

## Views of Primary Teachers About Homework (A Qualitative Analysis)

Sevil Filiz Buyukalan<sup>1</sup>, Yasemin Boyaci Altinay<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assoc. Prof., Gazi University Faculty of Education, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>Primary School Teacher, Turkey

Correspondence: Sevil Filiz Buyukalan, Assoc. Prof., Gazi University Faculty of Education, Turkey.

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the views of classroom teachers about homework assigned to primary students. In the study, a qualitative method was employed. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews and the participants were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. The participants of this study are twenty classroom teachers who taught the primary grades of 1, 2, 3 and 4 at a public primary school in Konya during the school year of 2017-2018. The interview form was administered to four classroom teachers in a pilot study whose findings produced a reliability level of 88% and the obtained data were analysed using the descriptive statistics. The participants' answers to the interview items were categorized under common themes and sub-themes. Besides, in the discussion of the findings direct quotations were also given. The findings generally indicate that the teachers had a positive attitude towards homework assignments. It was also found that for them homework assignments contribute positively to increase student achievement. The findings also suggest that the views of the participants about homework assignments do not vary based on the variables of gender, grade level, their professional experience and their educational background.

**Keywords:** home assignment, assignment-related activities, primary school, classroom teachers

### 1. Introduction

The concept of education is so broad that it cannot be limited to formal education. Instead, education is a life-long process and occurs both at schools and in other environments, which indicates its multidimensional character (Beydođan & Şahin, 2000). Although informal education occurs as a result of the experience through social institutions, including families, religious practices and mass media, formal education in nearly all societies is considered to be the responsibility of schools (Bloom, 1995, p.9). However, education does not take place only at schools. These institutions constitute only a part of it. The other part of the formal education continues at home through homework. In other words, learning at schools should be reinforced at home and it is only possible to help children acquire the skills of studying in a regular manner.

Regarding the issue, Çelenk (2003) argues that students' academic achievement is significantly affected by several factors, including harmony in family life, parents' attitude towards children and parental involvement in school work. Çelenk concludes that the parents having positive relationships with schools have positive effects on students' academic achievements and that parents should be trained by schools to avoid the misguidance of students and the disagreements between them and teachers.

If schools do their work in a desired way, educational goals can be achieved. However, it requires that school work should be complemented by homework. Homework is a kind of task which should be completed outside school through parental guidance or independently given by teachers. It is one of the most influential activities which is significant for making learning significant and to acquire new experiences (Cooper, 1989; Ođuzkan, 1985). Swanson (2001) argues that homework is predetermined activities to reinforce learning to make it long-lasting. In short, it is one of the most common learning methods which is primarily used to reinforce learning and to make further research.

Many researchers have similar opinions about the definition of homework and it is commonly stated that homework is an activity designed to improve students' knowledge and skills and to make formal learning much more lasting which is carried out in non-school setting. Homework makes students ready for further courses and gives them an opportunity to employ their knowledge and skills in novel situations (Büyükkaragöz & Çivi, 1994).

Epstein (2001) states that given that teachers design homework to make students aware of the learning goals the content

of homework is predetermined by teachers. It is clear that homework has a significant role in student learning. However, Sullivan and Sequeria (1996) argue that the significant point is how homework is given by teachers. Ilgar (2005) states that teachers should consider some points in assigning homework, including the level of students, the originality and duration of and feedback given to students and that schools, teachers and parents have their own significant responsibility in achieving the goals of homework.

Kazmierzak (1994) argues that in order to make homework much more influential and productive learning activities teachers should question about homework continuously. It is also maintained that if the homework assigned cannot achieve the stated goals, it should be redesigned in accordance with these goals. If it could not be achieved, there may occur some negative consequences. Atılğan (2006, p.329) indicate that there are some disadvantages in regard to assignment of homework, including the same format of the homework may make student bored. Homework may limit the time available for parent-child or child-environment interactions. On the other hand, parents may have some negative effects on homework activities if they themselves do homework for their children, if they provide some incorrect answers when they are asked to answer the questions about homework, etc. At the extreme cases these effects may result in cheating in the exams or telling a lie. In addition, homework should not require the use of those devices or tools that are very expensive or are not readily available at home. In addition, it is not possible for all parents to provide their children with a place which is completely proper for studying. Another point is that there occurs an equality among children due to the fact that some parents are eager to do homework for their children, but the others do not do the same.

