

***Familia y tareas escolares, un reto en la actual educación pos
pandémica cubana***
***Family and homework, a challenge in the current post-pandemic
education in Cuba***

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Resumen

Los cerca de 24 meses de confinamiento producto de la pandemia de Covid-19, obligó al sistema educacional cubano a transformar el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje y convertir cada hogar en una escuela y cada televisor en un docente. Ante esta situación el papel de la familia tomó un lugar más protagónico en el aprendizaje de los escolares y donde muchas de ellas no poseen los conocimientos fundamentales para implicarse de una forma más eficaz en la realización de las tareas docentes. Es por ello que realizamos la siguiente investigación con el objetivo de brindarle al docente una serie de orientaciones para la familia de sus educandos y lograr una eficaz participación familiar en las tareas o deberes escolares para la casa. Para la misma se emplearon los métodos tradicionales de la investigación educativa, lográndose en el centro muestra de la investigación resultados positivos en los objetivos propuestos.

Palabras clave: Familia; Tarea para la casa; Educación familiar; Participación familiar.

Abstract

The nearly 24 months of confinement as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic forced the Cuban educational system to transform the teaching-learning process and turn every home into a school and every television set into a teacher. In view of this situation, the role of the family took a more leading role in the learning process of schoolchildren and many of them do not have the fundamental knowledge to get involved in a more effective way in the performance of teaching tasks. That is why we carried out the following research with the aim of providing teachers with a series of guidelines for their students' families and to achieve an effective family participation in homework or school homework. The traditional methods of educational research were used for this research, achieving positive results in the research sample center in the proposed objectives.

Keywords: Family; Homework; Family education; Family participation.

Introduction

Non-compliance with homework and unsatisfactory educational results are the subject of permanent discussion by teachers, students and family, in general in all educational institutions at the primary level in our country, a problem that is discussed with the family in the different parents' meetings that are scheduled in each school year.

In relation to this problem, the Cuban family lacks an adequate preparation by teachers on how to intervene in a more effective way in the realization of homework for schoolchildren, which is the objective of our research.

In the study carried out by the authors of the present work, it is highlighted the lack of evidence of studies regarding the subject within the national scope, not being so in countries such as Spain, Mexico and Ecuador, where the following authors stand out: (Bernaza, 2000; Domínguez, 2010 and Rodríguez, 2016), where all agree on the importance of the role of the family in the performance of homework or school homework oriented homework and make proposals for actions in correspondence with the social and educational characteristics of the learners and families of their respective countries.

Cuban pedagogy has defined with certainty the important role of the family-school binomial as the main educational actors in the formation, from early ages, of future generations, based on the principles of Cuban socialism and in correspondence with the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the world today.

In the current research, the causes of the lack of effective family involvement in the successful completion of homework, the level of preparation that the family should receive from the school to get involved in this task with their children, the functions of homework, its importance, organizational

aspects to take into account at home for this activity, the different levels of help that can be used, among other aspects that favor the cognitive and formative fulfillment of this modality of independent study, are explored in depth.

Development

What are the main problems we see in our classrooms today about homework?

- 1.- Sometimes the task does not mean an enjoyable and necessary activity for learning.
- 2.- Activities are oriented without the correct orienting base of the activity (Leontiev and his "Theory of the activity: What should I do, What should I do about, How should I do it, What steps should I follow, What should I have to do it, What is the use of what I should do and what difficulties can I face if I do not do it or do not do it well, or do not do it all, How can they help me at home or in my Study Circle to do what I am asked to do, How can they help me at home or in my Study Circle to do what I am asked to do?

Tasks that become a problem for the student and the family, and that could provoke unfavorable evaluative criteria in the parents of the teacher's work: the "boomerang" effect.

