homework in their Academic Achievement

| Statements | Frequency of Responses in Percentage (%) | | | | |
|--|--|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Total |
| Homework promotes good grades | 50 | 30 | 5.25 | 14.75 | 100 |
| Homework enhances my academic success | 10.25 | 52.75 | 12.75 | 27 | 100 |
| Homework develops study habits and skills | 50 | 18.75 | 25 | 6.25 | 100 |
| Homework encourages overall endeavors | 2.5 | 92.75 | 4.75 | 0 | 100 |
| Homework provides deeper knowledge and understanding in the subject matter | 66.6 | 25 | 3.5 | 5 | 100 |

[Note: 1= Extremely agreed; 2=Agreed 3= Extremely disagreed, 4= Disagreed]

Table 2 shows that most of the participants (80%) agreed that homework promotes them for getting good grades (Item 1). Similarly, 63% of them agreed homework for academic success, 68.75% reported that it could develop their study habit and skills, and 91.6% stated that homework could provide deeper knowledge and understanding in the subject matter (Items 2, 3 & 5). All most all the participants (92.75%) reported that homework could encourage their overall endeavors (Item 4).

Homework provided them an opportunity to practice and review the language items and enabled them to enhance their academic achievement. They agreed that more the practice, the better will be their academic output. Sharing her experiences, S9 stated, " I understand when I read in class. When I practice homework, the level of understanding gets deeper and I can get better results in the examination than I expected". Similar to this, S7 argued that if they practiced homework at home, it would make them skillful and think faster". He further added that knowledge on grammar and vocabulary can be increased through homework rather than any other classroom activities. Homework in this sense can foster the students' academic ability and quality. In this context, S6 conceded, "If we have no homework, we pay no attention to read and review the course. When the examination comes, we must read more resources in detail and seriously that makes overloaded than the homework given in

each day". Many participants claimed that homework could be a platform for them to express their opinion and self-practice without any interruption from their fellow friends but they raised the question in the proportion and the nature of the homework they are provided with.

Students' Responses on Subject Related Issues

With the aim of investigating students' perception towards subject related homework issues, students were asked 7 semi-structured questions. Table 3 shows students' views on subject related homework issues.

Table 3. Students' Responses on Subject Related Issues

| Questions | Students' Responses | Reasons/ Ways(Students' Explanation) |
|---|---|--|
| How many courses (subjects) do you have every day at school? | 5 (25%) 6 (25%) 7 (25%) 8 (25%) | The responses were as per the grades (students of grade 9 and 10 studied 7 periods, grades 11 studied 6 periods and grades 12 studied 5 periods) |
| Do you get the homework of all the subjects each day? | Yes (99.25%) No (0.75%) | All the teachers give homework. |
| Do you get project work, group work, pair work/ only theoretical part as homework? What type of homework do you prefer and why? | Theory (100%) Project/group work/pair work (0 %) Project/group work/pair work (100%) | No project is assigned as homework, but the teachers take us in excursion as project once a year. We prefer Project/group work/pair work because they develop our communicative, creative, critical and independent learning skill and habit. |
| Are you thrilled with the homework in the major subjects like English, math, science, Social and Nepali? Why or why not? | Yes (5%) No (95%) | No: It encourages cheating/ copy habit I do not understand teachers' instruction Homework is boring for me |
| Which subject homework is more entertaining for you? Why? | English (2.25%) Maths (1 %) Nepali (1.25%) Social Studies (1%) Science (2.25%) Other (2.50 %) None (89.75%) | I do not entertain any homework (it's difficult, it kills my freedom & creativity, I do not get support from parents and teachers) I enjoy mathematics as it develops logics I enjoy English for world communication I enjoy Nepali as I easily understand it I enjoy science because the teacher is very good and helpful. I enjoy social as it gives overall knowledge from diverse areas. |

| Questions | Students' Responses | Reasons/ Ways(Students' Explanation) |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Do you agree the individual assigned subject-wise homework teach you interactive and study habit? How? | No (91.45%) Yes (8.55%) | Yes: they engage us in study, develop our skill, confidence and ability, and encourage us in reading and writing. No: Foster cheating, rote learning and copy, reduces creativity and independency |
| How motivated are you in homework? What motivates/ demotivates you towards homework? | Motivated (7%) Demotivated (93%) | No: Difficult subject matter, rote learning in homework, teachers' instruction, overloaded and disinteresting content. Yes: gives in-depth knowledge, helps to progress grades, and keeps busy. |

