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Full Length Research

Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding The Effect Of Financial Mismanagement on the Quality of School Workers, Students' Enrolment and Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Gucha Sub-County, Kenya

*Florence Osiri Mobegi

E-mail: fosiri@yahoo.com

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There have been a number of cases reported mainly through the local print and electronic media regarding mismanagement of finances in public secondary schools. Gucha is one such district that experienced 47 cases of financial mismanagement between the year 2008-2010. This study was therefore set to establish the perceptions of stakeholders on the effect of financial mismanagement on quality education: school workers, students' enrolment and performance in public secondary schools in Gucha district. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 126 head teachers, heads of departments, Board of governors' chairpersons, bursars, 1011 teachers, and 10 quality assurance officers. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 5 boarding schools, 37 day schools, 42 head teachers, 42 Bursars, 42 heads of departments, 42 BOG chairpersons, 337 teachers while purposive sampling was used to select 10 quality assurance and standards officers. Data was collected by the use of questionnaire, interviews schedule, Focus group discussions and observation forms. Quantitative data collected through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of means, frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data collected through interviews and Focused group discussions were transcribed, organized into themes and sub-themes as they emerged in an on-going process. The study established that financial mismanagement had adversely affected students' enrolment, performance and the quality of workers. Based on the findings of the study it therefore emerged the need for the government to appoint a financial committee at the school level comprising of members from other stakeholders to assist principals in managing school finances. This will reduce the principals' powers of controlling finances by themselves and increases levels of accountability and transparency.

Keywords : Financial Mismanagement, Financial Misappropriation, Quality Education, financial Training.

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INTRODUCTION

Finance is the most basic resource in any enterprise, education sector inclusive, hence everybody is

concerned about its management (Okumbe, 1998). Hallak and Poisson (2001) reported that, Seventy-three

percent of the World government's social sector expenditure and 40% of the national recurrent expenditure is channeled to the education sector. Households spend between five to seven percent of the GDP on education. Reports from different countries cited USA, Hawaii, China, Mexico and Haryana revealed that there were continuing problems with the financial management systems that called for improvement in certain internal control practices (Hallak & Poisson, 2001; Rasalind & Downes, 2004; National Advisory organization, 2009; Arballo, 2007; Martin, 2009; Ians, 2006).

According to Hallak and Poisson (2001), the survey conducted in Uganda, using a sample of 250 schools revealed that the average level of funding that reached schools was very low and only 13 per cent of those funds were used to serve their intended purpose. It was further reported that financial malpractices increase the transaction costs, reduce the efficiency, quality of services and distort the decision-making process. Gupta (2002) suggested that such malpractices lowered the quality of education by citing an example of a country in which only 16 per cent of children actually received textbooks, despite the significant financial efforts made by public authorities to provide each child with his/her own learning materials. Hallak and Poisson (2001) reported that financial misappropriation and misuse distort both the quality and availability of education services.

The quality of education is directly related to the quality of instruction in the classrooms. It is a fact that the academic qualifications, knowledge of the subject matter, competence, and skills of teaching and the commitment of the teacher have effective impact on the teaching learning process (National Education Policy, 1998-2010). The teacher resource is one of the most important inputs into the education system and, therefore, efficient management and utilization of teachers is critical to the quality of learning outcomes (Republic of Kenya, 2004). Anderson (1991) suggests that trained teachers are particularly important in the management of instruction and teacher centered activities given that most educational institutions in developing countries are lacking textbooks. It was also noted that the quality of education provided highly depended on the quality of instructions that teachers provide. In addition, Ayodo (2003) singled out the teacher as the most influential factor affecting the learning characteristics of the pupils, followed by textbooks.

Majority of schools fall short of providing for the learning needs of their students, leading to poor academic performance (Republic of Kenya, 1998). In respect to this Ongiri and Abdi (2004) reported that many of the country's 4000 secondary schools post bad examinations result year in year out and that there are

only about 600 schools that excel and if a student is not in any of these schools he or she is not expected to get a credible grade. Wekesa (1993) noted that to improve student performances, principals are required to improve on management of the schools. This can be done by management setting a clear vision for the schools, and support its achievements by giving resources and by being visible in every part of the institution that account for student' performance. Omariba (2003) conducted a study on factors that contributed to performance in public examinations in rural secondary schools in Kisii District. The researcher found out that school's size, expenditure on library, expenditure on school equipment and teacher qualification accounted for 68.1 percent change in performance.

