

Designment: A Modern Strategy for the Children of Military Personnel in Multilingual Classrooms

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Abstract

Traditional methods of teaching often fail to fully engage students from varied backgrounds, limiting their creativity and innovation whereas, multilingual classrooms, characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, offer both challenges and opportunities. In particular, the children of military personnel face unique hurdles in such settings due to frequent relocations of their parents' deployment and this disrupts their academic continuity. Every time when these children move to a different school, they struggle when they are given assignments and face challenges in adjusting to different educational standards and languages, making it difficult to identify the expectations of their teachers for a particular assignment. The stress of adapting to new environments can impact their ability to focus and complete assignments effectively. The paper provides a modern strategy designed to optimize outcomes in multilingual classrooms. Traditionally, teachers assign specific tasks, dictating what and how children should learn. These assignments often constrain their creative and innovative capabilities within predefined parameters. In order to address this, the study proposes the concept of designment as an alternative to assignments. This strategy fosters personal choice and autonomy, encouraging students to go beyond mere task completion and engage in meaningful, self-directed learning. This approach is particularly beneficial for the children of military personnel in multilingual settings, where diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds help in acquiring diverse knowledge.

Keywords: Designment, diverse knowledge, military children, multilingual classroom, self-directed learning

Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, education must adapt to meet the diverse needs of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Traditional teaching methods, while established, often fall short in engaging these students, leading to challenges in creativity and innovation. This is particularly evident in multilingual classrooms, where the interplay of different languages and cultural perspectives can enrich the learning experience but also complicate academic continuity.

Focusing on the children of military personnel is crucial because these students frequently face unique challenges that arise from their families' transient lifestyles. Due to their parents' deployments and frequent relocations, children of military personnel experience disruptions in their academic journeys, which can impact their educational outcomes. As they move to new schools, they must navigate varying educational standards, expectations, and languages, making it difficult to identify what are required of them academically. This paper explicitly focuses on the objectives, existing background studies and the new contribution.

The objectives are

- To analyze the challenges faced by children of military personnel in multilingual classrooms.
- To explore the limitations of traditional assignment-based education for these children.
- To propose the concept of "designment" as an alternative strategy that leads to creativity, personal choice and self-directed learning.

Literature Review

The educational landscape has increasingly shifted towards student-centred learning approaches that empower learners to take an active role in their education. In the paper "Students Rule With 'Design Your Own Homework'", Valerie Grimes illustrates how allowing students to create their own homework assignments can enhance engagement and motivation. By empowering students to design projects that resonate with their interests, educators foster a sense of ownership over their learning. This aligns with the growing body of research that highlights the positive impact of student autonomy on educational outcomes (Grimes). Similarly, Mark Creasy's concept of "unhomework" builds

on this idea by encouraging students to take responsibility for setting, checking, and assessing their own work (Creasy). Creasy posits that traditional homework often fails to meet the individual needs of learners and advocates for a more personalized approach that allows students to determine their own learning objectives.

Both Grimes and Creasy accentuate the importance of making homework meaningful. Grimes finds that students perceive self-generated assignments as more relevant, enhancing their connection to learning. Creasy echoes this sentiment by advocating for a framework where students are involved in determining the focus, purpose, and success criteria for their assignments. By engaging students in discussions about the relevance of their work, educators can facilitate deeper learning experiences that extend beyond rote memorization and compliance. This approach aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for meaningful learning through connection to personal interests and real-world applications.

These frameworks promote the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Grimes requires students to articulate their learning through written statements and project presentations, fostering metacognitive awareness. This reflective practice is critical for developing self-assessment skills. Creasy's emphasis on the 5 Rs respect, relationships, resilience, responsibilities, and rights provides a foundation for students to work collaboratively on projects, developing teamwork and communication skills. By allowing students to determine how they wish to present their work, both frameworks encourage innovative thinking and personal expression.

While these highlights the benefits of student autonomy in learning, there is limited research on how these concepts can be specifically tailored to meet the needs of children of military personnel in multilingual classrooms. These students face unique challenges due to frequent relocations, disruptions in academic continuity, and language barriers, making it difficult to apply uniform educational strategies. The current studies, such as those on designment and unhomework, do not address how these approaches can be adapted to support students dealing with transitions and varying educational standards.

This paper seeks to fill this gap by introducing the concept of "designment" as a modern strategy specifically tailored for children

of military personnel in multilingual classrooms. Designment, unlike traditional homework, fosters personal choice and autonomy, encouraging students to go beyond task completion and engage in meaningful, self-directed learning. The study proposes that by allowing these students to design their own tasks, they can better integrate their diverse cultural and linguistic experiences into their education. This strategy offers a flexible and adaptive approach, which can help the children of military personnel overcome the challenges of adjusting to new environments and educational standards. In doing so, designment could provide a more inclusive and effective learning framework for students in multilingual settings.