Table 3 shows that the students studied the subject each day as per their level. Grade 9 and 10 students studied 7 periods (subjects) each day while grades 11 studied 6 subjects, and grade 12 studied 5 subjects each day (Item 1), and almost all (99.25%) stated that they got homework of all the subjects (Item 2). All of them reported that they got only theoretical aspects as homework rather than the project works, group work and pair work (Item 3). All the participants preferred Project/group work/pair work in their homework because they believed that they could develop their communicative, creative, critical and independent learning skills and habits. Similarly, 95% of the participants were not thrilled with homework because they experienced that it encouraged cheating/ copy habit, they did not understand teachers' instruction, and homework is boring for them (Item 4). Likewise, most of the participants (89.75%) did not enjoy the homework because they found it difficult, and experienced that it killed their freedom, creativity and they did not get support from their parents and teachers (Item 5). However, a few participants liked the homework of English (2.25%) for enhancing global communication, 1% enjoyed mathematics for logics, 2.25% loved science because of teacher and their instruction, 1.25% enjoyed Nepali as they understood it easily, 1% enjoyed Social studies as it gave the knowledge of diverse fields and 2.50% liked other subject's homework (Item 5). The data further exhibit that 91.45% of the participants disagreed with the statement that individual assigned subject wise homework taught them interactive and study habit. All of them stated that homework developed copying, cheating and rote learning rather than developing creativity and independency (Item 6). Moreover, the data shows that 93% participants were demotivated in homework because of difficult, overloaded and disinterested content, teachers' instruction and rote learning (Item 7).

Similar to the quantitative results, the qualitative data showed that students were tired of theoretical homework. They were given theoretical homework of all the subjects. One of the participants (S1) stated that he received all writing homework which took him about five or six hours to complete after he returned to home from school. The homework given to him is out of his interest. In the same vein, most of the participants expressed their interest on project work, pair work and group work based homework. In this context, S1 expressed, "Project work, group work or pair work based homework can promote students' cooperative learning and stimulate homework discussions". However, S7 expressed his doubt in the effectiveness of project/group/pair work based homework because of unpunctual and irresponsible group members". In the same vein, S10 added that such type of homework

could be difficult if there are many group members. The students did not like the traditional way of doing homework as it was experienced demotivating for them. All the participants expressed that the subject wise assigned homework was overloaded for them and it could not develop their interactive, creative and critical abilities. The students were in favor of new mode of homework rather than being engaged in contents, teachers and parents dominated homework. All these accounts imply that project work, group work or pair work based homework could be more interesting and motivation to the students if they are well organized with clear roles and responsibilities of each member with adequate number of group members.

Homework Boosts or Blows Relationships

With the aim of investigation, the role of homework to establish students-parent's relationship, and students-teachers' relationship, the participants were asked 10 different structured questions where they were encouraged to rate their responses in one among four alternatives (Appendix A). In response to the question how often the teachers check their homework, majority of the participants (60%) mentioned that their teacher sometimes checked their homework, 20% preferred on usually and always their teachers checked their homework, but none of them reported that their teacher never checked their homework (Item 1). Acknowledging on the support that they got from teachers, 97.25% of the participants stated that they got the support less than they expected (Item 2). Likewise, 42.56% stated that their teachers provided them corrective feedback while 57.445% mentioned that the teachers never provided corrective feedback (Item 3). Moreover, the data exhibit that 90% of the participants experienced positive towards corrective feedback (Item 4). Similarly, all the participants reciprocated that if they did not do or did not complete homework on any day, they copied from their friends and submitted to the teachers (Item 5). The data further reveal that most of the parents (i.e. 90%) had positive experienced on their children's homework (Item 6). Most of the participants (i. e. 80%) reported that they got no help from their parents in doing homework, only 12.75% got support less than they expected, and only 7.25% got as they expected (Item 7). In connection to relationship, 77% participants agreed that homework could establish good parents and child relationship while 23% disagreed on it (Item 8), and equal 50% participants agreed and disagreed that homework developed good relationship between teachers and students. Finally, 65% disagreed and 35% agreed that homework was needed for developing parents' and teachers' relationship.

