

College choices among arab pre-service teachers between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

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Rezumat: În acest articol ne-am propus să oferim o imagine curentă privind alegerea profesiei didactice și a universității de către studenții arabi, precum și să subliniem nevoia de cercetare continuă a acestei tematici. Trecerea de la nivelul preuniversitar la învățământul superior pentru liceenii arabi în Israel – care sînt o minoritate –, alegerea unui domeniu de studiu și a instituției concrete constituie o etapă crucială pentru ei, deoarece poate determina profund motivația acestora pentru învățare.

Abstract: The purpose of the article is to provide a snapshot on the choice of the teaching profession and the type of college among Arab pre-service teachers, and to emphasize the need for continuing research that will examine the impact of these choices on the learning motivation. Transitioning from high school to higher education, choosing a field of study and academic institution is a crucial phase, which can affect Arab minority student motivation to learn and to persist in college.

Keywords: Motivation for learning, college choice, teaching profession choice, intrinsic choice, extrinsic choice, Arab minority, pre-service teachers, special education.

College student motivation for learning is a consistent problem at all levels of post-secondary education. Faculty and staff at colleges, in private and public universities all sigh on the lack of student motivation [20, p. 731]. College faculty and staff question the students' carelessness about their work, lack of curiosity in the disciplinary content of the courses, giving importance to grades but not to learning process. Students seem to lack the desire to study or to try very hard, they also postpone and attempt to study for an exam at the last minute, or try to write a paper the day before it is due, they are neither organized enough, plan their work in a better way, nor they learn to perform very well. The decrease in the motivation of students at the college, is expressed also in late arrival to class, absence from lessons, boredom, non-satisfaction and complaints, low grades, lack of perseverance [2, p.75; 20, pp. 731-732]. This can have deep implications on the students' eventual contribution as teachers in the school system.

As a lecturer and pedagogical supervisor at the departments of special education in Israeli Arab College and mixed college in Israel, I have extensive interaction with the students of these departments. Based on my own experience and that of my colleagues, there is an obvious need for developing insights regarding the effect of the student choices of the teaching profession and type of college on students' motivation to learn. Most of the Arab students reach higher education at age 18, right after high school. Most of the young Arab students face psycho-social difficulty of moving from a closed and differentiated Arabic village or town to college. They usually lack the knowledge and find difficulty to consult or ask for support. Some lose confidence and make mistakes in choosing college and specific department – which lead

to changes in the domain of the academic specialty, thus lengthening the studying period and therefore increasing the probability for dropping out of college. In addition they have difficulties to make decisions independently; they call their parents to consult on any matter [18; 29].

In the past there was only one Arab teacher training college for Arab students. Recently, there has been a rise in Arab programs and colleges, which competes with the mixed colleges, and a significant increase in the percentage of students who attend Arab and mixed colleges, especially woman. Only Arab students attend Arab colleges. Most members of the teaching staff are Arab, and classes are mostly held in Arabic language. Nevertheless Hebrew language is not avoidable and also dealing with English as the academic language. In Arab colleges students don't have the criteria of Hebrew proficiency test. Most of the graduated students afterwards teach in Arab schools in Arabic language. Today, there is an influx of Arab students attending mixed colleges [18, p.117]. Arab students who graduate from mixed colleges teach in Arabic schools, and they have to make the translation, transformation and adaptation of their learning content by themselves [18, p. 108]. It seems that the process of training Arab teachers, in Arab and mixed colleges of education, still needs to invest more efforts to provide the future Arab teacher with the essential tools to deal with the complex reality of the cultural and national uniqueness in Israel. This reality is experienced by half a million Arab students living in a society undergoing continuous changes that are often quite dramatic.

CHOOSING THE TEACHING PROFESSION AMONG ARAB

Choosing a profession is one of the most significant

decisions in the individual life, and it is a complex process that consists of several phases. The decision of choosing a career is made on a base of internal and external factors. There is an extensive literature about the motives for choosing the teaching profession. Researchers generally tend to divide these motives into three categories [4; 5; 30; 23].

1. *External motivation* such as influence of family and teachers, salary, stability and security, occupational status and prestige, convenient work hours and long vacations, especially among women.
2. *Internal motivation* such as natural talent for teaching, pleasure from teaching, children love, academic ability and intellectual challenge.
3. *Altruistic type motivation* such as desire to help children and contribute to society, desire to inter-personal relationship, the will to continue purchasing education.

Choosing a field of study and academic institution is also influenced by social and cultural considerations. Family and social environment takes an active part in selecting the weights given to the various factors, especially in Arab society which holds traditional elements. Among Arab students, many of whom is first-generation higher education and among minority populations a priority and prestige is given to professions that will enable greater certainty to secure employment and higher income [24].

