

## **The Use of Homework as an Instructional Tool by Moroccan EFL Teacher**

### **A Study Conducted by:**

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### **Abstract**

Far from discussing the controversial issues related to the relationship between homework and students' academic achievement, the present article focuses on the way this instructional technique is implemented by Moroccan EFL teachers. To meet this goal, I try to dig into a major perspective: the teacher.

In this article, EFL teachers working in Laayoune Sakia Elhamra region receive a varied survey to complete. The data from these surveys are categorized based upon sub-questions. In addition to questionnaires, as a tool of data collection, this study adopts two other tools: observations and teachers' interviews.

Upon completion of categorizing the data, an analysis and reflection of the data is performed summarizing and interpreting what the data represent. Given the fact that this article is a snapshot of the way homework is implemented in teaching English as an FL, it culminates in pedagogical implications and recommendations for teachers, students, parents, administrators, supervisors and future research.

### **Introduction**

Reality shows that, as an effective educational tool and part of most schools' daily routines, homework is not dealt with effectively by teachers, students, parents and administrators in the Moroccan context. It is often assigned when teachers fall short of class time to cover the subject matter. This situation, mingled with total scarcity of research in this field, suggests the urgent need for revisiting these practices to make effective use of homework to enhance students' learning of English as an FL and further their experience and understanding of concepts first brought to light in the classroom setting.

The aim of this article is to tackle teachers and students' perception and implementation of homework.

This study's main question is as follows:

- **How can homework be an effective and efficient tool to enhance learning?**

Everything considered, there is no need to emphasize the fact that this study does not claim to be objective nor exhaustive as is often the case with any study, no matter what research instruments are employed. Objectivity, as a matter of fact, is hard to attain in any type of study. Nevertheless, in an endeavor to reduce the degree of subjectivity in this study, I think it useful to include, in addition to the questionnaire, two other research instruments: 1. classroom observation of the implementation of homework, and 2. teacher interviews. This stems from my belief that it would be difficult to find out how teachers deal with homework without actually observing them in action.

Likewise, it would be hard to gain in-depth understanding of the reasons behind their attitude, assumptions, and decision-making without actually asking them why, when and how they use this instructional technique, hence the necessity of resorting to teacher interviews. Using these two additional instruments would supplement the questionnaire, and, somehow, result in data that are likely to provide richer information about why teachers behave the way they do – information that cannot be derived from the questionnaire completion alone. This may ultimately enable me to compare the findings of the questionnaire with the information obtained via the two other research instruments and see the extent to which the findings converge or diverge, match or mismatch, and correlate or contradict.

**1- Rationale :**

As a high school teacher of English and later on as a coach, I have noticed that homework is not well dealt with by most teachers that I had the chance to visit in their classes, and most students as well. Usually once the teacher realizes that the time of the lesson is about to be over, he or she tends to assign the rest of the task as homework. I have also noticed that most of these assignments are not taken seriously by both teachers and students. Besides, students receive little or no kind of feedback on their homework which may often give them the impression that doing homework is merely a waste of time and energy. It also renders homework a kind of busywork. Second, given the fact that students spend more time at home than they do in school, home time can be important learning time. This has pushed me to try to investigate possible ways of improving dealing with homework in teaching English as a foreign language.

**2- Statement of the problem:**

The main problem that this article tries to shed some light on is that simply most teachers tend to give homework without a clear purpose in mind. This can be clearly noticed if we consider the 'what, when, why, how and how often' in homework. Although most teachers believe that homework enhances students' academic achievement, most of them still assign the same homework to all students.

### **3- Purpose of the study:**

Given the striking scarcity of research in the domain of homework in general, and the quasi- total absence of it in Morocco more specifically, the present study aims at reaching certain practical solutions that may solve many issues for, at least, both teachers and students in a way that may help them deal with homework in an effective way. Accordingly, this article is expected to explore EFL teachers' perceptions and implementation of instructional homework as well as the potential challenges to be happening in their classroom practices. It also tries to demystify homework practices and discuss some pedagogical implications for English teachers, students as well as supervisors.