All these negative consequences can be avoided if homework is given in accordance with the pre-determined goals. Research suggests that such homework has positive contributions on students' academic achievement. Dietz and Kuhrt (1960) analysed the types of the homework assignments and concluded that improper homework may negatively affect student achievement, but proper homework may improve their learning and achievement (Ergünand Özdaş, 1997). In addition, there are some studies suggesting that there are correlations between regular homework and socio-economical status of parents (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001, pp. 181-193; Warton, 2001, pp.155-165) indicating that proper homework has significant effects on student achievement. Kathleen (2001) concluded that parents have the belief of their involvement in doing homework making positive contributions to the education of their children and that teachers and children have expectations that they should help homework (cited in Duban, 2016). Pattil (2011) and Özben (2006) found that homework improve students' social, academic and affective skills. Cool & Keith (1991) state that homework has positive effects on making student learning long-lasting due to the fact that it avoids learning to be forgotten and hence, improves student achievement.

Öcal & Özer (2012) state that homework has several benefits, including reinforcing and reating formal learning, making learning permanent, acquiring new information, improving the sense of responsibility and the habit of studying. Jianzhong (2007) argues that while designing homework activities teachers should consider certain variables: characteristics of children and parents, types of homework, and the goals of homework assignments (cited in Şen & Gülcan, 2012). Research suggests that homework is as much influential as learning methods employed on student achievement (Folye & Bailey, 1988; Paschal & Weinstein, 1984). Atılğan (2006, p.330) mentions the advantages of assigning homework as follows: "both independent and individual studying skills can be improved through homework. Study habits develop from early ages. These habits make it possible for children to solve daily life problems and to be successful. However, if homework assigned is not consistent with grade level, students cannot acquire the necessary skills and be successful."

Küçükahmet (2003, p.175) explains it as follows: "Homework is significant in terms of reinforcing the learning. It is one of the indicators of students' study skills. It is certain that those students who do homework regularly have better study skills, more positive attitudes and better habits than those who do not homework. Homework is closely affected by certain factors, including study environment at home, parental interest, and their educational background."

In addition to improve student achievement homework has also other benefits. It makes it possible for children to acquire several skills of self-discipline, independent acts and responsibility. It also teaches children how to plan their time outside school. In addition, it helps them to make studies in accordance with their levels and to recognize their interest. In short, homework makes it possible for children to learn outside school (Kapıkıran & Kıran, 1999, p.55). On the other hand, homework assists those students who learn slowly and provide an opportunity with those who learn quickly to challenge themselves. Similarly, Rosenberg (1989) states that in order to make it possible for students with learning difficulty to acquire basic skills topics should be repeated and reinforced. If homework is meaningful and reinforce the in-class work, it positively contributes to student achievement. Homework also provides an opportunity with parents to involve in their children education. Concerning this topic Foyle and Bailey (1986) stated that "homework is a bridge between schools and parents." Parents should be informed by teachers about the goals of homework and how they could guide their children to involve them in education. Therefore, homework is one of the activities that may initiate a productive cooperation between parents and schools. Another significant point is the

amount of homework assigned. Shaughnessy argues that teachers should take into consideration some factors such as students' age and skill level when assigning homework and that they should assign homework to reinforce prior learning. The goals of assigning homework to productively contribute to learning are as follows: acquiring scientific thinking skills through research, learning how to access information, learning problem-solving skills, communicative skills and the relationship of cause and effect, having an awareness about social differences, producing knowledge and technology and producing entrepreneur individuals (cited in Gür, 2003).

Constructivist educational approach states that the primary role of teachers is to offer opportunities and activities based on individual differences, and to provide a learning environment in which students could express their views cooperatively (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Given that the views of classroom teachers about homework are reported to be significant this study aims at revealing such views.

Based on this aim the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the purposes of teachers in assigning homework to students?
2. What kind of homework is assigned by teachers?
3. Which factors do teachers take into consideration in assigning homework to students?
4. What are the problems teachers face in assigning homework to students?
5. What do teachers think about students' attitudes towards homework?
6. How do teachers evaluate homework?
7. What do teachers suggest to improve student motivation about homework?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Design of the Study*

This study is designed as a qualitative research in which the data were collected through the semi-structured interviews.

