



How ironic it is that parents who have chosen to put their children into an ineffective education system which cannot function without their support are withdrawing their support in protest over the fact that the schools are ineffective!

The Homework Conundrum

Why do schools give homework?

It's easy nowadays to be anti-homework. It is common knowledge that studies show how ineffective homework generally is and everybody knows that children, teachers and parents hate it. Yet, there it is; universally, globally.

The fact is, homework can be good or bad depending on the student, the work and the home. It seems reasonable to expect parents to help with the education of their child and there is also the 'bridge-to-home' supporting argument.

My children are home-schooled which it is 100% homework – so I'm definitely not against homework.

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Homework has been in the news recently. Parents in Spain have organised in large numbers to protest and boycott homework. They complain that there is too much and that it eats into family time. They also make this interesting claim:

*“Schools are passing on tasks to families that they shouldn't be. They've made us into second teachers and left children in the latter stages of secondary school with up to 60 hours of schoolwork a week.” **

My experience as a teacher and a parent also confirms to me that many teachers, especially weaker teachers, will give a lot of homework to compensate for ineffective learning in the classroom.

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Another popular argument against homework is that it favours the stronger students and those with more studious home environments and so it is elitist.

Certainly it would seem to be true to anyone with experience or logic that the most successful academic students are the ones who studied hardest at home. I know I did!

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The only conclusion I am able to come to is actually quite a shocking revelation in its small way. It's this: the fact is about homework that schools give it because the school by itself is unable to deliver the required academic standards. In almost any case, a student will not achieve high academic standards without family support or private tutoring. Just going to school won't be enough – this is why even students in successful private schools have loads of homework and private tutors.

This is startling – but there is one more part of the conundrum to solve: Why? Why can't schools independently deliver their own standards?

Is it because the essential nature or structure of schools makes it impossible?

Or are the standards unrealistic? Certainly, doing Year 6 SATs, 8 or 10 GCSE subjects, IB or 3/4 A-Levels, this is hard, really hard, and many otherwise normal and bright students struggle.

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My conclusion is that schools give homework because they can't deliver their own standards without outside help. I find this a fundamental and startling realisation. I don't know why. My best guess would be because in schools students can't get the individual and focussed attention they require and that they find at home or with private tutors. However I think it is probably a mixture of factors.

Moreover, this highlights how confused and broken the education system has become. Take Spain. You have a school system which cannot deliver the required standards and parent organisations complaining about how much they have to do to support the schools. How ironic it is that parents who have chosen to put their children into an ineffective education system which cannot function without their support are withdrawing their support in protest over the fact that the schools are ineffective!

Instead of saying 'We refuse to help our kids!' the parents in Spain could be saying 'Let's do the job ourselves! We don't need schools!'

But no.

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*<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/02/spanish-parents-urged-to-put-children-on-weekend-homework-strike>