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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOMEWORK AND MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING AMONG ARAB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ISRAEL

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, research findings have highlighted the importance of students' motivation and its effect on their experience and performance in school.[1, 2] Results from empirical studies, using quantitve as well as qualitative methods converged with the finding that when students engage in academic assignments with interest, pleasure and purpose to learn and understand, they engage more significantly, regulate their learning, achieve higher grades, maintain the material, and express higher satisfaction than when they engage in academic tasks for more external reasons like wanting to please others, demonstrating ability, avoiding feeling stupid, or avoiding Punishment.[3, 4, 5]

The research of the role that the homework fills in the promotion of motivation among students may help teachers understand how to establish in the student's motivation that will further the learning and develop in the student's curiosity and

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[1] J. Alonso-Tapia & A. Pardo, *Assessment of Learning Environment Motivational Quality from of Point of View of Secondary and High School Learners*, "Learning and Instruction", 2006, 16, 295.

[2] J.S. Eccles, C. Midgley, A. Wigfield, C.M. Buchanan, D. Reuman, C. Flanagan et al., *Development during Adolescence: The Impact of Stage-Environment Fit on Young Adolescents' Experiences in Schools and in Families*, "American Psychologist" 1993, 48, 90.

[3] C. Ames, *Classrooms: Goals, Structures, and Student Motivation*, "Journal of Educational Psychology" 1992, 84, 261.

[4] P.M. Coutts, *Meanings of Homework and Implications for Practice*, "Theory into Practice", 2004, 43, 182.

[5] C. Midgley (ed.), *Goals, Goal Structures and Patterns of Adaptive Learning*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ 2002.

thus enrich the learning process. The main questions regarding this problem are first, how homework promotes or does not promote motivation among students; and second, what is the role of homework as an element of school life in elementary school in Israel.

Different research studies have examined the importance of the establishment of the optimal motivation to learn. However, the role of homework in the establishment of the motivation to learn has not been researched at length in Israel. Moreover, though some studies have examined this subject in Hebrew speaking schools in Israel, schools in the Arab society have not been included in similar studies yet, hence the importance of the current research.

THE ISRAELI EDUCATION SYSTEM

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Compulsory Education Law, 1949 was legislated, obligating every child from the age of five to thirteen to study in a recognized educational institution. The State Education Law,[6] legislated on August 12, 1953, sought to establish public state education and to enact a national-state standard character in all Israeli schools. Following a multicultural education policy, the Israeli education system largely expresses the complexity of the society in Israel and the state schools are oriented to create a shared social, cultural, and national basis for the citizens of the future with class and ethnic integration. However, until the legislation of the State Education Law in 1953, the Israeli education employed a system of different branches of education one for each sector of its society, and the state did not have a uniform curriculum for all the schools. The State Education Law eliminated this system and established a national state education system. Nevertheless, even today, the state schools in Israel are still divided, recognizing particular needs of its cultural sectors. Thus, Hebrew speaking school are separated form Arabic speaking schools, and the Jewish religious groups are separated from the general population Jewish groups.

For the Arabs and Druse, education systems in their language were established as early as the formation of the state, under the control and supervision of the Israeli state education system. Until 1967 the curricula implemented in the Arab education system were identical to those of the Jewish education system, translated into Arabic and taught by teachers who belonged to the Arab sector or by Jewish teachers who had immigrated to Israel from the Arab countries such as Egypt or

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[6] State of Israel, *State Education Law*, Ministry of Education Website, [online] <http://cms.education.gov.il>/ [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

Iraq. The curricula focused mainly on the technical issues and the studies of European culture, while ignoring the cultural foundational values associated with Arab society in general and the Arabs of Israel in particular.[7]

The renewal of the relationship of Israeli Arabs with the Arabs of Judea and Samaria and in other Arab countries following the Six Days War in 1967 Led to the development of consciousness to the inferiority of the Arab education system in comparison to the Jewish education system.[8] From the 1990s attempts were made to reduce the gaps between the sectors, in national programs such as the Five-Year Program from the year 1999. This program sought to promote the academic and educational achievements of students of the Arab and Druse education system, through the increase of the students' achievements in the Arabic language and in mathematics, training of the teachers, increase of the eligibility of students for the high school matriculation certificate, accreditation of additional teachers and educational counselors, development of unique curricula for the Arab sector, allocation of hours, upgrading of computers and equipment of the preschools and laboratories in the schools with kits for studies in the sciences and mathematics, and the identification of gifted children.[9] However, social-economic gaps were not eliminated as the secular Jewish schools even nowadays, still belong to the higher level of the education system, while the Arab schools more often belong to the lower level and instill merely basic and limited knowledge that perpetuates the inequality in Israeli society.[10, 11]