### **4- Research question :**

The major question that this study tries to shed light on is as follows:

#### **➤ How can homework be an effective and efficient tool to enhance learning?**

To answer this main question, the following questions will be taken into account:

1. How do Moroccan EFL teachers implement homework to meet their students' needs?
2. What types of homework have greater meaning for students and why?
3. What are some challenges that teachers face when dealing with homework?
4. How do EFL teachers perceive the merits of homework?

## **Review of literature**

### **1- Concept defining : Homework**

As a matter of fact, the literal meaning of the term "homework" is work intended to be done at home. In the literature, this term does not necessarily refer to the same thing. For E. Hong, R. Milgram and P. Perkins homework is defined as "tasks assigned to learners by their school teachers that are to be done outside of school time and without teacher direction" (1995: 197). Homework may take place outside the classroom but not necessarily at home as Hong et al., (1995) see that homework is most frequently done at home and alone but it may be done in other places such as the library or with other people such as parents or friends.

Homework can be defined if we consider the role it plays. Alanne and Macgregor (2007) define homework in relation to its purpose. They consider it as "the time students spend outside the classroom in assigned activities to practice, reinforce or apply newly-acquired skills and knowledge and to learn necessary skills of independent study" (p.2). More simply, Meyer (2005) defines homework as "acts of researching, studying, or completing assignments" (p.9). Cooper, Robinson, & Patall (2006) consider homework as any task assigned by schoolteachers intended for students to carry out during non-school



hours. For Cooper (1989a), homework is typically defined as any task “assigned to students by schoolteachers that are meant to be carried out during nonschool hours” (p7). While many definitions of homework exist, this study adopts Cooper’s.

## ***2- Dealing with homework in the classroom:***

A number of critics see that most teachers do not utilize homework in a proper way. This is mainly due to the fact that most homework assignments necessitate too much time to be completed, lack meaning, and are boring for the majority of students. Another problem has to do with lack of consistency, in the sense that while some teachers do not assign homework at all, others assign it on a daily basis. When students are not aware of the fundamentals of the problem, homework, then, is going to be just busy work, and therefore students’ efforts are going to be in vain. In fact, what happens in most classes is that it is the quantity rather than the quality of homework that is highlighted. This situation, consequently, pushes teachers to grade completion rather than comprehension.

Despite most teachers’ knowledge that one method does not work for all, many teachers assign the same homework for each student. Total absence of quality differentiated homework is obvious. Vetterott (2009) thinks that the major role of homework “is to support classroom learning through practice, prelearning, processing, or checking for understanding” (p124). Its major function is providing students and teachers with formative feedback. For Shumow, Schmidt & Kracker (2008), teachers admit that they often use homework as a tool to evaluate students’ knowledge of the subject matter. Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) think that effective teachers set specific goals and guidelines for homework and allow students to meet those requirements in different creative ways, such as performances, creative literature, videotapes, or posters. They use homework as a tool to assess the learning needs of their students. Yet, reality shows that given the fact that homework can be an extension of classroom instruction, it is often assigned when the teacher falls short of class time. This may oblige students to face the danger of learning new concepts at home without the assistance of a teacher.

One of the obvious facts that have to do with teaching is that while lesson planning and task designing are frequently discussed within ELT, there is little advice for teachers on how to apply methodological principles to homework. In other words, while a teacher can turn to the textbook for help in planning lessons, very few textbooks include material designed especially for homework, or provide guidance on how to adapt activities as homework tasks. It is worth mentioning that not only planning but also assigning homework are among the teachers’ major responsibilities.

Definitely, the type of homework is, to a great extent, related to its purpose. A type of homework can be designed with the aim of reviewing and practicing already learned material. It can also be designed with the aim of elaborating, enriching and amplifying already covered material. A different type of homework may be set to prepare, in advance, material to be seen in the following classes. Discussing the implementation of homework is by implication tackling the following issues: The amount of homework teachers set and feedback on homework.