The strategy introduced in this paper to approach education in a better way is designment. This strategy is obtained by reversing the existing method followed in colleges, which is assignment. At present, assignment is the exercise task given in educational institutions. The downsides of assignments have been researched by many. Ms. Harshitha in her blog "Pros and Cons of Assignments" clearly explains the negative aspects of assignments. Harshitha says that there is often a lack of personalization, which may not cater to individual learning styles or paces in assignments. Creative assignments might not align with all the school students' interests or strengths, potentially leaving some at a disadvantage. Assignments can inadvertently encourage cheating or plagiarism due to time constraints or a lack of understanding (Harshitha, 2023).

Another paper "Is Homework Important? What Are Its Advantages and Disadvantages" shares a similar idea on the disadvantages of assignments. It delivers a fact that assignments increase the focus of students on completing the task rather than focusing on creativity and innovations (2023).

In order to awaken one's understanding on the new strategy of the study, designment, one must know the disadvantages of traditional assignments given in schools.

Downfall of Traditional Assignments

Traditional assignments, while long-standing in educational institutions, often suffer from several significant drawbacks. One major issue is the lack of personalization. Assignments are typically standardized, which means they are designed to be completed by all students in the same

manner. This approach does not account for individual learning styles, paces, or interests. As a result, some students may find assignments too challenging, while others may find them unengaging and repetitive. The one-size-fits-all nature of assignments can lead to a disengagement from learning, as students are unable to explore topics in ways that align with their personal strengths and curiosities. Harshitha's blog "Pros and Cons of Assignments" highlights these issues, noting that assignments often fail to cater to individual learning needs and can stifle creativity and enthusiasm (Harshitha, 2023).

Another significant drawback of traditional assignments is their potential to encourage negative academic behaviours. Due to time constraints and a lack of understanding, students might resort to cheating or plagiarism to complete their tasks. Assignments often prioritize the completion of tasks over the learning process, pushing students to focus on meeting deadlines rather than truly engaging with the material. This can result in superficial learning, where students do the bare minimum to complete the task without gaining a deep understanding of the subject matter. Moreover, as pointed out in the paper "Is Homework Important? What Are Its Advantages and Disadvantages", traditional assignments can stifle creativity and innovation, as students are more focused on fulfilling specific requirements than exploring new ideas (2023). This environment can limit the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for success in the modern world.

The Modern Approach in Multilingual Classrooms - Designment

The study aims to propose a strategy opposite to assignment. The term designment means a plan or a purpose in Merriam Webster's *English Dictionary* (Webster). Considering this meaning, the study implies the idea of designing or planning one's own task called designment wherein assignments do not allow the students to plan on what work is to be done. It simply pushes the individual to identify what plan is given by the instructor and work on it. This leads to monotonous activity and repetition of work as well. Designments allow students to leverage their creative skills and thought processes independently. In this approach, teachers provide only the topic or area of focus, leaving students to determine their methods and pathways of exploration.

In this study, multilingual classrooms refer to educational environments

where students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together to learn. Such classrooms often include students who speak multiple languages at home or who have relocated frequently due to circumstances such as military family life. The children of military personnel, in particular, experience constant transitions between schools in different regions or even countries, which exposes them to various languages and educational systems. These multilingual settings are rich with cultural diversity, yet they also present challenges such as language barriers, inconsistent academic standards, and a need for students to quickly adapt to new environments.

This approach is particularly advantageous for the children of military personnel in multilingual settings, where the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds can enrich their learning experiences. Designment allows students to decide and plan their learning activities, giving them the freedom to choose the areas they wish to explore and the methods they prefer to use, rather than strictly following the teacher's instructions. By enabling personal choice, designment helps children of military personnel and others in multilingual classrooms to learn more effectively and creatively. It also helps them to avoid mood fluctuations which is common for children of military personnel (Suganya et al., 2023).

The study suggests that designment is a superior strategy to traditional assignments, as it promotes engagement, creativity, and autonomy. This method effectively addresses the unique educational challenges faced by the children of military personnel in multilingual environments. Designment not only supports better learning outcomes but also fosters a more inclusive and dynamic educational experience. This approach holds promise for broader application in diverse educational settings, potentially transforming how educators engage with students from varied backgrounds and enhancing the overall quality of education.

Designments offer several distinct advantages, particularly in multilingual classrooms. By allowing students to choose their own projects and methods of learning, designment accommodates the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds present in these classrooms. Students can integrate their cultural experiences and linguistic strengths into their projects, enriching both their own learning and promoting cultural exchange among their peers.