- 4.- The same type of homework for all students.
- 5.- Excessive amount of homework for one day and the old and inappropriate criterion that there must be homework in all classes every day.
- 6.- Predominance of homework with an excessively short deadline (for tomorrow).
- 7.- The inadequate order of research, for the primary educational level (search for, look for information in, read the pages... of the text... and write it down in your notebook).
- 8.- The elaboration of integrating, interdisciplinary, enjoyable and developmental tasks is not taken into consideration in the methodological preparations of the study units.
- 9- Ignorance of the functions and requirements that the task must have in order to be considered a form of independent work.
- 10.-Evidence of little theoretical-methodological preparation of teachers to correctly conceive exercises or activities for school homework.
- 11.-Lack of interrelation among homework, the class and the class system.
- 12.-Development of homework through activities, sometimes very extensive and comprehensive, and sometimes too brief and excessively reproductive.

Definition of homework. Its main functions, objectives and importance

The word homework comes from the vulgar Arabic *ṭarīḥa*, and this from the classical Arabic root *ṭarḥ*, which means, to cast, leave, assign, duty, debt, demand, need, is the work to be done in a limited time, usually short and that meets the intended purpose.

Throughout the history of education, homework has been a resource for the transmission of knowledge. Rodriguez (2016) defines them as an activity, in which the ancient society, transmitted to their generations, their beliefs, moral, religious concepts, knowledge and techniques. It is through action and repetition that teaching is based either formally or informally, using tasks as the means to achieve knowledge.

In this regard, Domínguez (2010) defines these activities as tasks assigned to students by teachers to be performed during extracurricular hours. These activities are used as an exercise to reinforce the contents seen in class.

On the other hand, Fúnez (2014) defines them as activities to be performed inside and outside the classroom, as a practical preparation or extension of the class and that report an invaluable value for the efficient development of learning, with long and short term effects on the emotional development of the student and the family.

Among the authors cited, we were able to find similarities in terms of the main functions and objectives of homework.

Main functions

- Practice: In them, students apply and reinforce, in a personal way, the knowledge and skills acquired in class, for example, exercise guides or questionnaires.
- Preparatory: They are those that students are asked to do in order to learn about the topic to be presented in the next class, for example, search for information on a specific topic, readings, obtain material to prepare projects or presentations, etc.
- Extension: They are used for students to apply the acquired knowledge in different situations, encourage individual learning and incite research, for example, projects, long-term assignments, etc.

Other important functions

- Create study habits and values.
- Achieve mastery of the textbook and other complementary sources.
- Review and systematize the content.
- Expand the content received. Introduce new content.

- Develop reading, research and technological skills and abilities, among others.

What elements should teachers and families should know in order to guarantee homework activities that meet these requirements?

1. Have correctly defined the objective(s) to be pursued, in the cognitive, intellectual and formative order.
2. More than one variant of order and an adequate guiding basis for the activity should be considered in your class no less than 5 minutes to guide the homework.
3. You must awaken the motivation of the students so that they feel the need to look for and take the best ways to solve the assigned task.
4. It should involve intellectual effort.
5. It should be an extension of the class.
6. It should adapt the activity oriented to the skills, abilities and characteristics of the students' home environment.
7. To be indicated at any moment of the class, it tends to be oriented at the end in a hurried way, for reasons of time.
8. To inform the student the prudential time that they have to carry it out.
9. To orient them how they can self-evaluate and rectify the accomplishment of the task themselves.
10. Always stimulate the learners with the completion of the task, make them see what was missing, what they brought and how they could have done it better.
11. To elaborate varied activities, sufficient according to the purpose to be pursued and differentiated.
12. To achieve a good motivation in the students to awaken their interest and to execute the task.
13. Do not consider quantity as a synonym of quality. In the case of students, it is very difficult for them to understand both aspects, since whether there is little or much, many of them relate homework as something negative.

Main objectives of the homeworks

A review of the history of homework reveals that at first it was imposed in the school apparatus as a form of punishment alongside physical punishment. Criticism of this way of conceiving them, as well as progress in pedagogy, led them to be conceived as a means to achieve greater academic performance.