Abu Asbeh [1] claims that the reason that a high percentage of educated Arabs choose to attend the colleges of education are caused by limited possibilities of operating. Many academics Arabs do not find a job in the field of specialization, and go to education as a source of livelihood. The fact that the opportunities to work in the open labour market are very limited, so a large part of the young Arabs enrol in teacher training colleges. In parallel Ilaiyan et al. [13] studied the motives in choosing the teaching profession among Arab teacher trainees. The purpose of the research was to identify the main motives that direct the Arab students in choosing the teaching as their profession, and to examine the factors that affect their choice. The results indicated that the main motives for choosing teaching as a profession are internal motivations such as: intellectual development, creativity, pleasure, satisfaction and social commitment. The most crucial factors that affect the process of choosing the teaching profession are conviction of a relative and request or recommendation of parents. The results presented a profile of the teaching trainees in Israeli- Arab society, which consider the teaching profession as self-fulfilment, expression of their development, and a way to be agents of change in their society.

In Agbarias' [2] research significant correlations were found between motivation and self-efficacy, as well as between participation in choosing one's collage and the academic year. Increasing students' involvement in shaping their professional future will have a positive effect on their motivation, as expressed by persistence in study, enthusiasm to study and to face challenges productively, and a greater emotional bond. For that reason the study recommends better consciousness on the part of parents and high school teachers of the drawbacks of commanding a choice of profession that does not settle with the student's personal wishes. Such pressure may have long-standing effects on student professional development [2].

The Arab students perceive the educational field as a default option, differently from other academic fields in which they feel they basically have no possibility for development [7; 6]. Diab & Shalom [7] studied the voices of Arab students and faculty members in teacher training institutions. They found a substantive number of Arab students and faculty members in teacher training institutions but in spite of the large number of Arabs in these institutions there are many signs of exclusion.

The factors of choosing the teaching profession is an important variable in the research, as it could affect the motivation to learn of the students. In first academic year, students also start to realize if their choice of the teaching profession, and of the specific discipline meets their expectations. This is particularly obvious to them and tangible in their teaching practice at schools. The question of participation in choosing the teaching profession is important also in light of the support it gains from previous studies that indicated that choosing a profession that fulfils the individual's needs and personal tendencies leads to greater personal welfare, as expressed in satisfaction at work, motivation, persistence and achievements, and vice versa [21; 27].

It is important to mention that statistically the majority of the teachers are females [13; 29]. Therefore "teaching as feminized" is not a recent phenomenon [25, p. 85]. In the Arab society the phenomenon of "feminization of teaching" is also obvious [3]. The Arab society is still characterized as a traditional and patriarchal society therefore prefers the teaching profession which enables the Arab women needs to reconcile the demands of home and work outside. In addition they look to the teaching profession as a natural continuation of the role of women responsible for the upbringing of their children, and that explains the influence of parents on the choice of the teaching profession. We are witnessing the phenomenon of seeing young Arab women's who go to Jordan to study medicine, pharmacy and educational counselling [6], but still a large share of the total professions practiced are by Arab young women.

CHOOSING THE COLLEGE

College choice research has been best described as a three-stage process by Hossler and Gallagher's [12]. The college choice model includes predisposition, search, and choice. Hossler and Gallagher's framework suggests an explanation of the college-choice process, or the stages students go through as they decide whether or not they will register to college. Each stage contributes to the understanding of students' behaviours and attitudes for attending college [9; 16]. Throughout the predisposition phase (nursery school – grade 8), students build up an attitude toward postsecondary education. Before making a decision about whether or not to attend college, students consider the possible profit and costs of enduring their education and eventually decide whether they will go to college [12]. In the second phase- search (grades 9-10), students expand their choice set, or the group of schools to which they will apply, on the basis of their needs, values, and boundaries [12]. During this phase, students look for information about and consider the institutions to which they would like to apply [12]. Choice is the final stage of the process (grades 11-12), during which students apply for admission at one or more colleges and eventually choose an institution to attend [12]. Economic, social status and social psychology theories have contributed a perspective for examining the college choice process along with specific factors that influence each stage. The choice stage involves both institutional and individual factors and rational and intuitive processes that result in a student's decision to apply to and enrol at an institution. Factors considered by students in making their choice of college to attend include individual attributes such as socioeconomic class, ability, parental education, residency characteristics, parental encouragement, peer encouragement and support, and ethnicity. Institutional factors include costs (tuition, living expenses, and transportation), financial support, special academic and non-academic programs, institutional reputation, location, social atmosphere, institutional size and class size [16].