***a- The amount of homework teachers set:***

Marzano, Pickering, & Patall, (2001) see that it is the quality of homework assignments that is important rather than the quantity. They see that effective teachers assign homework that does not necessarily involve a finished paper to be submitted by the student. Effective teachers focus more on assignments that provoke students' thought. Another study by Patall, et al., (2010) shows that providing students with choices in homework tasks increases their intrinsic motivation. Warton (2001) sees that the motivation a student has towards a task is higher once the individual perceives the task as emotionally rewarding and important. In other words, the student will not have increased motivation to complete an assignment unless he/ she perceives it to be beneficial. Trautwein (2007) thinks that better quality homework, which is associated with achievement gains, can encourage students to devote more effort. When homework has a clear purpose, this contributes to its quality. Blazer (2009) sees that teachers should make sure that students understand what they are supposed to do.

***a- Feedback on homework :***

Providing feedback is concequently one of the most interesting factors that contribute directly to homework completion. Xu (2011) believes that teachers' feedback can have a positive effect on homework completion. Without feedback a student may be forced to palce less value and effort in the assignment. An experimental study conducted by Murphy and Decker (1989) reveals that approximately three- quarters of interviewed teachers check and grade homework. Despite the fact that this study does not address the impact of such feedback on students' achievement, the results show the importance teachers place on homework, which may positively affect the rate at which students complete it.

Walberg (1999) thinks that students achievement can vary based on the sort of feedback provided by the teacher. Graded homework can have a positive effect on student learning versus homework without feedback (Wallberg, Paschal, & Weinstein, 1985). Grading homework can be useful, but an assignment in which a teacher embeds instructive comments is more useful. According to Cooper (1989a), teachers can provide four types of feedback:

- Letter grades that evaluate students' performance on the homework;
- A review of the homework that provides students with ways to improve their work;
- Verbal or written praise or criticism; and
- Non- verbal incentives.

***3- Students' perception of homework:***

As far as Picciano (2002) is concerned, "Student perceptions of their learning may be as good as other measures because these perceptions may be the catalysts for continuing to pursue coursework and other learning opportunities" (p. 22). Surveys on students' perception concerning homework yield different stand points. Surveys of secondary school students have found that students generally feel that

homework assignments are necessary and help them improve their grades and do better on exams (Woods, 1987). These surveys have shown that while some students prefer easy, simple, and short homework assignments, others prefer challenging assignments. It must be noted that the type of homework students like also varies, to a great extent, from routines textbook exercises or worksheets to projects that require hands-on creative endeavors; most students totally reject boring and meaningless homework (Hong, Topham et al., 2000).

A different study performed by Wilson & Rhodes (2010) shows that 86% of the students in the study agree that homework reinforces concepts learned in class and 67% report that homework helps them understand the subject matter better. In this study, 64% of students disagree with the statement that homework provides little or no purpose. In (2008), Fisher & Fry conduct a survey sponsored by MetLife. The results prove that homework is viewed as useful or very useful by 83% of teachers, 81% of parents, and 77% of students. However, it is worth mentioning that these percentages do not indicate the effectiveness of homework. They just show how each party values homework. By and large, homework becomes increasingly important in the educational process as students increase in age.

#### ***4- Merits of homework:***

As a matter of fact, admitting that students who complete homework generally outperform those who do not academically speaking is one of the major beliefs that have to do with homework. Epstein (1988) thinks that homework can have positive impacts on students' achievement and provide many other educational benefits for students. It can help students develop effective study habits and recognize that learning can occur beyond school. Homework, therefore, can foster responsible character traits and independent life-long learning (Cooper, 2000). For Corno (2000), homework can have a positive impact on the retention and understanding of knowledge and can improve study skills, attitudes toward school, and demonstrate that learning can happen in informal settings. Students identify that homework can make them 'smarter' (O'Rourke-Ferrara, 1998). According to Gill and Schlossman (2003) "leading educational spokespersons have celebrated homework as essential to raise educational standards, foster high academic achievement, upgrade the quality of the labor force, and link family and school in a common teaching mission" (27).

