Abusing Research: The Study of Homework and Other Examples
Excessive reliance on previous research can be problematic. When I reviewed the work of three other researchers, I found that two of their studies did not even mention hyperactivity. This led me to question the validity of their findings. The third study, which was eventually published as "Television and Children: Reviewing the Evidence," in *The Case Against Standardized Testing* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), is a prime example of the circular reasoning that pervades the field of education. The authors' own conclusions are sometimes nearly independent of the data they collected. As E. D. Hirsch, Jr., notes, "It has been shown that homework helps students develop good study habits." However, he also states, "It is clear that homework teaches children about work habits." This circular argument makes it difficult to determine whether homework is beneficial. 

The last, and most common, way to measure achievement is with standardized tests. Despite their standardized nature, these tests can be misleading. For instance, a recent study by Marzano and his colleagues found that "the majority of research on the effects of standardized testing is based on surveys of teachers' opinions." This illustrates the importance of relying on empirical evidence rather than anecdotal opinions. 

Closely related to the practice of misrepresenting research findings is the tendency to invoke or ignore research depending on whether it supports ideas one happens to like. This is done in two ways: by making use of research only on certain topics and by ignoring research on topics not of interest. 

Homework to elementary school students has been a topic of debate for many years. Many educators believe that homework is essential for developing good study habits, while others argue that it is unnecessary. In fact, research has shown that homework is not always beneficial. For example, a study by Marzano and his colleagues found that "the main impact of homework was on teachers' opinions." This highlights the importance of relying on empirical evidence rather than subjective opinions. 

The detailed summary of that literature that he provides, as we've already seen, includes the crucial acknowledgment that "the relationship between homework and achievement is complex and varies across different grades and subjects." This emphasizes the need for careful analysis and consideration of the available evidence. 

The idea that homework teaches good work habits or develops self-discipline has been challenged by research. For instance, a study by Cooper, Nye, and Lindsay found that "no evidence supports the idea that homework provides nonacademic benefits." This highlights the importance of relying on empirical evidence rather than anecdotal opinions. 

In summary, the tendency to misrepresent research findings must be addressed. By relying on empirical evidence and avoiding the use of subjective opinions, we can make more informed decisions about the practices we adopt in education. 

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