In qualitative research events and facts are analyzed in their natural setting and therefore, it is an approach which attempts to understand social facts in their environment (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2005). In addition, Kuş (2003) states that qualitative research considers life to be a process rather than a static entity. The data of the study were collected through semi-structured and non-guided interviews. The use of this technique indicates that the participants are asked to reveal their experiences about the study topic. Such type of interview covers open-ended items. In addition, Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005) state that semi-structured interviews make it possible for researchers to have systematical and comparable data.

### *2.2 Participants*

The participants of the study were twenty classroom teachers working at a public school in Selçuklu district of Konya during the school year of 2017–2018. The teachers were teaching the grades of 1, 2, 3 and 4. They were selected using the typical case sampling which is part of the purposive sampling methods. Here the aim is to reveal the related situations and to have information about them or to make people informed about them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005).

### *2.3 Data Collection Tools*

In order to determine the research questions first the related studies were reviewed. This review covered the following points: aim, methodology, and results. The feedback gained from this review was used to identify the methodology of the study.

Given that the study attempts to reveal the views of the primary school teachers about homework the data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Kuş (2003) argues that interviews are a kind of purposive conversation in which the researcher asks predetermined items to the participants. Karasar (2005) categorizes interviews into three groups: structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews include pre-determined items developed in detail (Stacey 1970). Unstructured interviews are made up of open-ended items which are not determined in advance and in such interviews there is no expectation about the answers to these items (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2005). Semi-structured interviews which were used in the present study to gather the data involve the items that do not attempt to guide interviewees. Because the goal was to reveal the experiences of the participants about the study topic.

Based on a review of the related literature interview items were developed. Then the items were analysed by field specialists. Next an official permission was taken. The available days for interviews were identified. The participants were informed about the interview process. They were also informed that their identity and views would be confidential. A pilot study was carried out with four classroom teachers to establish the validity and reliability of the process. The

data obtained were examined through descriptive statistics and the reliability was calculated using the following formula:  $\text{Reliability} = (\text{Consensus} + \text{Visibility}) \times 100$ . The result was found to be 88% indicating that it is reliable. A total of twenty classroom teachers participated in the interviews. Interviews lasted for approximately 30–35 minutes and were recorded. On the other hand, some of the participants did not want their interview to be recorded so that notes were taken during these interviews.

#### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interview forms were analysed using the descriptive analysis. Necessary parts were designed as direct quotations. When necessary level of data was collected a detailed analysis was done to get answers to the questions of why and how. At this step an inductive analysis technique was employed (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2005). The questions prepared for this aim were directed to 20 class teachers. The interviews with twenty participants were recorded and analyzed by researchers. Then the recordings were transcribed to find out main themes. After the interviews the answers to each question were coded in terms of their main aspect. Direct quotations were given using the abbreviations for each participant from P1 to P20 to ensure the confidentiality of the names of the participants.

### 3. Discussion of the Findings

The findings are categorized based on seven items used in the interviews. This categorization produced several themes and sub-themes. The first set of findings is about the characteristics of the participants which were asked in the first section of the interview form. These characteristics that are given in Table 1 include gender, educational background, grade level they taught and professional experience.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants

		Number of the participants
<b>Gender</b>	Female	12
	Male	8
<b>Educational background</b>	Teachers' training school	0
	Training Institute	1
	Graduate education	17
	Master's degree	2
<b>Grade level taught</b>	PhD	0
	1. grade	5
	2. grade	5
	3. grade	5
	4. grade	5
<b>Professional experience</b>	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	3
	16-20 years	9
	21 years and more	5

As can be seen in Table 1 there are 12 female and 8 male in the participant group. There are only one participant who graduated from the training institute. The number of participants who had graduate education is 17. Two of the participants had master's degree. The number of the participants who taught the grade levels is the same, each five. Only one participant had a professional teaching experience of 1-5 years. There are two participants whose professional teaching experience is between 6 and 10 years. The number of participants with 11-15 years of professional experience is three. There are nine participants whose professional teaching experience ranges between 16 and 20 years. There were five participants who had more than 21 years professional teaching experience.