Although it is true that sometimes negative circumstances occur, homework, in its healthiest conception, has very specific and highly positive objectives in the development of children and adolescents. Among many of the objectives of homework the main ones are:

(a) To foster autonomy: it is an activity that, as far as possible, should be done by those who have the responsibility, with the minimum participation of adults. In this way, they learn to make decisions, to choose among several options and to face the consequences of their actions.

b) Stimulate creativity: where to consult, what materials to use, where to get them, how to present a work, and what formulas to use in a problem are, among many, the challenges that must be faced before a task. If the accompaniment is stimulating towards taking the initiative, inventiveness and curiosity, innate qualities in childhood and adolescence, it will be much easier to solve almost everything.

c) Reinforce knowledge: in most of the times the teacher develops in his class the basic points of a subject. With homework, the subject can be expanded or better understood. It is not the same to attend class and write down in a notebook, often without understanding what is written, than to read individually, in a quiet place and without the pressures and noises of a classroom, about the subject that was discussed in class.

d) To develop aptitudes and abilities: when the tasks are appropriate for the capacities according to the age, they allow making evident diverse abilities. Painting, writing, solving mathematical problems, doing manual work, learning to synthesize and summarize the main ideas of a written document, as well as organizing group activities are valuable elements that help them to develop their abilities.

group activities are valuable elements that will allow children and adolescents not only to "do their homework well", but also become tools to face everyday life.

e) Helping to build and rebuild self-esteem and happiness: with the negative idea that many adults have (due to their personal experience of childhood and adolescence), this objective may seem contradictory or almost impossible to achieve. But it is that it is forgotten that children and adolescents love challenges.

f) Create habits: study, as well as the "urgent" "rescue" of the habit of reading, consulting books and documents, visiting the library, among others, because we are facing an increasingly worrisome and dependent digital pandemic.

Different perspectives on homework

Schoolwork is influenced by a variety of circumstances that cannot go unnoticed. Some are easy to detect, such as those related to the socioeconomic and cultural level of the family. In this case, it has been shown that the higher the cultural and socioeconomic level, the greater the possibilities of attention and help that the children receive in relation to schoolwork.

In addition, it is necessary to take into account the motivation on the part of the children to do their homework and the learning that this entails. This is clearly a factor that influences family dynamics. The more motivated the children are to learn and do their homework, the more the parents accompany them in doing it.

There are other circumstances, apparently distant, but no less important, such as the school, the family and the community acting as true partners when it comes to resolving the issue of homework for students, children and citizens.

However, there are other circumstances or reasons that approach family education in schoolwork and that go into the possible relationships that can be established between parents and children in this regard, and what this means for family education.

The following are some of them. The first has to do with the preparation of parents when it comes to offering their children help with schoolwork. Beyond the parents' level of studies, or the knowledge they have in relation to homework, the help that parents can offer their children requires pedagogical knowledge. Doing homework with their children also has to do with issues that go beyond the actual knowledge of the different.

Characteristics of homeworks

According to Cuban pedagogy, there are three characteristics that homework assignments must have in order to meet the academic objectives they are intended to achieve:

- They must be pedagogical, that is, the teacher must have a clear intention regarding the formative and cognitive development when assigning them.
- They should be short, so that the child or adolescent does not have to complete almost a double day of school work: that of the school and that of the overwhelming homework that does not give them time to play, be with their family and friends.
- They should be considered as a strategy to form a personal work routine that will help in adulthood to fulfill personal and work responsibilities.

When the family knows and is aware of these characteristics, they should demand that the tasks they give to the students are fulfilled, so that the best results can be achieved with them. Failure to do so

means agreeing with the conception of homework as punishment, which goes against healthy schooling as part of socialization.

The study environment at home

No less important is this point. To make the most of the study, an adequate physical and emotional environment is required.