The qualitative data yield the similar results that the students got less feedback and support from their teachers and parents. The participants were in favor of corrective feedback but they received it less than their expectation. One of the participants (S2) stated that the teachers gave the homework but they did not check it daily and carefully. If they checked it, they just put the sign writing seen rather than providing feedback and suggestion. In same context, S4 argued that corrective feedback can reach them in understanding of the accurate knowledge and develop their confidence in the subject matter but they received it in fewer amounts These accounts avow that homework is only for the sake of homework rather than students' progress and achievement. In the same context, another participant (S5) added that the poor and irregular students copy homework from their friends reaching school earlier than the school time but the teachers do not cross check if the homework is done by the student himself / herself. Such practices promote cheating and copying habits of the students more than reading writing, and developing creativity and critical abilities. Homework bridges the relationship among teachers, students and

parents. S1 expressed that if homework is as per the interest of the students and the students get proper support from both teachers and parents, it can establish a good relationship among teachers, us and parents. In contrast, S5 argued that homework creates conflict and fear rather than relation. These accounts imply that students are in favor of well managed and organized student centred homework where teachers' and parents' roles have significant value.

Problems Associated with Homework

To find out students' perspectives on the problems associated with homework, they were asked eight structured questions with four alternatives where they were requested to choose either of the one in each question. Table 4 presents the participants' views on problems associated with homework.

Table 4. Participants' Views on Problems Associated with Homework

| Statements | Frequency of Responses in Percentage (%) | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Homework increases stress level | 100 | | | |
| Homework brings health issue | 100 | | | |
| Homework makes me less sociable | 95.75 | | 4.25 | |
| Homework encourages cheating habit | 60.71 | 29.19 | 3.75 | 6.25 |
| Homework kills creativity and criticality | 86.66 | | 1.34 | 12 |
| Homework prevents me from freedom | 98.72 | 0 | 1 | 0.28 |
| Home is hindrance of my progress | 5.3 | 4.55 | 84.7 | 5.45 |
| Homework is boring to me. | 73.23 | 20 | 5.77 | 1 |
| | Lack of resources | Difficult subject matter | Unclear Teachers' instruction | Lack of parents' help |
| What makes homework difficult for you? | 2 | 6 | 47 | 45 |

Table 4 demonstrates that all the participants (i.e. 100%) extremely agreed that homework increased stress level and brought health issues (Item 1 &2). Similarly, majority of them reported that homework made them less sociable [95.75%] (Item 3), encouraged cheating habit [90%] (Item4), killed creativity and criticality [86.66%] (Item 5), prevented them from freedom [98.72%] (Item 6), and it was boring for them [93.23%] (Item 8). Moreover, that data demonstrates that 89.52% respondents disagreed that homework was hindrance of their progress (Item 7). It also exhibits that lack of teachers' instruction (47%), lack of parents' help (45%), lack of resources (2%) and 6% determined difficult subject matters (6%) were the major hindrance for their progress (Item 10). Likewise, the data shows that 93.23% participants experienced homework boring.