Studying in a mixed college rather than in Arabic city could be a similar experience for studying abroad since many students leave their villages and towns and live away from home for the first time, and meet with "the other" in college. Salisbury et al. [22] concentrated their research on the process of students' choice to study abroad. They found that factors including socioeconomic status, social and cultural capital influence student intent to study abroad, and these factors influence males and females differently. Their findings were based on surveys with a sample size of 2 772 students. They applied student choice theory [17; 28] and Laura Perna's [19] integrated model used by her to foresee college choice. According to this model there are three decision-making stages of college choice, which the authors argue are

nearly identical to the choice process for study abroad. These stages are (a) the development of the pre-tendency or intent to study abroad, (b) the search for a appropriate program, and (c) the selection of a specific location and program [12]. The student choice theory [17; 28] argues that students' decisions are shaped by their socioeconomic background such as home life and school environment. That is, long-lasting influences that an individual gains throughout their home and school environments – such as values, attitudes, aspirations and perceptions – generate a framework for individual decisions [10].

The college choice process is most often conceptualized as the series of decisions students and their families make about whether the students will continue their formal education beyond high school and if so, what institution the student will attend. This process begins with the formation of college aspirations and continues through enrolment in a postsecondary education institution. Many questions come in mind when we think about the factors that lead the Arab students to choose Arab college or Jewish college which has a minority of Arab students in it. It is important to understand what motives the Arab student to choose an Arab college or a Jewish college. Moreover, in the Arab society religion serves as a resistance force and suppression against liberal changes in the society. Religion has a considerable influence and often decisive on the social, cultural and political life [14]. Furthermore, religion is strengthening and becoming a powerful factor among the three religions in the Arab society: Islam, Christianity and the Druze religion [14; 26]. So is it the religiosity (whether the college is in an Arabic country with a majority of religious people or an Arab oriented college) a crucial factor in choosing the college?

Thus this life decision- choice of college-examined in the study was selected for a variety of reasons. First, it is an important and difficult life decision, faced by many adolescents and their families. This decision has implications on family ties, friendship, professional and career plans. The choice of college is expected to determine whether the student will live away from home, will need loans, will maintain the same relationship with high school friends. Moreover, the choice of college may determine, or at least influence, the chances of success in finding career opportunities, in intellectual development, possibility of admission to graduate or professional school, or in social status. This decision is one that occurs during a well-delimited time period and on a well defined timetable. In few other significant life decision can a large cohort of decision makers be found all of whom are expected period of time away from the last decision. This allows us to make better predictions about where in the process a student is likely to be at any given point [8].

College choice is the first most important financial, educational, social and professional decision for many students which they have had much responsibility for and choice in. Lastly, like most difficult decisions, the choice of college requires the student to search for and integrate information from a variety of sources. This decision can take days or even weeks of a decision-makers time. Information on college is willingly accessible from various sources such as high school guidance, counsellors and the guidebooks, brochures and pamphlets, videotapes produced by colleges and universities. Indeed there is more information than any one individual can hope to process thoroughly in the year or so in which college decisions are typically made. Thus, this decision is one rich enough to support various approaches and strategies of information gathering and synthesis [8].

There is no single right choice to make when choosing a college. Instead, any number of choices might all be possible or reasonable, leaving the decision maker to find means by which to choose. Definitely, the college decision, unlike many laboratory decision-making tasks, requires students to seek out information, develop or discover own criteria, assess different alternatives—all processes themselves that might require countless decision. Students do not have all of the important information with which to make the decision placed before them—indeed, they must decide when they have collected adequate information. Most laboratory tasks present students with information of know (often perfect) reliability or validity (at least by hypothesis). In this real-life decision, the quality information collected (including impressions from visits, opinions of family and friends) must be assessed. These plausible differences between real-life and laboratory decision making raise the question of what yardsticks, if any, can be used to assess the process of making real-life, ill-defined decision, such as choosing a college [8]. In Hemsley-Brown [11] research on college choice among 16 year olds students in London it was found that though students initially base their choices on ‘pre-dispositions’ and work within social and cultural frames of reference, young people also rely on the marketing information provided by colleges to justify their choices, and to announce their decisions to others [11].

Higher ability students are likely to consider more criteria, more different types of criteria, and more schools than do lower ability students. This tendency suggests that higher ability students make a slightly more complex decision ‘map’ for themselves, by using more criteria with which to make a decision. The general conclusion of the research is that students find this decision hard to make, and they seem to limit the set of information they actively consider at any point in time to about nine criteria and about four alternatives [8].

Studies conducted on college choice among Israeli-Arab minority [29] show that a large part of the respondents indicated that the high level of teaching and the good name of the college were the main reasons for their choice to learn in Oranim College (Jewish college). Only a small part of the respondents mentioned that the media advertising was the main reason for their choice.