Instructional homework "benefits students by taking into account their individual differences, while offering teachers greater control in their planning" (Sallee & Rigler, 2008, p.51). Many learners also need an after school period of independent work. Homework may help address learner's individual problems and varied amount of time needed for comprehension, allowing a learner to learn at his own pace. Lemmer and Van Wyk (1998:1) report that regular homework is a necessary part of learning when children get the homework habit, they are learning more than just Maths, science or literature, but they are also learning study skills, self- discipline and independence.

All in all, assigning homework serves various educational needs. It serves as an intellectual discipline, eases time constraints on the amount of curricular material that can be covered in class, and supplements,



establishes study habits and reinforces work done in school. In addition, it fosters student initiative, independence, and responsibility and brings home and school closer together. Homework can have an overall positive effect on a student's level of achievement, improvement in educational skills, and social skills when structured properly (Haas, 2008). In order for these merits to be achieved, it is imperative that the homework is functionally integrated into the lessons (Dettmers, Trautwein, Ludtke, Kunter, & Baumert, 2010).

These are precisely the issues that this present study focuses on. Particularly, there is a need to hear voices from Moroccan students and teachers about the homework process. In collecting data, most of the foregoing studies rely mainly on questionnaires and sometimes on both questionnaires and interviews. With the aim of having more reliable findings, the present study is going to use questionnaires, interviews and observation as data collection tools. Another shortcoming of the foregoing studies is that, in their questionnaires, they use direct questions to students in order to know how they perceive of homework. This study adopts a different approach. Students' perception of homework can be deduced from their answers to a number of questions.

## **Proposed Methodology**

### ***1- Research design:***

The aim of this part is to describe the research design used in the empirical investigation. It includes the sampling of participants and procedures for data collection by means of a questionnaire, a focus-group interview and class observations. It also describes how data is analyzed. Because the study is primarily descriptive and exploratory, descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, etc) are applied to survey data. The research follows a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach to describe teachers' practices to use homework in TEFL.

### ***1- Data sources:***

The qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon as it occurs in its broader context. A main group of participants is involved in this study; EFL teachers belonging to different junior and senior high schools in Laayoune Sakia Elhamra region. The target population of the study composed of all Morocco's middle and secondary school EFL teachers to which the researcher prefers to generalize is rarely achievable. So this study is going to be conducted in Laayoune Sakia Elhamra region. Justification for choosing participants is that they are from schools with different backgrounds, which could generate rich data on teachers' perceptions and implementation of homework in various settings. Hopefully, 96 junior and senior high school teachers from all public junior and high schools in the region fulfill the survey. The majority of participants have, at least, one or more year's experience of teaching EFL. The teachers' age ranges from 20 to 50's.

***1- Data collection techniques :***

***3.1. Questionnaire:***

The researcher ensures that adequate time is allocated for the construction of the questionnaires. Questionnaires are drafted a number of time before they are finalized. They are personally distributed by the researcher to all participating schools in this study so that respondents could complete them in their own time. They are collected later and analyzed by the use of google forms.

***3.2. Interviews:***

A focus group interview is conducted with four teachers selected from those who participate in answering the questionnaire. The four teachers are contacted by the researcher and invited to participate in the interview. During these interviews, a relationship of trust and collegiality is established to make it easy for the participants to provide information.

***3.3. Class observation:***

To see how things related to homework are handled in practical settings, thirty two classes are randomly visited, four of which are visited more than once. These classes belong to different middle and high schools in Laayoune provincial directorate. These classes are 9th grade, common core, first year and second year baccalaureate. Their streams are Arts, Sciences, Physics, Human Sciences, Maths and Economics. Students' number ranges from 12 to 44 per class. In order to see clearly how teachers and students deal with homework, the researcher avoids discussing the aim of the visit with the targeted teachers.

***1- Issues of reliability and validity:***

To ensure such a fit, the researcher cross- checked the information and conclusions with actual participants for verification and insight.

***1- Sampling techniques:***

To control the gender variable for teachers whom the researcher visits, the researcher uses stratified random sampling. As for the questionnaire, all junior and senior high school teachers working in Laayoune Sakia Elhamra region fill in the questionnaire. The selection of classes is based on convenience sampling as an example of non-probability sampling. Here participation in the study is based on availability and willingness.

