

A Critical Review of Kohn, A. (2006, September 6). The Truth About Homework.  
*Education Week.*

In the article, Kohn (2006) has argued that homework is not only needless but also counterproductive for children. The author adopts a contextual review method to provide evidence that previous studies have not been able to find a correlation between quantity of homework and student achievement. The author believes that more homework takes away the fun of learning which is not desirable. The author is concerned with the increased burden of assignments on children despite the lack of evidence of its utility. Kohn cites the lack of understanding about the learning process as the main reason for this anomaly. The author has taken an extreme stance by recommending removal of homework to increase the children's desire to learn and discover the subject. The author suggests that the process of learning in the classroom needs to be improved to improve students' scores. The author has used a combination of ethos (appealing to logic) and pathos (appealing to emotions) to present his case on "the truth" about homework. While the author has raised a valid issue on the increased quantity of homework, the extreme stance taken by author has several limitations which must be considered in the debate.

Kohn's (2006) assertion that the studies have failed to find a correlation between homework and test scores needs closer attention. There have been numerous studies in the past (most notably Leone and Richards, 1989) who have found that increased homework time is associated with better academic achievement. Moreover, research contradicts Kohn's nonchalant dismissal of the belief that homework yields nonacademic benefits. Numerous studies have shown that homework helps the

students in learning time-management and organizations skills (cited in Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006).

However, the central argument about doing away with mindless assignments is pertinent for both teachers and parents. The improvement of learning process depends upon “instructional time” which can be achieved only in classroom. However, this does not necessitate completely doing away with assignments. Kohn himself states that practice is needed to perfect any art. While I agree with Kohn’s suggestion that the learning process needs to be improved, I do not concur with Kohn’s views that assignments must be done away with completely. Well designed assignments can make learning a fun activity for students. Such assignments also allow them to unleash their creativity while learning the nuances of the subject. However, to achieve this, the quality of instructional time must improve. This will make sure that assignments do not become a way of “mindless practice” or “rote learning”.

In summary, the article has some useful insights for both parents and teachers. Kohn has raised a valid concern about the increased quantity of assignments for students. However, Kohn’s suggestion that assignments be done away with completely is too extreme. Kohn has failed to explore the option of quality assignments which can encourage students to learn and discover the subjects. Kohn’s suggestion smacks of an escapist tendency which is devoid of any practical application.

## References

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