Diab, K. & Mi’ari, M. [6] conducted a research on motives of Arab students in attending teacher training institutes and it’s affect on their professional development. The results of the quantitative research indicate that the factors influencing the decision to attend college are summarized as follows: The vast majority of participants (75%) indicated that employment opportunities in the future influenced or greatly influenced their decision. This factor follows, according to the arrangement, professional and academic factors as follows: personal interest (69%) and college level (68%). And only then three non-professional and non-academic factors, as follows: desire of parents (51%) and the influence of friends or significant other (45%) and the difficulties of university admissions (42%). When students were asked about the most influential factor in their decision to attend college, most of the participants (30%) stated that the choice is personal interest in the profession, (24%) “Jobs in the future” and (23%) “University admission difficulties”.

Even though school and colleges attempted to provide rich information when they reached 14, most students were already disposed to desired or non-desired options [11]. Hemsley-Brown [11] findings suggest that college and careers education and guidance staff enter the process of decision making to a certain extent at a late stage. Students already had preconceptions about professional and academic options (and some colleges) before they entered an official process of decision making. These preconceptions had been shaped within the context of the family and among peers. It was suggested that colleges need to consider ways of handing over positive information about the value of higher education to parents and to pupils at a younger age. On the contrast, in Totris’ [29] research it was found that the majority of the Arab students did not receive guidance in selecting the department in which they learn (not during their high school or when registering in college), but along with that most of them said they were satisfied with their choice of departments.

Nora [16] study on ‘choosing college among minority and non-minority students’ examined the dimensions of pre-college psychosocial factors, determined the extent to which those factors were reflected in students’ college choices, and established the effects those factors exert on measures of student satisfaction. In general, students choose colleges where they experience comfort, acceptance, and fit. The study focused on sources of change over which institutions and individuals have some control. For

example, if minority students are underrepresented on a college campus, what can that institution do to attract minority students and provide experiences that facilitate their feeling accepted and comfortable? If we know that students who depend on psychosocial factors to inform their college decisions are afterward more satisfied with their college experiences, what can be done to translate this finding into informational programs to inform students and parents? The college choice process is a complex effort and many questions remain unanswered demonstrating that further research is necessary to unravel its countless complexities. These results begin to update practice at secondary and postsecondary institutions. Secondary school counsellors should encourage students to visit campuses before enrolling. Similarly, college administrators ought to estimate their campus visit programs to ensure visitors feel at home and are encouraged to attend. Generally, students should choose a college where they experience comfort, acceptance, recognition and fit. These experiences are influential predictors of satisfaction that provide the drive for students to return for another year [16].

Given the above transitioning from high school to higher education is a crucial phase, which can affect Arab minority student motivation to learn and to persist in college. Therefore it is important to understand the reasons for choosing a college- is it because of the lecturers, staff – Arab or Jewish? Is it the language- in light of the difficulty in Hebrew and in passing the “Yael test”? Is it the choice of Arab culture or Jewish culture? Is it political views? Is it the location of the college- closeness to home, or distance from home and parents and desire for independency?

CHOOSING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROFESSION

In the last few years a large number of students choose to study special education in preference to other fields in the colleges of education. Several studies have addressed the issue of the motivation for selecting teaching in regular education but this topic has barely been investigated in special education. The sources and implications of this phenomenon must be investigated particularly considering the percentage of pupils with special needs in the educational system. In Lavians' [15] research on motives of student teachers to major in special education, it was found that most of them perceive special education as more meaningful than regular education, while some of them see educational studies as a step towards studying various types of therapy. Most of them came to special education from a very personal place or familial difficulties. Some of them are sisters to children with special needs and some of them have learning disabilities or were new immigrants. This forced them to experience in the early stages of their lives a treatment where they

experienced success either through personal responsibility or in the army. They come to teaching with the intention of changing the system, to make it better and more compassionate. Some of them come to teaching out of a wish for a corrective experience for themselves after a sense of failure in the regular system. Some of the participants indicated the influence that significant special education teachers had on them as models of identification. All the participants recognized themselves as having personal characters and abilities that drove them to pursue this profession such as creativeness, flexibility, dedication, endurance, compassion and sympathy [15].

SUMMARY

Transitioning from high school to higher education is a crucial phase, which can affect Arab minority student motivation to learn and to persist in college. Therefore it is important to understand the reasons for choosing a college- is it the parents' decision in a patriarchal society? Is it the location of the college- closeness to home, or distance from home and parents and desire for independency? Is it because of the lecturers, staff – Arab or Jewish? Is it the language – in light of the difficulty in Hebrew and in passing the “Yael test”? Is it the choice of Arab culture or Jewish culture? Is it political views?

Further research directions can include deeper understanding of the effect of student choices of special education profession, the college and type of college (mixed-multicultural or Arab culture) on Arab students learning motivation specifically and on minorities and populations with different socio-economic characteristics and in studying the interaction of these factors with the students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

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