The second set of the findings are about the purpose of assigning homework. The following Table 2 shows the related findings:

Table 2. Purpose of assigning homework

To reinforce students’ sense of responsibility
To make learning long-lasting
To reinforce student learning
To provide communication with parents and students
To eliminate insufficient knowledge of students
To improve students’ self-study skills
To improve students’ knowledge and skills
To make productive students’ time at home
To make students much more practical in their study
To improve students’ academic achievement
To make it possible for students to acquire study habits
To richen the classroom worth giving several examples
To complement the courses
To avoid forgetting learning
To make it possible for students to acquire the habit of repeating daily learning
To provide an opportunity with students to prepare for the next courses
To make it possible for students to acquire positive behaviour
To improve students’ higher thinking levels

As Table 2 indicates that the majority of the participants assign homework to reinforce learning, to improve students’ sense of responsibility, to make learning permanent and to provide an opportunity with students to prepare for the next courses. The other reasons for assigning homework are stated by the participants as follows: to make students’ out of school time productive and to improve their study habits and skills. The following direct quotations exemplify these reasons of assigning homework as follows:

P1 “Students mostly spend their time at home. If they do homework after resting and playing for a while, they may spend productive time at home. Because if we do not assign homework, they do not study at home.”

P13 “When we do not assign homework related to learning in class, they will easily forget what they learn at school so that we assign homework to make learning much more permanent.”

P8 “Some parents do not know how to spend their time with children in a productive way. Particularly parents with lower level of education can have productive time with them while involving in their children’s homework.”

P6 “Although students may be active and involve in courses their higher level thinking skills such as making research, criticism, interpretation can only be improved through homework.”

The next set of the findings are about the factors affecting student attitudes towards homework. Table 3 indicates these findings as follows:

Table 3. Views of the participants about the factors affecting student attitudes towards homework

Positive views	Negative views
Being aware of responsibilities	Avoiding responsibilities
Acquiring study skills	Being under the effect of environmental stimuli
Having an intention to be successful	Lack of motivation
Parental involvement	Anxiety about failure
Improving child-parent communication	Unwillingness
	Working parents
	Inefficient use of out of school time

As Table 3 indicates the participants reported both positive and negative factors affecting the student attitude towards homework. However, it is seen that there are more negative factors rather than positive ones for teachers which influence the students’ attitude towards homework.

The following direct quotations exemplify the views of the participants about the factors that negatively affect the student attitude towards homework as follows:

P5 “There are numerous factors that negatively affect the study of children, including television, computer games, Internet, social media. It is very hard to reduce children’s interaction with them.”

P20 “Parents of most of my students are employed. It means that after school they should stay at home alone. When their parents do not check they may not do their homework.”

P3 “Courses become much harder in higher grades. And sometimes homework can be challenging. Therefore, under such situations for those children who cannot manage do the homework and whose achievement level is lower both unwillingness and anxiety of fear occur.”

The following direct quotations exemplify the views of the participants about the factors that positively affect the

student attitude towards homework as follows:

P4 “Some students have a sense of responsibility from earlier grades: such student shave very involved parents and therefore, they have higher motivation to make homework.”

P16 “If students are succesful they have mostly a regular habit of study and sense of responsibility and therefore, they have higher levels of motivation to complete homework. In addition, such students have a desire to achieve their goals.”

The other set of the findings is about the factors that their goal schers take into consideration in assigning homework to students. The related findings are given in Table 4:

Table 4. Views of the teachers about the factors considered in assigning homework to students

Clear and understandable
Fun
Developmentally appropriate
Grade-level appropriate
Related to daily activities
Being informed about the views of students
Not time consuming
Related to learning
Could be done independently
Instructive, observable and encouraging research
Clearly informed goals

Table 4 indicates that the majority of the participants consider several factors in assigning homework, that are clear, fun, and developmentally appropriate. In addition, the participants’ homework should be not time consuming, be related to learning and done independently. Some of the participants thought that homework may not attract student interest so that they attempted to assign homework that encourage research and instructive based on student views. Some of the such views are exemplified through following direct quotations:

P14 “While assigning homework, I always take grade level into consideration. Because there are student with different levels of achievement in the class. If I assign homework appropriate for successful children, the others either do not complete homework or make mistakes.”

P2 “While assigning homework, I try to assign homework that they could do on their own. Because the parents do not help their children in doing homework since their educational level is lower. On the other hand, the topics we study at the fourth grade are very complex so the homework assigned should be simpler.”

P9 “I try to assign homework that is not boring, but fun. My goal in assigning homework is to provide students with an opportunity to spend their time at home learning some topics in an entertaining way.”

P15 “I mostly assign homework that are about the observable daily life-related topics which make them to search. I think in this way parental involvement is also established and students have fun while doing homework.”