**1- Selection of participants:**

This study targets 96 EFL teachers working in public middle and high schools in the Laayoune Sakia Elhamra region.

**Presentation of findings**

**1- Teachers' questionnaire data :**

**1-2- Focus question one: How do Moroccan EFL teachers implement homework to meet their students' needs?**

**1-2-1- How often do you assign homework?**

All subjects (i.e., 100% of participants) say they assign their students homework. 11% say that they give it on a daily basis, 5% every other day, 37% twice a week, 47% once a week.

**1-2-2- Why do you give homework?**

As for the reason behind giving homework, 61% say that they set homework in order to practice, 35% to complete, 0% to prepare for, 3% to extend an activity, a task or an exercise.

**1-2-3- During the lesson, do you give homework in the beginning, the middle or the end?**

99% of participants say that they give homework in the end of the lesson while 1% says s/he gives homework in the middle of the lesson and 0% in the beginning.

**1-2-4- Is homework always assigned in written form, such as gap-filling, compositions, etc?**

Collected data show that 92 participants say they give homework in grammar, 96 participants in writing, 77 participants in reading, 37 participants in vocabulary, 27 participants in functions and 1 participant says s/he gives homework in other forms of writing.

**1-2-5- Do you make sure the instructions are clear?**

97% of participants say that they make sure homework instructions are clear whereas 3% say they do not.

**1-2-6- How long does it take to do the homework you set?**

As for the time spent on homework, 34% of participants say that students need less than 30 minutes to complete it, 65% say students need about an hour, and 1% say that their students need more than an hour for homework to be completed.

***1-3- Focus question two: What types of homework have greater meaning for students and why?***

Data collected in this part reveal that all subjects (i.e., 100% of participants) say that they correct homework in the class. 58% of participants say they sometimes correct it, 28% say they often correct it whereas 14% say they rarely do that. 42% of participants say they take into account low ability students when giving homework while 58% say they do not. 18% of participants claim they make sure their students do homework by themselves whereas 82% say they do not. 96% of participants say they give students feedback on their homework while 4% say they do not. Among the 96% of participants who give students feedback on their homework, 19% say they often do that, 63% say they sometimes provide students with feedback, and 17% say they rarely give students feedback on their homework.

***1-4- Focus question three: What are some challenges that teachers face when dealing with homework?***

Data collected in this connection show that, as far as the problems that prevent students from doing their homework, 51 participants say this is due to the fact that the instructions are not clear, 10 participants say the assignments are difficult, 77 participants say their students do not have enough time to do it, 31 participants admit that their students do not have a suitable place for doing it, and 12 participants say that the main problem is that students themselves are not motivated and irresponsible.

29% of participants say they discuss homework problems with their students while 71% say they do not. As for ways of motivating students to do homework assignments, participants provide different answers. Yet, the majority says that they motivate their students to do their homework by giving them extra- marks.

***1-5- Focus question four: How do EFL teachers perceive the merits of homework?***

Data collected in this domain reveal that 98% of participants think students should have homework while 2% say they should not. 96% of participants think homework is important, 2% think it is very important and 2% think it is not. 20% of participants say they ask their students what importance they place on homework whereas 80% say they never do that.

***3- Class observation data***

Data collected from attending 32 lessons in 10 high schools and 3 middle schools reveal that 19 teachers assign homework while 13 teachers do not. Among the teachers who assign homework, no one gives it in the beginning of the lesson, only two teachers give it in the middle, and 17 teachers give homework assignments in the very end of the lesson. 11 teachers assign homework orally while 8 teachers write it on the board.

Concerning the purpose of homework, 7 teachers set homework to practice an activity and 12 teachers assign it to complete an activity. No teacher gives homework in order to prepare for or to extend an

activity. Only four teachers set time for homework correction. This is the reason why I visit the same classes for the second time to see how correction takes place. Among the four teachers who set time for homework correction, two of them respect the time set. Homework assignments are in grammar, writing and reading comprehension. The tasks are in the form of gap-filling, completion, transformation and paragraph writing. Correction in the two classes is in the form of whole class oral correction. Teachers' feedback is just in the form of verbal comment on content.