Low enrolment in secondary education in East Africa may reflect lack of supply of schooling, the opportunity cost of attending school and factors such as distance from school (Raja & Burnett, 2004). Major determinants for enrolment include household income, schooling costs, presence of schools, transportation, community involvement, and education quality and relevance (Raja & Burnett, 2004). The impact of safe, clean toilets in schools in Africa has been documented. A study by UNICEF reports that from 1997 to 2000, enrolment rates for girls jumped 17% after improvements in school sanitation, and the dropout rate among girls fell by even greater percentage (Rihani, 2007).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cases of financial mismanagement are experienced in secondary schools in Kenya. Gucha is one such district that is experiencing 47 cases of financial mismanagement and misappropriation (Table 1) coupled with poor quality education as evidenced in poor KCSE results for the last nine years (Table 2). In Gucha district's examinations performance has remained poor especially when compared to Nyamira and Kisii central. Gucha district has consistently taken the last position in Nyanza province with its mean score averaging 3.970. Where mismanagement and misappropriation of funds is experienced, quality of education is bound to decline. However, from the literature that was reviewed, there was no research done in the district to find out the effect of financial mismanagement and misappropriation on the quality of education. Given that finance plays a major role in the provision of quality education, it is necessary to conduct a study to establish the effect of financial mismanagement and misappropriation on the quality of education in Gucha District.

Table 1. Financial Audit report for the year 2008-2009 for Gucha District.

Categories of Reports	Number
Headteachers dropped due to financial misappropriation	07
Headteachers serving interdiction due financial mismanagement	03
Headteachers' financial records with audit queries	15
Headteachers retired on public interest due to financial mismanagement	02
Headteachers transferred due to misuse of funds to give room for investigation	07
Headteachers alleged by the community for mismanagement of school funds	13
Total	47

Source: Gucha District Education Office, Audit Department: 2009.

Table 2. Nyanza Province KCSE performance per district for the period 2001-2009

DISTRICT	Mean scores in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination								
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Kisumu	5.241	5.212	5.293	5.257	5.246	5.300	5.432	5.851	5.824
Homa Bay	5.519	5.384	5.311	5.623	5.580	5.384	5.684	5.894	5.812
Kisii	4.182	4.123	4.119	4.391	4.362	4.208	4.483	4.352	4.498
Siaya	5.665	5.582	5.373	5.874	5.628	5.523	5.776	5.872	5.954
Nyamira	3.996	3.930	3.967	4.315	4.087	4.214	4.501	4.545	4.351
Migori	5.825	5.858	5.621	6.113	5.888	5.471	5.620	5.826	5.855
Suba	4.976	5.671	5.919	6.046	6.014	5.701	5.727	5.791	5.505
Rachuonyo	4.911	4.868	4.973	5.440	5.401	5.001	5.373	5.562	5.958
Gucha	4.958	3.958	3.798	4.160	4.077	3.977	4.277	4.267	3.970
Bondo			5.923	6.112	5.973	6.698	5.935	6.005	6.013
Nyando			5.367	5.846	5.817	5.415	5.626	6.025	6.017

Source: PDE'S office Kisumu (2010)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study explored the effect of financial

mismanagement on quality education in secondary schools in Gucha District, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used. This design was found to be ideal as it enabled an in-depth study of the relevant variables to be made in order to establish existing conditions in the

schools. This design is ideal for studies that aim at describing a particular situation at a specific period of time (Vockel & Asher, 1995). Studies that are concerned with what people think and what they do, and different types of educational fact finding, can utilize this research design (Babbie, 1979; Frankel & Wallen, 1993).

Area of Study

This study was conducted in Gucha District in Nyanza Province in Western Kenya. According to the 1999 national census, the district had a population of 438,123 persons and a population density of about 1000 persons per Km². The number of poor individuals in the district was estimated to be 269,252. This makes 61% of the population to be living below the poverty line. Poverty Index Range per division is between 51%-69% (Republic of Kenya, 2003). The economic activities practiced in Gucha district are crop farming, dairy farming, soapstone carvings, brick making and small scale businesses. There are few tea processing factories which offer employment opportunities to the people. The inhabitants of the area attach great importance to better quality education for their children but this has not been achieved.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the schools and the category of respondents to be included in the sample. The schools were grouped into four categories as follows: Girls' boarding schools, Boys' boarding schools, Mixed Boarding schools and and public Day schools. The sample constituted of 42 schools: 5 boarding schools and 37 day schools. This accounted for 33% of the total public secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers and quality assurance officers.