The next set of findings is about the problems faced in assigning homework. Table 5 presents these findings as follows:

Table 5. Views of the participants about the problems faced in assigning homework

Crowded classrooms
Individual differences
Time constraints
School environment
Lack of necessary equipment
Lack of parental interest
Demands of parents
Lack of sources
Parents with lower educational level
Forgetting about homework
Misunderstandings about homework

The major problems that are faced in relation to homework based on the views of the participants were shown Table 5. They generally include crowded classrooms, individual differences among the students, time constraints and lack of sources. The participants stated that all these problems have negative effects on homework activities. In addition, there are other problems which affect such activities negatively, including lack of parental involvement and lower levels of parental educational background. Some teachers also reported that in some cases students misunderstand homework or forget about doing homework. The following direct quotations exemplify such views:

P1 “Unfortunately parents intervene the homework process so often that I have difficulty in managing the process. There is an incorrect belief that good teachers assign a lot of homework. Although my goal is to assign less but efficient

homework, as a result of parental pressure I sometimes assign much more homework than I originally plan.”

P14 “In the process of assigning homework, textbooks are not enough. Therefore, I should use other sources to assign homework. So it seriously increases my workload.”

P3 “The class is very crowded and there are many students with different skill levels. Therefore, while assigning homework, I should consider these individual differences. And it ultimately leads to a waste of time.”

P7 “I teach the 1<sup>st</sup> graders and these students cannot note down their homework and understand the homework process on their own. Therefore, I must note their homework on their notebooks. However, there are still students who forget to do homework or who misunderstand the homework activity.”

The next set of the findings is about the types of homework assigned and homework in which students have difficulty. Table 6 presents these findings as follows:

Table 6. Participant views about the types of homework assigned and homework in which students have difficulty

<b>Homework types</b>	<b>The headings of homework in which students have difficulty</b>
Research-oriented	Time consuming
Project-based	Mathematics homework
Individual	Homework demanding creative thinking
Homework to improve parents-child communication	Challenging homework
Group-based	Homework about hard topics
Internet-based	Homework requiring excessive use of equipment and tools
Study sheets	Research-oriented
Homework to improve handcrafts	

The views of the participants about the types of homework assigned and difficult homework were indicated in Table 6.

As can be seen in Table 6, the most frequently assigned homework types are those which require the repetition of the learning, including study sheets, internet-based or research-oriented and homework to improve handcrafts.

Some participants reported that they also assign such homework to improve parental involvement or group work. The following direct quotations show these views:

P16 “I generally assign research-oriented homework to students. In classes, students mostly acquire theoretical knowledge. Therefore, homework should function to guide them to access knowledge on their own during the out-of-school period.”

P11 “I generally assign homework to students which improves both parental involvement and students’ handcraft. For instance, students may visit the zoo with their parents and report it as part of homework activities which is much more valuable for me than exercise-based homework.”

P8 “I prefer to assign homework which reflects individual performances of the students. Because when they do homework with the help of others I cannot focus on and observe their own performance. For me, it is not realistic. I also think the stated goals cannot be achieved in this way.”

The teachers reported that the majority of the students had very difficult time in doing homework with certain characteristics such as time consuming, challenging, or requiring excessive use of tools or creative thinking. In addition, nearly all participants reported that the most difficult homework is about mathematics. The following direct quotations show such views of the participants:

P9 “Because of the social back ground of the students, I cannot assign homework about some topics. If the homework requires to use various equipment, then they cannot complete the homework or do not do homework. The reason for such negative conditions is closely related to the financial status of families.”

P13 “Nearly all students have difficulty in completing and doing homework about mathematics. I think that it is a result of the negative attitudes of the students towards the mathematics. Because although the homework is simple, they think that the homework is hard for them.”

P3 “I observe that the students have difficulty in dealing with homework which requires creative thinking or is research-oriented. Particularly when homework is research-oriented, the students cannot easily access the sources needed. Such homework is also challenging for students who cannot employ creative thinking skills.”