## **Analysis and discussion of findings**

### **1- How do Moroccan EFL teachers implement homework to meet their students' needs?**

Assigning homework towards the very end of the lesson or when the bell rings may encompass a danger in itself. Students may not give much importance as they have already started preparing to leave the classroom. Homework instructions may not be clear to all students due to noise that often takes place in the end of the lesson.

Schools do not have a clear policy concerning homework frequency which reflects lack of collaboration among teachers and administration. This may result in bombarding students with a number of homework assignments of different school subjects.

The syllabus is rather long, and our students commonly have only two to five hours of English classes per week. One can deduce that teachers need to be aware of the fact that the reasons behind homework should not always be practicing and completing an activity. Homework can be used as a tool to extend and to prepare for an activity.

### **2- What types of homework have greater meaning for students?**

In the findings, students prefer the type of homework that has clear instructions, that suits their academic level, that is given systematically and that is corrected in the classroom. Concerning the tasks, data show that students prefer the tasks that help them prepare, extend and practice what they learn. Among these tasks are guided discovery tasks, real-world tasks and project work.

Data collected in this connection show that 58% of participants say that they sometimes correct homework, 28% say they often correct it, and 14% say they rarely do that. This clearly shows that correction is not given much importance. This also indicates that a number of teachers assign homework but do not correct it on a regular basis. This may give students the impression that homework is not to be taken seriously as they are usually left without correction.

To meet students' different needs and styles, homework tasks should take into account the mixed abilities of the class by adapting the textbook and moving beyond it. Teachers should bear in mind that there is no single textbook that is designed for all their students. Their role is to tailor these



materials to suit individual needs, which means that teachers need to do more efforts to make homework assignments interesting for all students regardless of their academic level and learning styles.

### **3- What are some challenges that teachers face when dealing with homework?**

Data collected in this connection show that teachers are aware of the challenges that students face when dealing with homework. These challenges are caused by a number of factors. To start with, the instructions are not clear. This is basically due to the fact that most teachers give these instructions orally and towards the very end of the lesson. Most teachers don't give students the chance to start their homework in the class which may give them guidance concerning dealing with the assignments at home without problems. Second, the assignments are difficult to do alone. This degree of difficulty is due to the fact that usually rubrics are difficult, and sometimes the assignments target lessons that are not covered in the class. This dilemma can also be a natural outcome of unclear instructions.

A third challenge that students face regarding homework completion is lack of time which can be aggravated by lack of coordination among teachers of different subjects. Very often, students find themselves bombarded by a number of assignments of different subjects to be done in the same night. A major challenge that a number of students may face is lack of a suitable place for doing homework. This can be caused by a number of distractors that prevent students from doing their assignments at home. In fact, sometimes parents, themselves, can be part of these distractors. Most schools do not offer suitable places for those students to do homework such as school libraries, etc. Another challenge that is linked to students themselves can be seen as students' lack of motivation since most of these assignments don't provoke students' thought and don't allow for students different styles.

### **1- How do EFL teachers perceive of the merits of homework?**

#### **4-1- EFL teachers' perception of the merits of homework**

At the level of perception, the majority of participants say that students should have homework. 96% of participants think that homework is important and 2% think it is not, but only 2% think it is very important. As for the positive reasons for giving homework, participants rank the fact that homework extends learning as number one. Homework can extend learning since it provides students with an opportunity to apply skills they already have to new situations. This means that providing students with extension assignments that may take the form of projects is of paramount importance as they are required to apply previous learning and apply skills to a new situation. This process is fruitful in the sense that it



can enrich classroom experiences to deepen student's understanding, and it provides opportunities for problem-solving, critical thinking and integrating skills.