Students are more engaged and motivated when they have control over their learning. Designment gives them the freedom to select topics that interest them and methods that suit their learning styles. This is particularly important in keeping students from varied backgrounds invested in their education. The autonomy provided by designment sparks intrinsic motivation, as students tend to pursue subjects, they are passionate about, leading to deeper engagement and sustained interest in learning.

Why Designment Works Best for Military Children?

The frequent moves and transfers of military families create significant educational challenges for children of military personnel, who must constantly adapt to new schools, curricula, and teaching methods. Unlike civilian students, these children experience frequent disruptions in their academic continuity, which can affect their learning outcomes. Given these unique circumstances, it is critical to implement an educational strategy that addresses their specific needs, rather than relying solely on traditional methods that assume educational stability. Designment offers a flexible and adaptable learning approach designed to mitigate these challenges by empowering these children to take ownership of their education, no matter where they are stationed.

By allowing students to design their own tasks and projects, designment enables military children to integrate their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds into their learning. This personalized approach is particularly suited to military children, as it provides them with the continuity and relevance, they often lack due to frequent relocations. With each move, military children encounter different academic standards and classroom expectations, which can be disorienting. Designment addresses this issue by giving students the autonomy to choose their own learning pathways, enabling them to maintain control and consistency in their education across different settings.

Designing their own learning tasks fosters a sense of autonomy and ownership, which is essential for children of military personnel who might feel disconnected due to constant transitions. This approach is particularly effective for students from military families because it gives them the opportunity to integrate familiar aspects of their life such as cultural experiences from different regions and linguistic diversity

into their schoolwork, making their education more relevant and engaging. When these children are given the freedom to choose their own topics and methods of exploration, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material, thus improving their learning outcomes. This intrinsic motivation not only enhances their educational experience but also helps them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In a multilingual setting, this approach allows the children of military personnel to incorporate their linguistic strengths and cultural experiences into their projects, promoting a richer and more inclusive learning environment.

Furthermore, these children often face emotional and social challenges, such as mood fluctuations and difficulties in forming stable peer relationships. These challenges stem from their transient lifestyle, making it difficult for them to establish long-term friendships or feel rooted in a particular community. Designment offers a consistent and engaging framework that can provide much-needed stability and purpose. By focusing on projects that interest them, children can develop a sense of control over their learning, which helps mitigate feelings of instability and anxiety. The collaborative aspect of designment also encourages students to work together, share ideas, and support each other, fostering a sense of community and belonging that is especially important for children who experience frequent relocations.

In multilingual classrooms, where the children of military personnel often find themselves, designment leverages the diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds to create a supportive and dynamic learning environment. This approach allows them to build resilience, adaptability, and a positive attitude towards learning qualities essential for their academic success and overall well-being. These traits are critical not only in managing their frequent transitions but also in helping them thrive in their unique, ever-changing environments. By addressing both the academic and emotional challenges faced by the children of military personnel, designment provides a holistic and effective solution tailored to their specific needs.

Practical Implementations

Implementing the designment strategy in educational settings involves several practical steps to ensure its effectiveness and integration into

the curriculum. Teachers must shift their role from being the primary source of information to becoming facilitators of learning. This requires comprehensive training and professional development to help educators understand how to guide students in designing their own tasks. Teachers should learn to provide broad topics or areas of focus and support students in developing their own projects. They must be equipped with the skills to mentor and provide feedback throughout the process, encouraging students to think critically and creatively.

The curriculum must be adapted to accommodate designment. Traditional rigid structures and standardized tests need to be reconsidered to allow for more flexible and personalized learning pathways. Schools can develop frameworks that outline the essential skills and knowledge students need to acquire while giving them the freedom to explore these areas in ways that interest them. This could involve project-based learning, interdisciplinary approaches and the integration of real-world problems that students can address through their projects. Assessments should also be redesigned to evaluate not just the end product, but the process, creativity and effort put into the designment.

In addition to these, the classroom environment must be supportive of this strategy. This includes providing access to a variety of resources such as libraries, online databases, laboratories and other materials that can help students explore their chosen topics. Schools should foster a culture of collaboration, where students can work together, share ideas and learn from one another. Time management strategies should be taught and emphasized, helping students plan their projects effectively and meet deadlines without feeling overwhelmed. Creating a classroom atmosphere that values creativity, curiosity and independent thinking is crucial for the success of designment.

Involving parents and the broader community can enhance the effectiveness of the designment strategy. Schools can organize workshops and informational sessions for parents to understand the benefits of designment and how they can support their children's learning at home. Community partnerships with local businesses, organizations and experts can provide students with opportunities for mentorship, real-world experiences, and resources that enrich their projects. Engaging the community not only broadens the scope of resources available to students but also helps to create a supportive network that values and contributes to the students' educational journey.