The next set of the findings is about the evaluation of homework and the related problems. Table 7 presents these findings as follows:

Table 7. Participant views about the evaluation of homework and the related problems

Homework evaluation Methods	Problems
Daily regular checks	Misunderstood homework
Evaluation based on checklist	Excessive parental intervention
Evaluation together with students	Time constraints
Making peer comparisons	Crowded classes
Weekly evaluation	Lack of parental control
	Sloppy, haphazard homework
	Not doing homework
	Not considering reading as homework

The views of the participants about the evaluation methods employed by them and the problems faced by them during this process were indicated in Table 7. The majority of the participants reported that they systematically check homework on a daily basis and that if the class is crowded they check it with the students. There are also some classroom teachers who check homework on a weekly basis. In addition, some of the participants reported that they evaluate student homework based on the checklist they developed in advance and that at the end of the semester, they give performance scores based on homework. The following direct quotations exemplify these views of the participants:

P15 “I regularly control homework on a daily basis. Otherwise, children cannot develop a sense of responsibility in relation to homework. I use the early hours of classes for his purpose.”

P17 “Checking homework in a crowded classroom is really time consuming. Therefore, I prefer to check student homework as a group with the active involvement of the students.”

P5 “I generally allocate time to discuss at the beginning of each course concerning homework. Students discuss homework one another. During this period, they exchange views and when they come across any problem, the class discuss it together to find a solution.”

P4 “I systematically check homework in the form of worksheets or exercises on a daily basis. However, sometimes I also assign homework in the form of weekly exercises. The evaluation of the latter may be weekly or monthly based on the required period of the completion of the homework.”

The participants reported that the most frequent problems they faced during the homework evaluation process include misunderstood homework and sloppy or haphazard homework. They also stated that some homework is completely done through the help of parents or there is homework which is not controlled by the parents. In addition, they reported that the student attitude towards home is closely related to the homework type. For instance, they stated that their students did not consider reading as part of homework activities. The participants also argued that the students cannot manage to use their time productively and that they cannot complete the homework in time. They also stated that due to the crowded classrooms, checking homework causes a waste of class time. The direct quotations below show these views of the participants:

P16 “Some of the students which are excessively active or who are easily distracted may misunderstand the goals of homework. Therefore, they do it in an incorrect way which leads to use time for nothing.”

P3 “Although I frequently warn the parents, some of them do it. Particularly for project-based or research-oriented homework, they excessively intervene the homework process. The completed homework does not reflect the student performance.”

P8 “Some parents have lower levels of education and do not involve in their children’s education. Therefore, it may be reasonable that they cannot help their children in their homework. However, they may at least check whether or not the children do the homework. It helps me to teach students the significance of homework. Therefore, it is time consuming for me to check each homework in crowded classrooms and I cannot spend the time for students in class.”

P1 “I observe that students are much more careful in doing homework which requires writing, certain skills or are research-oriented. However, they do not consider reading as part of homework activities.”

The next set of the findings is about how to improve student motivation to do homework. Table 8 presents these findings as follows:

Table 8. Student views about how to improve student motivation to do homework

Short-term homework
Entertaining homework
No homework
Non-material rewards (stars, stickers, words used as reinforcements..)
Teaching the significance of homework and being aware of it
Sending notes to parents
Making possible for children to spend time with parents while doing homework
Clear, understandable and easy homework
Developmentally appropriate homework

As can be seen in Table 8, the participants employ various methods to improve student motivation in regard to homework. They first reported that homework should be completed in half an hour, fun and be appropriate for the knowledge level of students. They stated that the following methods may be useful in improving student motivation regarding homework: giving non-material rewards, teaching the significance of doing homework, and assigning homework which provides students with an opportunity to work with parents. They also stated that one day of the week may be declared as the day of no homework to make it possible for students to spend it for their own activities. The following direct quotations show the views of the participants about how student motivation about homework can be improved:

- P6 “While assigning homework, I think that teachers should assign homework which is fun and does not take so much time to give children sometime to play with their friends.”
- P19 “When homework is assigned each day, the students may become tired. So at the beginning of each week, my students and I choose one day as the day of no homework. On that day, children can do whatever they want after school. I think such an activity contribute to the attitudes of the students positively towards doing homework.”
- P3 “While checking student homework, I stick stars or emogies on their papers if they successfully completed the homework. In addition, I send notes to their parents. I think that parental involvement makes student achievement much better.”
- P12 “I don’t get angry if the students do incorrect homework. I generally use encouraging words while talking about student homework. I always tell them that the significant point is their independent study and their acquiring the habit of doing homework regularly. I also tell them that parents should not do their children’s homework. I tell parents that they should only check whether or not their children complete the homework.”
- P2 “I observe that the students are much more enthusiastic to do homework if it is appropriate to their level, clear and understandable. Therefore, I think that homework should be easy to do.”