The qualitative results on problems associated with homework from students' perspectives yield that participants were aware of their health issue. They expressed that they had to spend much time in doing homework after their

school that prevented them from playing, watching television, engaging other activities or even taking meal on time and satisfactorily. Participant S3 stated that homework is the enemy for keeping our mind free and fresh. Similarly, S10 conceded that homework has kept them too busy and made them unsocial. He shared his experience “Due to homework, he could not get connection with his relatives of the next doors for long time. So, one day, his elder father asked him where he was on those days”. This implies that overloaded homework stressful and asocial. Moreover, S7 stressed that if the balance in homework could not be made, there was high possibility of causing mental stress on students that might be cause of several other diseases. In the same context, S1 asked his teachers to make the homework interesting rather than boring to the students assigning more project work, group work and pair work rather than all writing theoretical perspectives. The students claimed that homework in fact was valuable and useful for their academic career but the overloaded and rote based homework kills their creativity, criticality and it encouraged cheating and copying habit just to satisfy the teachers and parents. S3 in this context shared that he had to do his homework at any cost but he could not get proper support from both parents and teachers that led him to copy and paste. The shared accounts reveal that the students experienced homework as an important component in their academic achievement but the amounts and types of homework, and teachers and parents support are the major obstacles that discourage them towards homework and make their homework more difficult.

Discussion

The study investigated learners’ perspectives on the role of homework in their academic achievement employed sequential explanatory mixed method research design. Both the quantitative and qualitative result sets unveil that majority of the students agreed that homework plays a significant role in their academic achievement, understanding, progress and development. This finding agrees with Cooper (1994) that concludes homework enables the students to better retention of knowledge, increases good understanding of phenomenon and enhances concept formation in their learning. Despite their disinterest in doing homework, majority of the students do and complete their homework for the sake of satisfying their parents and teachers rather than being motivated themselves realizing it for their academic excellence which corroborates with Paudel’s (2012) study where students showed their unwillingness in doing homework. The nature of the homework determines their motivation in engaging and doing it. If they find it as per their needs, interests, levels and backgrounds, they take beneficial for their increasing their academic performance. This account corroborates with the claims made by Karadimitriou (2016) and Emerson and Mencken (2011) as reviewed in this paper. The students are aware of the importance of homework in their academic career and are in favor of getting homework that assimilates with the research finding of Songsirisak and Jitpranee (2018) that without homework students would have lack of motivation and opportunity to practice language skills and acquired factual knowledge.

The results further show that the students are dissatisfied and demotivated on it because it does not fit to their skill, level and speed. The nature and type of homework that the students are provided with determines their interest, motivation and success in doing it for academic achievements. The finding corroborates with students who have strong intrinsic motivation can take homework as important tool for their understanding of the course

(Samuel & Olufemi, 2014). Encouraging students' interest and motivation towards home work is essential to have its positive effect on students' learning.

Concerning to the students' perspectives on homework for their overall academic achievements, the results exhibit that all the participants agreed that homework could be a means for enhancing their overall academic endeavor. The results further show that homework uplifts their academic achievement engaging them in studying and reviewing the subject matter through self-practice. However, most of the participants raised question on the way and type of giving homework. The results yield that the students get written homework of all the subjects that they study in a day. The homework is given in traditional way and mostly theoretical. The traditional way of giving homework system very little improves achievement, improves grades and builds character (Kohn, 2006). Teachers need to be very sensitive and careful in giving homework in a balanced way keeping the students' interest, skill and speed in mind. The overloaded homework cannot give better output. Teachers should not assign overloaded homework which affects students' free time management and makes them encounter uncomfortable feelings (Songsirisak & Jitpranee, 2018). American Federation of Teachers (2011) notes that good homework need to interesting, reinforce, balanced and encourage collaborative working and stimulate group discussion. The findings show that students' preference is more on project based, group work or pair work for developing cooperative, communicative, creative and critical learning skills and habit which contrasts with the findings of Janjua et al. (2011) that claims individual types of homework provides language opportunities for the students to fully develop their own knowledge and language competence along with non-academic skills. The subject-wise assigned homework becomes overloaded for them that leads their demotivation and disinterest towards homework. However, the research finding agrees with Songsirisak and Jitpranee (2018) that states pairwork / group work types of homework can develop students' cooperative and communicative skills. Students should be involved in their homework and have choices or options to the types of homework that best meets each of their individual learning styles and depends upon the context. (Schimmer, 2016; Vatterott, 2007; Vatterott, 2009; Vatterott, 2010; Vatterott; 2017).