Instruments of Data Collection

Four instruments were used in data collection namely: questionnaires, In-depth interview guide, Focus Group Discussions and direct observation schedule. Questionnaire was preferred for its suitability to this study. It was suitable as a method of data collection because it allowed the researcher to reach a large sample within limited time and ensured confidentiality of the information given by the respondents. We designed four sets of questionnaires for the four categories of respondents who included head teachers, heads of departments, board of governors' chairpersons and

bursars/accounts clerks. The four questionnaires sought to solicit information on the effects of financial mismanagement on quality education in public secondary schools in Gucha district.

Interview Schedule

Saidman (1991) points out that interviewing is one of the best instruments for qualitative data generation. In-depth interview schedule consisted of unstructured items. Face to face interviews were administered to two quality assurance at the district and eight field officers. The aim of the interview was to get more information on the effects of financial mismanagement on quality education in public secondary schools. Responses from interviews were recorded under headings emerging from interview with interviewees.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) do not aim for a representative sample of a population; they try to generate talk that will extend the range of thinking about an issue, and this is done by recruiting groups that are defined in relation to the particular conceptual framework of the study (Saile, 2004). According to Cohen (2007) focus groups are a form of group interview ... the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss the topic supplied by the researcher yielding a collective rather than an individual view – from the interaction of the group, data may emerge that will represent the views of the participants rather than the agenda of the interviewer. A total of 17 FGDs were held which involved 17 teachers each giving a total of 289 teachers. Teachers were considered to be useful in this case since they understood better the distribution of teaching/learning facilities in their respective schools. A focus group discussion guide with a few guiding items was prepared by the researcher.

Direct observation of the school's physical facilities, classroom learning environment, and teaching facilities in general was carried out by the researcher. Particular attention was given to each school regarding the quality, adequacy and availability of school Physical facilities, and instructional facilities. Other aspects which were considered included: gender of respondents, qualification of personnel involved in the study, age of the BOG chairpersons, Bursars, and principals and finally literacy level of the same. The researcher prepared a checklist and administered it personally at the time of visiting each sampled school and proper writer-up made later. Data from observation helped to verify the responses to questionnaires and interviews.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

To make instrument valid, Cohen and Marion (1994) stress that the validity of research instruments should be determined by experts. To validate the instruments, questionnaires and interview guide, Focus group Discussion guide and observation checklist were presented to three experts in the department of Educational Management and Foundation at Maseno University for examination. Their suggestions and comments were incorporated with a view to improve the validity after which a pilot study was conducted in 10 schools in the study area which were not included in the sample to ascertain validity.

Reliability of questionnaires was determined through running a correlation using the Pearson Product moment. Test-retest method was used to confirm the reliability of the instruments. The questionnaires were administered to the same respondents twice within an interval of 2 weeks. The scores of the responses from the sets of questionnaires that were administered on the two occasions were computed and the coefficients were calculated using Pearson Product Moment. The correlations of the instruments used were high, that is 0.905 for principals, 0.922 for heads of Departments, 0.917 for Board of Governors Chairpersons and 0.860 for Bursars questionnaire.

Methods of data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaire and observation checklist were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereby data was coded and tabulated after which means; frequency counts and percentages were worked out. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using line-by-line analysis and then categorized as theme and sub-themes emerged while data from in-depth interviews and Focus group discussions were transcribed, organized into themes and sub-themes in an on-going process as they emerged from data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of stakeholders regarding Effects of Financial Mismanagement on the Quality of School Workers

The results obtained revealed that less than 9(21.4%) of the bursars, 10(23.8%) of the HODs and 7(16.7%) of the HTs involved in the study indicated that due to financial mismanagement schools employed unqualified teachers, laboratory technicians, bursars /account clerks and store keepers. During FGDs, teachers

reported that majority of the teachers were employed by Teachers Service Commission and their salaries came directly from it. They argued that financial shortages contributed more to employment of unqualified personnel. They indicated that in cases where financial mismanagement was experienced BOGs teachers were not paid regularly. As a result of this, they opted to move from school to school in search of better pay and this affected syllabus coverage and contact hours.