Challenges in Implementing Designment

Implementing designment in educational settings comes with few challenges. One significant challenge is the shift in teaching methodology required for educators. Teachers accustomed to traditional assignment-based approaches may find it difficult to adapt to the role of facilitators rather than direct instructors. This shift requires extensive professional development and training to equip teachers with the skills necessary to guide students in designing their own learning projects. Additionally, educators must be adept at providing individualized feedback and support, which can be time-consuming and demanding.

Another challenge lies in balancing structure and flexibility within the curriculum. While designment promotes autonomy and creativity, it still needs to ensure that students meet essential learning outcomes and standards. Developing a curriculum that allows for personalized learning paths while maintaining academic rigor can be complex. Schools must create frameworks that provide clear objectives and expectations without constraining students' creative freedom. This involves careful planning and ongoing assessment to ensure that all students are progressing appropriately and acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills.

Ensuring equity and access to resources is also a crucial consideration in implementing designment. Students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those in under-resourced schools, may face challenges in accessing the materials and support needed to successfully engage in designment projects. Schools must address these disparities by providing adequate resources, such as access to technology, libraries, and learning materials. Additionally, there needs to be a focus on supporting students who may struggle with self-directed learning due to varying levels of prior knowledge or learning difficulties. Providing additional guidance and scaffolding can help ensure that all students benefit from the designment approach, regardless of their starting point.

Positive Future Outcomes for Students with Designment

Two children of military personnels were introduced to designment strategy and positive responses were received. A 16-year-old boy named J. S. Blesson Paul from Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu was interviewed via phone. His father is a retired military personnel and he agreed that it was indeed a challenging environment in school to cope with regular

assignments when his father was away. When the idea of designment was introduced to him, he said that he had a interest to learn his subjects and do his homework rather than forcing himself to do it when the traditional method of assignments were given (B. Paul, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Similarly, an eighteen-year-old girl named L. Jinsha, daughter of a retired military personnel was also interviewed via phone. She resides in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She says that moving to different places pushes her into a shell, wherein it feels like forcing herself to cope up with the tasks given in school. When she was introduced to the strategy of designment, Jinsha confidently argues that designment makes her to develop her creativity and is a burden-free learning process (Jinsha, personal communication, October 10, 2024).

Thus, these case reports provide a vivid idea that the implementation of designment in education promises a future where students are better equipped with essential skills for the twenty-first century. By fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, designment prepares students to tackle complex real-world challenges. As students take ownership of their learning, they develop a sense of agency and confidence that extends beyond the classroom. This empowerment can lead to a generation of innovative thinkers and leaders who are adept at navigating an ever-changing global landscape.

Students engaged in designment are more likely to develop a love for learning that persists throughout their lives. The freedom to explore topics that interest them cultivates intrinsic motivation and a passion for discovery. This sustained engagement can result in higher academic achievement and a deeper understanding of subjects. Furthermore, the skills acquired through designment such as research, project management, and collaboration—are directly transferable to higher education and professional environments, ensuring that students are well-prepared for future academic and career pursuits.

Designment also promotes inclusivity by allowing students to incorporate their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into their learning projects. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also fosters a greater appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism. As students work on projects that reflect their unique perspectives, they develop a stronger sense of identity and self-awareness. Additionally,

the collaborative nature of designment encourages students to build social skills and empathy, preparing them to become compassionate and effective communicators in a globalized world.

On the whole, designment offers a transformative educational experience that equips students with the skills, motivation, and confidence needed for future success (Jinsha, personal communication, October 10, 2024). By emphasizing creativity, autonomy, and inclusivity, designment prepares students to thrive in both their personal and professional lives, contributing positively to society.

Conclusion

Children of military personnel, who often face frequent relocations, benefit from the flexibility of designment. This approach allows them to continue their learning seamlessly, adapting their projects to new environments and educational standards without the disruption typical of traditional assignments. Designments inculcate self-reliance and adaptability, skills that are particularly valuable for the children of military personnel who must frequently adjust to new schools and curriculum.

Teachers can act as facilitators and mentors in a designment framework, providing guidance tailored to each student's project and needs. This personalized support can be especially helpful for students who might struggle with language barriers. Designment also encourages collaboration among students, allowing them to learn from each other's diverse backgrounds and perspectives, which can be particularly enriching in a multilingual setting. This approach not only supports military children facing frequent relocations but also enriches the learning environment for all students, making education a more dynamic and inclusive process. By this commendable process of education, the thought of the study intends for a better universe with an education of high imbue.

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