Today, the Israeli education system includes formal and informal educational frameworks. The formal education system consists of the following levels: pre-primary, elementary and secondary (middle-secondary-high school). The informal education system includes social and youth activities in various educational fields as well as adult education. The formal education system in Israel includes Hebrew-speaking educational institutions and Arabic speaking. The structure and curricula of these institutions are analogous to those of the Hebrew-speaking sector, with appropriate adaptations for different languages, cultures and religions. The state education system for the Hebrew-speaking sector consists of two educational streams: state and religious education. State-religious education is aimed at populations who want more emphasis on

[7] I. Abu-Saad, *State-Controlled Education and Identity Formation Among the Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel*, "American Behavioral Scientist" 2006, 49.8, 1085.

[8] I. Abu-Saad, *Arab Education in Israel: Issues and Dilemmas*, "Alnebras" 2009, 5, 21.

[9] M. Alhaj, *Preparation of Curricula in the Arab Education System in Israel: Changes and Recommendations*, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, Jerusalem 1994 (Hebrew).

[10] I. Abu-Saad, *Arab Education…*, op. cit., 21.

[11] D. Golan-Agnon, *Why Are the Arab Students Discriminated against in Israel?*, [in:] D. Golan-Agnon (ed.) *Inequality in Education*, Babel Press, Tel Aviv 2004, 70–89 (Hebrew).

religion within the school curriculum. There are also "recognized" schools that operate outside the state education system and provide mainly ultra-Orthodox education.

Since the establishment of the state, several reforms have affected the education system. Recent reforms include the "New Horizon" program ("New Horizon"), which began in 2008 and is in pre-primary, post-primary education; And the "Power for Compensation" program, which has been operating in secondary education since 2011. The goal of the "New Horizon" reform is to improve the salaries and status of teachers, to hire the best teachers, to advance in the education system, and to foster students with difficulties and gifted students. One of the key prerequisites for reform is that all new teachers working in the education system should have a college degree and a teaching certificate. Under the "New Horizon" reform, hundreds of thousands of individual teaching hours were added to groups of 1–5 students. Within this framework, teachers can support students with learning difficulties, develop unique learning groups and encourage outstanding students and students with unique skills.[12]

This significant mass of individual teaching hours is a potential substitute for long hours of independent practice at home, which, as noted earlier, may be ineffective and even harmful in term of learning and motivation. In other words, in Israel there are formal resources and alternative frameworks within the conventional curriculum that are already marking the possibility of treating student needs differently than the traditional class work and home work dichotomy.

HOMEWORK

Students often complain that they are assigned excessive amounts of homework and that the teachers do not take into account the overall quantity of homework assigned, the level of difficulty, and the daily time they are required to devote to homework, thus leading to a feeling of frustration, anger, and disappointment. Accordingly, research studies in the field of homework in elementary schools show that not only does homework do not have a positive impact on the academic achievements but they also have many negative effects, such as burnout, boredom, arguments at home, false reports of the children to their parents about the performance of homework, and an adverse effect on the love of learning. In addition, homework is sometimes perceived as devoid of context and irrelevant to the children's content world and promotes among them feel-

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[12] Y. Azulay, A. Ashkenazi, L. Gabrielov, D. Levi-Mazloum, & R. Ben Dov, *Facts and Figures in the Education System of Israel*, Jerusalem 2013.

ings of dissatisfaction.[13, 14, 15, 16] The parents and teachers seek to promote the intrinsic motivation to learn based on curiosity and desire to succeed among the children. Unlike extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation prevents the need to coerce, to exert discipline over the children, and to impose sanctions on them. Furthermore, it is essential to the establishment of an effective learning processes among students.

Homework is a classic form for the student's self-regulation of his or her learning. The student decides whether, when, and how to cope with the tasks of homework given to him in the class. In addition, the factor of perseverance is significant in the performance of tasks in the home. Homework constitutes an instrument for the practice of the material learned in the class, from a perception that practice has an important role in the process of the internalization of the new learning material.[17] However, research studies have shown that a relationship does not exist between homework and achievements, and some of them have even found a negative relationship between the two variables.[18, 19, 20] Like all the parameters of learning, when talking about homework, there is difference in the level of motivation that the students have to perform. The perception of efficacy constitutes a predictor of the motivation to prepare the homework and persevere in it.[21]

Children in the elementary school experience stress at high levels, and the homework is a main factor of tension and stress. The stress may influence the students' health and cause headaches and digestive problems, and they may develop unhealthy sleep habits that lead to sleep disorders following the need to finish the homework at a late hour. In addition, since the parents generally need to remind the elementary school students to do their homework, the topic of homework frequently becomes a source of tension and stress in the relationships between the parent and the child.[22] In another aspect, the preparation of homework restricts

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[13] D. Baker & G.K. LeTendre, *National Differences, Global Similarities*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2005.