The results further airs that the subject matter, teacher's instruction and rote based home work demotivate learners in doing homework. If the students are not intrinsically motivated, just doing homework for the sake of other does not uplift their academic achievement. The results vaunt that the students are not given adequate and sufficient support from their parents and teachers which implies that homework may create conflict among teachers, parents and students. Parents, teachers and students need to collaboratively find the accurate homework plan to help increase students' motivation on it and have better achievement (Minke, 2017). Teachers' feedback can be boon for students' improvement and understanding. But the results exhibit that the students have not got corrective feedback as they expect as Paudel (2012) claims that its teacher's responsibility to provide students' adequate response to the students. If the teachers are able to make the students understand the purpose and benefits of homework in their academic enrichment, their eagerness in homework can be increased that assimilates with the findings of Wiggins and Vander Hoff (2021). The teachers need to ensure that their feedback is useful and encourages students learn and react to mistakes from their comments. Well managed and properly organized homework may encourage and motivate the students to have positive attitude towards it that ultimately leads to have better academic enhancement.

Conclusions and Implications

This study intended to investigate the role of homework on students' academic achievement from learners' perspectives as sequential explanatory mixed method research. The results reveal that the students have positive and optimistic perspectives towards the role of homework on their academic achievement, progress and development. However, they are not intrinsically interested and motivated in doing homework for the sake of themselves; instead, they do and complete the homework for the sake of teachers and students. The students are stressful and uncomfortable in managing time for completing homework because of the mostly theoretical and overloaded homework. Overloaded homework affects students' motivation and interest in learning and makes them feel stressed that may cause several health issues. The students get less support from their parents and teachers in doing homework. It leads them to plagiarize homework copying from either internet or friends or both. To reduce this issue, the present study suggest that curricula and courses should be students' friendly and updated and teachers should be aware of the amount of homework given to the students and plan accordingly, help students time management and parents support them creating conducive home environment. T

he students' preference on pair, group and project based homework against the currently practiced traditional ways and types shows their motivation in homework for fostering creative, interactive and critical skills rather than developing the habit of rote learning and cheating habit. The contradiction between students' affirmative perception on the role of homework for their academic excellence and their disinterest and demotivation raises question on the types and amount of homework given to them, and the support they receive from teachers and parents. The homework should be to support students' learning, provide them opportunity to practice language skills, acquire factual knowledge, and develop independent learning habits and time management skills rather than imposing them with experts' knowledge and skills. Teacher's feedback plays a significant role to intrinsically stimulate learners for using homework in their academic advancement. This research concludes that the policy makers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, teachers and parents need to rethink about the nature, types and the ways of homework assigned to the students and plan accordingly so that the contradiction between students' perception and their motivation on homework can be reduced.

Although this study contributes to an understanding of students' perspectives on the roles homework in their academic enhancement, it has a number of delimitations in its scope and methodology. It is limited only to 400 secondary level school students from five schools of a district. Thus, it can be reiterated form more students from the schools of different parts of the country and can have a comparative study across country too.

A further limitation is that the study only investigates students' perspectives using survey questionnaire and interview. The succeeding studies can be carried out to see policy makers', curriculum designers', textbook writers', teachers' and parents' perspectives on the role, nature and type of homework using multiple tools, techniques and designs. These perspectives can be crucial for decision making at policy level. Despite the limited objectives and scope, this study can be a landmark to the teachers, administrators, students, curriculum designers and policy makers and opens up avenues for further studies on homework, and therefore is significant.

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Author Information

Pitambar Paudel

 <https://orcid.org/0000-00015706170X>

Tribhuvan University

Prithvi Narayan Campus

Pokhara

Nepal

Contact e-mail: pitambarp@pncampus.edu.np