Regarding the physical environment, ideally a quiet place is required, away from the most "traffic" areas of the house, not near the telephone, the television or the door. In other words, in a space where there is as little distraction and noise as possible.

If a library or study room is not available, it can be the same bedroom or even the dining room table, but always in the same place, where the minimum elements are available (pencil sharpeners, pencils, paper, textbooks, eraser, etc.), to avoid constant interruptions looking for these objects all over the house. It is well known that many children and adolescents spend all their study time in preambles and excuses to continually get up from their seats.

There should be a table or desk with a comfortable seat, with a backrest and appropriate for their height. The place should be well ventilated, allowing light to enter from the opposite side of the hand with which the child writes; thus, if the child writes with the right hand, the light should come from the left side or from the front, not from the right side.

Although already mentioned, it is necessary to reiterate that it is not possible to study with a good performance if homework is done near the telephone or cell phone and if the television or radio is on, which means that electronic devices for watching videos or listening to music should not be present at the time of doing homework, which should always be sought through agreement and not imposition.

As important as the physical environment is the emotional one. It is necessary an atmosphere of tranquility, without pressure, establishing a fixed schedule, but not too intense. Ideally, study time should be interspersed with moments of play, entertainment or rest. For example, when you get home after eating something, you should rest for a while; then study for a maximum of 45 minutes, after which you can rest or watch television.

Afterwards, you can go back to study for another 45 minutes, if necessary. It is more useful to distribute the time this way than to do the tasks in continuous form, as exhausting days of two or more hours, which are, clearly, inconvenient. The astuteness of the parents plays a great role in this

aspect, because if they know how to distribute the time well, they avoid confronting the tasks with the game, the television or the telephone.

In other words, everyone should understand that these activities are not the enemy of study and that they are part of the daily life of children and adolescents. By reconciling them with homework, the child's idea of homework will not be distorted.

On the other hand, it is necessary for adults to respect every moment, both play and study time. Often adults give double messages with their attitude: on the one hand, they say that studying is very important, but at the same time they constantly interrupt this activity to answer the phone, open the door or run an errand. Undoubtedly, this only contributes to create more animosity towards studying and does not allow the expected performance.

The role of the family

The family is the nucleus where children develop with greater security, supporting them in activities that implicitly are already a challenge, will make them develop in a positive way in affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects and, therefore, a greater academic success, besides, students feel that their performance is better when parents help them with their homework.

Adults do not have to do homework with their children. This has to be said emphatically and categorically. With the best intentions and with a misunderstood "spirit of sacrifice", many parents sit down with their children to study, or worse, to do the homework themselves, thus falling into the harmful overprotection or instilling in them an inappropriate sense of competition: you have to be the best in the class, just as I was.

The true function of accompanying adults (fathers, mothers, siblings, uncles, aunts, uncles, grandparents, grandmothers) in school homework, besides facilitating an environment conducive to study, as already mentioned, is to accompany children and adolescents in this task with affection and respect.

Let them know that when they have difficulties they can count on their adults. Their concerns should be responded to positively with stimulating comments, such as "I think there is a mistake in this operation, do you want to review it together? or how about doing it this way? Otherwise, making corrections with sarcasm, irony, or lectures will only frustrate their effort and deal a severe blow to their self-esteem.

At the end of the study, ask if there were any difficulties, if they want to show what they did or if they need any help. Impositive or overprotective adults, or those who understand the study with the

criterion of reward and punishment, not only hinder the normal intellectual growth, but, in the long run, will only get them to assume the study and homework as something tedious and boring.