[14] H. Cooper, *Synthesis of Research on Homework*, "Educational Leadership" 1989, 47 (3), 85.

[15] H. Cooper, J.J. Lindsay & B. Nye, *Homework in the Home: How Student, Family, and Parenting-Style Differences Relate to the Homework Process*, "Contemporary Educational Psychology" 2000, 25, 464.

[16] A. Kohn, *The Homework Myth: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*, Da Capo Press, Philadelphia, PA 2006.

[17] O. Eren & D.J. Henderson, A*re We Wasting Our Children's Time by Giving Them More Homework?*, "Economics of Education Review" 2011, 30 (5), 950–961.

[18] D. Baker & G.K. LeTendre, op. cit.

[19] H. Cooper, *Synthesis of Research…*, op. cit., 85–88.

[20] O. Eren & D.J. Henderson, op. cit., 950–955.

[21] H. Cooper, *Synthesis of Research…*, op. cit., 87–91.

[22] N. Aloni, *Homework – It Is Possible Differently*, Hebrew Psychology Website, 2004, [online] <https://www.hebpsy.net/articles.asp?id=348> [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

the children's time for playing outside of the home and for physical activity and imposes a mental and physical price. In addition, the preparation of homework takes from the children quality family time, the creation of friendships, and the development of hobbies and reduces their ability to deal with boredom.[23, 24]

The elementary school constitutes the first stage in the school system and hence the importance of the establishment of a positive feeling towards the school in these years. The feeling of emotional and cognitive burden created as a result of the homework and the fact that the homework comes at the expense of enjoyable activities creates negative feelings towards the school that increase with the increase of the load of homework.[25, 26] Then there is the addition of the fact that the students in the elementary school feel that the homework is superfluous and repetitive, and they prefer to perform other actions in their free time.[27, 28] During adolescence the preparation of homework takes precious time that sometimes reduces the ability of adolescents to develop social skills and other engagements that are no less important to the formation of the adolescent's personality.[29]

Furthemore, The failure to prepare homework has always been a base for clashes and frictions with the parents,[30] since the homework is not commensurate with the child's abilities, thus obligating the parents to help them.[31] Moreover, during adolescence the adolescents require support and emotional containment and the tension about the preparation of the homework exacerbates the tension between the adolescents and their parents. The relationships between the teachers and their students are eroded because of homework when the examination of the homework constitutes a threat to the student, leads to defensiveness, and sometimes causes the student to lie. This situation harms the basic trust between teachers and students. Aside from the harm to the trust, the examination of the homework takes precious time and does not enable a continuum of learning and the transition to new material directly from lesson to lesson.[32]

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[23] H. Cooper, *Synthesis of Research…*, op. cit., 85–91.

[24] H. Cooper, J.J. Lindsay & B. Nye, *Homework…*, op. cit., 464–487.

[25] P.M. Coutts, op. cit., 182–187.

[26] C. Midgley (ed.), op. cit., 2.

[27] O. Eren & D.J. Henderson, op. cit., 950–961.

[28] P.M. Warton, *The Forgotten Voices in Homework: Views of Students*, "Educational Psychologist" 2001, 36, 155.

[29] H. Cooper, J.J. Lindsay & B. Nye, *Homework…*, op. cit., 464–480.

[30] Ibidem.

[31] N. Aloni, *Homework – It Is Possible Differently*, Hebrew Psychology Website, 2004, [online] <https://www.hebpsy.net/articles.asp?id=348> [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

[32] A. Kohn, op. cit., 6.