#### 4. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study aims at revealing the views of classroom teachers about the homework assigned to primary school students. During the interviews, it is found that the major goals of assigning homework by the participants are to reinforce learning, and the students’ sense of responsibility and to contribute to student achievement positively. In addition, the homework is generally assigned to improve the communication between parents and children and to make it possible for them to have quality time together. Homework assignment is not significant only in Turkish education system but also in the education system of other countries. Brock, Lapp, Flood, Fisher and Han (2007) stated that the homework assignment is one of the most common educational activities in the USA. They administered a survey questionnaire to 133 primary school teachers to analyse the goals of homework, homework types and the beliefs of teachers on the effects of homework on student achievement. In addition, by choosing twenty-seven of these participants, interviews were conducted with them. The study concluded that the majority of the teachers assign homework. They argued that homework has a significant effect on student achievement. The other finding is that parents cannot afford to buy the materials which are needed for homework. The findings of our study are in line with these findings.

The findings of the study indicate that those students with lower levels of achievement generally have positive attitudes towards homework and willingly do their homework. However, it is also found that some of these students and those students who have learning difficulty have anegative attitude towards homework because there are many environmental distractors. Research suggests that homework assignments are influential as much as learning methods on student achievement (Folye & Bailey, 1988; Paschal & Weinstein, 1984). In addition, homework contributes to those children with learning difficulty and provides the challenging materials for the students who learn fast. On this topic, Rosenberg (1989) argues that homework is a very powerful technique to acquire basic skills for those students who have learning difficulty through repetition of the topics.

In the interviews, the participants reported that while assigning homework they attempted to give clear, understandable

and entertaining homework to students to make it possible for them to complete homework correctly. In addition, they stated that if homework is related to daily life and appropriate for the level of students, it has positive effects on student achievement. It is also found that one of the major problems that the participants come across in regard to homework assignment is the undesired parental involvement. Therefore, it seems that if parents are informed about how they can help their children in doing homework, such problems may be avoided. Research on parental help in doing homework found that many parents do not feel themselves adequate in providing such help due to their busy routines and not being aware of the educational program (Costen, Morrison, Albanese and Macias, 2001, p.216). Research suggests (Hong & Lee, 2003, pp.234-245; Mc Ewan, 1998, pp.30-32; Paulu & Darby, 1998, p.71) that the role of parents in doing homework is significant and that if they are informed about how to help their children through communication with teachers the goals set for homework can be achieved.

In this study, it is found that for teachers students have difficulty in dealing with homework which requires creative thinking or is research-oriented or is about mathematics. Kaplan (2006) concluded that assigning different homework rather than traditional homework may improve student interest in doing homework and at the same time, student attitudes towards homework. It is also found that checking homework has significant contributions to achieve the goals set for homework. Aytuna (1998) argues that when teachers do not check homework on a regular basis and give feedback, homework becomes an undesired activity for children and they avoid doing homework. Therefore, checking homework on a regular basis and giving feedback to students about homework are two significant factors in completing homework (Kapikiran & Kıran, 1999). Besides, homework should also be checked to see what students learn and to improve the sense of self-control. Homework should be given both individuals and as a group work. At this point teachers should make a decision over which type of homework should be better for the class.

When homework is assigned in accordance with the age and grade level of students, learning is improved, personal development and the sense of responsibility among students are developed and student achievement is positively affected. Therefore, teachers should be careful in choosing homework topics because unnecessary repetitions may negatively affect student interest. Instead, homework should reinforce learning.

The other significant point is that homework topics should be chosen among those that are consistent with student interest and students' level of skills. Given that if homework covers such topics students do homework without any frustration, their attitudes towards homework will be improved. When students can do homework without any difficulty, their self-confidence will improve. The other point is that doing homework should not last for long periods of time. If homework is about those topics that students have interested in but lasts for long periods of time, it cannot produce desired results for students. In addition, their time for personal or social activities (playing with friends, etc.) will be shortened. Therefore, the duration of homework is another point that teachers should take into consideration.

The findings of the study suggest that both students and parents should be informed by teachers about how to deal with homework activities. For this aim, meetings can be organized addressing parents. Future studies may analyse the effects of homework assignment at different grade levels. Besides, studies on homework are mostly about teacher views. Such studies may address the views of students, too.

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