Other family recommendations

- It is necessary to know their children's teachers, as well as to attend and participate in parent-teacher meetings.
- It is necessary to show with facts and examples the advantages of learning, deducing, drawing conclusions, looking for alternatives and options different from the conventional ones.
- It is necessary to take advantage of the natural curiosity and initiative of children and adolescents to awaken their investigative spirit.
- It is essential to involve school homework and study issues in the family's daily conversations, as well as to relate them to news or press articles or television programs. This will show that what is being done and studied is valuable and important. Homework or study should never be used as a punishment.
- Accompanying adults should be convinced that studying is not the opposite of playing, watching television or being with friends.
- When children or adolescents refuse to do their homework, punishment is useless. It is necessary to analyze, always together with the teachers, what is the reason for the refusal and, in common agreement, look for a solution. In summary, parents and teachers have the great challenge of showing children and adolescents that studying and reading is as good as playing or being with their friends.
- It is important that parents establish a unique schedule agreed with their children to do homework, thus creating a habit of study, it is recommended that the schedule is in a period of the evening, where the child clear and favorable conditions allow him to have a blank mind and in harmony.
- It is not recommended to do homework after having eaten, or after leaving school, this is because the child should not feel overwhelmed or rushed.

Quantity or quality of homework

An issue that often arises has to do with the amount of homework that teachers should prescribe for elementary school students. Quantity is often considered to be synonymous with quality. In the case

of children, it is very difficult for them to understand both aspects, since whether it is too little or too much, they relate homework as something negative.

The quantity of homework does not determine the quality with which it will be done, nor whether the results obtained from it will be what the teacher expects the students to achieve. This should be measured by the quantity of objectives that the teacher wishes to achieve; quality is marked by a personal aspect in each of the students.

The effort and importance that a student puts into each of his or her tasks will measure the quality that will result from it; the effort invested in homework has been shown to have a more positive impact on academic performance than the time spent on homework itself. (Bailén and Polo, 2016).

El The fact that homework is not done with the expected effort has to do with the students' concept of it. These activities are not seen as beneficial for them, since students participate in homework not because of their interest or enthusiasm, but rather out of a sense of duty, a desire to please, or even to avoid punishment.

Not much information was found that made reference to the amount of homework appropriate for elementary school students, but taking into account the above, it is considered important to know the degree of complexity that students can reach in each school grade, and thus adapt the tasks so that they are performed with greater effort and achieve the quality needed to meet the objectives set by teachers.

According to many national and foreign educators and researchers, between 1st and 3rd grade, most children should not spend more than 20 to 30 minutes per day during the week on homework in order for it to be of maximum benefit. For most students in grades 4-6, 45 minutes to 1 hour per day is recommended.

For some students, a different (heavier) homework load than recommended here may be appropriate. Instruct the family to consult with the teacher if they feel their child's homework is too much or too little.

Six keys to good homework

1. Have a clear learning purpose and that students are aware of that purpose.
2. That there is a balance between the time students are expected to spend on the task and the purpose of the task.
3. Encourage ownership of the learning.

4. Promote a positive attitude: in addition to encouraging learning, they should promote self-confidence.
5. That they are attractive or interesting to stimulate motivation to learn.
6. Do not forget that they should be activities that encourage students to search, inquire, note, consult, discuss, give their opinions, think, reflect, reach conclusions, so that they can achieve developmental and educational learning.

Conclusions

Homework is an activity that human beings carry out not only in the school environment, since with it they achieve that knowledge has a meaning in their daily lives. For the teaching practice, they are a strategy that allows measuring the performance and acquisition of the learning seen in class and to know if the student will be able to develop them in other activities that are not necessarily academic. Emphasis is placed on the congruence that should exist in the school and family contexts. For an elementary school child, this relationship should be close, so that he/she does not feel that he/she is doing things that do not correspond to his/her personal life. Parents and teachers should work as a team so that students understand that reading, writing, operations and other academic activities play an important role in the development of the skills they need for an adequate development in society. Probably the image that every student has about homework will continue to be somewhat negative for more generations, as it is today. But if teachers and parents work to implement them properly, their main objective, to complement and reinforce academic content, can be carried out with a greater effort imposed by students, obtaining higher quality results, that homework always leave traces and not scars.

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