Homework and its necessity

Homework researchers are far from expressing a unified opinion on the strengths and weakness of homework as an educational technique.[33] Homework is usually regarded as a duty given by the teacher to students to be completed outside of school hours and without teacher participation.[34] Homework must be closely linked to the lesson plan[35] and usually given in practice to solidify the study material. Homework should increase the effectiveness of learning, demonstrate mastery of the subject, and help prepare for tests, practice, prepare and develop a variety of intellectual skills.[36] Homework includes multiple functions, one of which allows the student to learn the material according to his or her cognitive abilities, learning style, and speed in addition to giving sufficient time to repeat the material to a full understanding.[37] The second role is to develop the student's independent learning skills in order to foster willpower and discipline.[38] Homework responsibility is not just about the actual assignment, but lies in knowing that by doing homework, the student takes responsibility for their learning.[39, 40] Painter[41] argues that students do not understand the importance of homework in their educational process and often homework becomes a source of stress,[42] due to several factors such as the large volume and level of difficulty of the material, the time it takes to complete it and the explicitly or lack of it in the instructions. Debates have been raised about the necessity and usefulness of homework[43] and whether this should be a natural learning aspect for students and teachers.

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[33] H. Cooper, J.J. Lindsay, B. Nye & S. Greathouse, *Relationships Among Attitudes about Homework, Amount of Homework Assigned and Completed, and Student Achievement*, "Journal of Educational Psychology" 1998, 90, 70.

[34] C. Chen & H.W. Stevenson, *Homework: A Cross-Cultural Examination*, "Child Development" 1989, 60, 551–561.

[35] C. Vatterott, *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA 2009.

[36] J.L. Epstein & F.L. Van Voorhis, *More Than Minutes: Teachers ́ Roles in Designing Homework*, "Educational Psychologist" 2000, 36 (3), 181.

[37] Ibidem, 181–193.

[38] L. Painter, *Homework*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003.

[39] H. Cooper, *Synthesis of Research…*, op. cit., 85–91.

[40] J.L. Epstein & F.L. Van Voorhis, op. cit., 181–193.

[41] L. Painter, op. cit.

[42] H. Cooper, J.C. Robinson & E.A. Patall, *Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987–2003*, "Review of Educational Research" 2006, 76, 1.

[43] H. Cooper, J.C. Robinson & E.A. Patall, op. cit., 2.

Homework and motivation

The word motivation comes from the word motion. Motivation describes the motives, or the power that moves. In the psychological domain this is an inner process that occurs in the individual and motivates him to activity with rewarding outcomes.[44] The concept of motivation has received extensive reference in the fields of psychology and education as one of the most important theoretical factors in the understanding of human behavior.[45]

Maehr and Midgley[46] defined three dimensions in motivational behavior: direction, intensity, and quality. Direction is the choice that the person makes between one or another activity, when he perseveres in a certain activity even when difficulties arise or other alternatives come up or in the continuation of a certain activity even when he is not required to do so. Intensity is the level of investment that the person invests in activity and quality and differentiates between behaviors with different motivational character: problem solving in innovative ways versus difficult work with the use of an unsuccessful strategy, critical and in-depth thinking that awakens difficult questions that may anger the teacher versus confident striding forward towards the desired grade.[47]

From a psychological perspective, the researchers differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation derives from motives in the person related to enjoyment and feeling of ability and control of the situation, and it is accompanied by a feeling of free choice.[48] It is related to internal enjoyment by the very action and not necessarily by its real outcomes; it does not have external reward and nobody supervises it or its investment. As a part of this, the attribution of internal causation explains processes in the person's mind according to which the reason is related to the person himself and he is responsible for the results of his action.[49]

Conversely, extrinsic motivation is implemented from the desire to achieve a goal and concrete reward from the environment or to avoid punishment. Its focus is external and depends on factors outside of the person, and the result can

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[44] D.H. Schunk, *Metacognition, Self-Regulation, and Self-Regulated Learning: Research Recommendations*, "Educational Psychology Review" 2008, 20 (4), 463.

[45] A. Kaplan & A. Asor, *Motivation to learn in school – Practically speaking. The Education of Thinking 2.0*, Jerusalem 2001.

[46] M.L. Maehr & C. Midgley, *Enhancing Student Motivation: A Schoolwide Approach*, "Educational Psychologist" 1991, 26, 399.

[47] Ibidem, 421–425.