### **Pedagogical implications and recommendations**

#### **1- For teachers :**

In the process of dealing with homework, more focus should be given to checking rather than grading. In other words, providing timely feedback to both teachers and students about how learning is taking place should be the central role of homework. In this connection, homework should be seen as a form of formative assessment since it provides students with many chances to receive feedback from the teacher. The way a teacher chooses to give feedback about homework is decisive in motivating or discouraging a student from completing homework. In fact, providing students with formative, corrective, interactive, and non-threatening feedback is very fruitful in the sense that it provides positive information to students, and it keeps the focus on checking for understanding and learning. Teachers are also invited to bear in mind that detailed feedback is more effective than simple letters or numbers, and that providing students with no feedback on homework sends a message that it isn't worth completing it.

When planning homework tasks, teachers should reflect on the type of learning they want homework to reinforce. First, given the fact that practice is among the objectives of homework, shorter and more frequent periods of practice are more useful than longer assignments given less frequently. Complex processes should be broken down into smaller bits or skills. Second, homework should not occur in isolation but should be closely connected to classroom learning. Homework should be linked to what students are learning in class and serve to extend classroom studies and activities. Homework should not be used to teach complex skills or introduce new concepts, but should focus on the integration of skills already possessed by the student. It is the quality, not the quantity, of homework that should be highlighted by teachers.

#### **2- For students:**

First of all, students should be fully aware of their responsibilities in the process of homework. They are required to have the assignments, understand them before leaving the classroom, ask for clarification or assistance from the teacher when homework assignments or the expectations are not clear, manage time and materials, e.g. by bringing home necessary materials, and display effort toward completion. Students had better be aware of the school homework policy if there is one. They should avoid using homework in learning new concepts which can be detrimental to them. Because it is not always the teacher who has to make the comments on students' assignments, students should offer feedback to one another. Furthermore, students are asked to keep track of assignments in a systematic way.

### **3- For parents:**

Parents should know that they can help their children as far as homework assignments are concerned in a number of ways by providing a suitable environment for homework, getting rid of distractions, reminding their children that homework is their responsibility, guiding in homework when unusual difficulties arise, encouraging their children to ask teachers for clarifications, communicating with teachers, monitoring activities so that sufficient time is provided for homework, acting as a supporters, not homework police, and prohibiting such dishonest practices in homework completion as cheating.

### **4- For administrators:**

Administrators are recommended to create a school homework policy in consultation with their school community, particularly the students' parents association regarding the implementation of homework, distribute the school homework policy to staff, students, parents and caregivers, particularly at the time of student enrolment, have on-going discussions with staff as far as effective homework strategies and practices are concerned, conduct on-going discussions with parents, encourage action research in this domain, and address challenges related to homework issues.

### **5- For supervisors:**

Given the importance of dealing with homework assignments in an effective way, this topic should be covered more pointedly in pre-service and in-service education for both teachers and administrators. The role of supervisors, therefore, should be highlighted. This means that homework is not only something that students do but also part of teachers' professional work. Supervisors need to conduct, for example, pedagogical meetings, workshops, plenary sessions that handle issues related to homework. They should also involve and encourage teachers conduct action research in this domain. In addition, supervisors are required to make homework one of their concerns during their class visits, by checking the way it is set, checked and corrected, simply because most teachers are presently guided, monitored and evaluated on the quality of class lesson plans and classroom teaching, but are not well prepared, supervised, or evaluated on their homework designs and actions.

### **6- For future research:**

In the Moroccan context, more research is definitely called for in the arena of homework assignments practices since there has been very little or no systematic investigation into homework and homework practices. This can be successfully achieved if we give priority to such topics as:

- ✓ Studies focusing on the effective application of ICT in relation to homework ;
- ✓ Research on the impact of homework on students' attitudes and attainment ;



- ✓ Studies focusing on the impact of homework environment in relation to individual learning styles; and
- ✓ Studies dealing with parental involvement in the children' homework, etc.

This list is far from being inclusive but it can be a starting point for more focused investigation in relation to homework.

### **Conclusion**

Homework can be an effective instructional tool for improving student learning when homework assignments are connected to specific important learning objectives and of a reasonable length, and when meaningful feedback is provided in a timely manner. Second, in the Moroccan context, one can easily observe that there is a need to re-examine homework practices. Third, any attempt to re-examine these practices necessitates collaboration among students, teachers, parents, administrators, and supervisors as well.

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