[48] H. Barak Stein, *Motivation – To Strengthen the Desire, to Achieve Goals*, Hebrew Psychology Website, 2013, [online] <http://www.hebpsy.net/community.asp?id=93&cat=article&articleid=2506> [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

[49] A. Kaplan & A. Asor, op. cit.

be the achievement of satisfaction or a prize or the avoidance of punishment or a bad feeling.[50] Thus, for example, learning to obtain a high score or not to fail is an expression of extrinsic motivation. In the context of homework, extrinsic motivation leads students to read and to practice not from desire and enjoyment but as a means for the achievement of reinforcement or the avoidance of punishment. The external attribution of causation therefore sees the cause to be something found outside of the person and independent of him.[51]

Over the years, researchers have identified factors that predict positive motivation towards the school. *Positive attitude towards the school* is the perception of the school as the best place that provides a good feeling for the student, *positive feeling of value of the student* in the school while providing positive reinforcements and encouragement of the students. *Need for the high achievement of the student* – it is important that the teacher will strengthen the student's need for achievement and will direct him for the good of the learning; the feeling of belonging to the school framework as a part of the establishment of self-worth and the self-fulfillment that lead to learning; the *opportunity for self-fulfillment* in the school framework, *class climate*, and *teacher's style of teaching* – the teacher can create an atmosphere of intrinsic motivation or external atmosphere according to behavior in the class (autonomy).[52]

The students' lack of motivation bothers the community of teachers and parents. However, despite the effort and understanding of the importance of the establishment of motivation among students, it is necessary to observe the absence of motivation as something natural and unavoidable. This understanding will be possible through the reinforcement of the coping forces, the belief in another and the reinforcement of the student's self-image and self-worth to release and remove barriers to the motivation.[53] The increase of motivation among students can occur through the search of existing motivation and the attempt to connect it so as to reach the motivation they want; reinforcement of indications of motivation through an outside factor through the encouragement and external spurring by the parent/teacher/friend, the identification of the factor that leads to the lack and removal of motivation, the attempt to understand the nature of motivation, investment and effort; the containment of lack of motivation and avoidance of anger or frustration; the implementation of discipline and external influences – sometimes

[50] H. Barak Stein, *Motivation – To Strengthen the Desire, to Achieve Goals*, Hebrew Psychology Website, 2013, [online] <http://www.hebpsy.net/community.asp?id=93&cat=article&articleid=2506> [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

[51] A. Kaplan & A. Asor, op. cit.

[52] Ibidem, 425–427.

[53] C. Midgley (ed.), op. cit., 3.

when they do not succeed in driving intrinsic motivation, it is important to implement discipline, to require obedience and performance.[54]

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN STUDENT MOTIVATION

Studies have indicated that throughout the school year the general level of students' quality of motivation had declined.[55] Whereas early explanations suggested that the decline in motivation was associated with such developmental changes as adolescence, more recent studies have focused mainly on the role of the educational environment in these patterns of student motivation.[56] Researchers working within the SDT assume those teachers' behaviors and exercises have a significant impact on students' feelings for and involvement in learning. This point of view indicates that findings of a decline in students' adaptive motivation for schoolwork are due, at least to some extent, to a decrease in Environmental support for the three psychological needs of autonomy, capable and related

CONCLUSION

There is a need to research the relationship between homework and motivation for learning among Arab Elementary School Students in Israel. This kind of research could add to the existing research in the field and examine the role of homework in the establishment of motivation among students in elementary school and hence its importance. Moreover, the Arab population in Israel has not yet been researched in this context. This research study may contribute to the existing knowledge and the understanding of how homework promotes or does not promote motivation among students and the understanding of which type of motivation promotes homework – intrinsic and extrinsic. This understanding will enable a look at the homework and the understanding of their role in the promotion of the processes of optimal learning.

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[54] H. Barak Stein, *Motivation – To Strengthen the Desire, to Achieve Goals*, Hebrew Psychology Website, 2013, [online] <http://www.hebpsy.net/community.asp?id=93&cat=article&articleid=2506> [accessed: 26.06.2020] (Hebrew).

[55] E.M. Anderman, M.L. Maehr & C. Midgley, *Declining Motivation after the Transition to Middle School: Schools Can Make a Difference*, "Journal of Research and Development in Education" 1999, 32, 131.

[56] J.S. Eccles et al., op. cit., 90–101.

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     dations*, "Educational Psychology Review" 2008, 20 (4), 463–467.
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     dria, VA 2009.
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     2001, 36, 155–165.

Summary

Students, parents, teachers and researchers in the field of education disagree with each other about
the contribution of homework in the overall student learning process. In particular, widespread criti-
cism is directed at the emotional and cognitive load that homework imposes on the student, the con-
siderable time they consume, and the disruption caused, according to the claim, to the social devel-
opment of the student. This claim is supported by a series of empirical studies that have been carried
out for decades, especially recently, in the world and in Israel. Nevertheless, the role that homework
plays in the student learning process and their impact on other components of the student's learning
experience has never been studied in Arabic-speaking schools in the country.