The study also established that 27(64.3%) of the HODs involved in the study revealed that financial mismanagement had affected motivation of teachers and students. During FGDs, teachers argued that money meant for teachers' seminars once mismanaged barred them from going to workshops and seminars". They emphasized that due to this teachers came to schools and attended to their lessons only and they left for private business. They lamented that this affected teachers' morale to offer remedial teaching. During focus group discussion one of the teachers reported, "teachers' morale is affected by not attending to seminars and as a result of not given other non-monetary incentives." She cited examples of lab coats, writing materials as some of the missing facilities which demotivated teachers. Because of doubling of administrative, supervisory and financial management roles, principals employed form 4 school leavers to teach their lessons. During FGDs, one of the teachers reported: "such teachers have no qualifications to teach in high school levels" while another teacher stated: "principals just pick on form four leavers to cover for the syllabus"

Findings obtained revealed that quality assurance officers were of the opinion that cases of financial mismanagement had resulted to interdiction of principals. In respect to this, one of the QUASO reported, "Because the majority of principals come from within the community, members of the community and the sponsors do not accept any other principals sent for replacement. During that time there is confusion in the schools and teaching and learning processes are affected as there is lack of supervision." Such wrangles divided up teachers based on groups of those supporting the outgoing principals and those for the incoming principals. This affected contact hours as it ended up in some teachers transferred especially those in support of the outgoing principals." The nature of school workers influenced the quality of teaching and non-teaching services rendered in schools. In situations where the laboratory technician was unqualified it impacted on the organization of science equipment in the laboratories and therefore the rates at which experiments were carried out. The same applied to the nature of the librarians.

In cases where schools employed untrained bursars and typist had an impact on how school materials could

be acquired and how soon examination papers would be ready. Employment of untrained teachers to cover up for the principals was a great blow to the quality of teaching and learning process in such schools. This greatly impacted on the quality of education provided in schools. This finding is in line to the views of Farombi (1998) who reiterated that school libraries may not be effective if the books therein are not adequate and up-to-date as its impact may only be meaningful if the library could be opened to the students always for a considerable length of time in a school day. This finding was also similar to a study by Adeogun (2001) who discovered that human resources (teaching and non-teaching staff) had positive significant effect on students' academic performance. The finding was in agreement with earlier findings of Oni (1995) who discovered that human resources played the most important role in the teaching - learning situation than any other factors of production in the school system. Also, Anderson (1999) suggested that teachers who regularly monitored and supervised their students' learning by checking students' work and helping individual students to overcome errors and learning difficulties were likely to have students who exhibit higher level of achievement.

Perceptions regarding Effects of Financial Mismanagement on KCSE Performance

From FGDs teachers were of opinion that due to financial mismanagement money meant for examination was not well used. They argued that money meant for examination was not channeled to exam committee and this affected internal exams as exam papers were photocopied. It was reported that principals misused examination fees and were unable to register candidates at the deadlines. They mentioned names of four schools where some students missed to sit for KCSE examination due to delays in registration. In respect to this, one of the teachers reported, "Due to collision between principals and suppliers, schools received low quality science equipment for practicals and this affect KSCE performance negatively." Another teacher reported "due to financial mismanagement schools lack textbooks and other teaching learning facilities which are important for examination performances."

All (10) quality assurance standards Officers involved in the study indicated that standards of education had fallen as the mean score for the district remained averagely 3.970 an equivalent of D plain due to mismanagement of funds. In respect to this, one of the teachers stated; "Schools have inadequate facilities and untrained teachers, factors which are crucial for examination performances." This was due to the fact

that the amount of money spent on school facilities influenced their availability, adequacy and sufficiency. School facilities have a direct bearing on the students' achievement. This finding was similar to the study by Adeogun (2001) which found that financial resource available in the schools in Nigeria in the study area had significant effect on students' academic performance. It was discovered that students performed better in schools that were well funded than those that were poorly financed. This result was in line with earlier findings by Beeby (1966) which reported that good education cost more than bad one. Inadequacy of funds handicapped principals in their administrative and academic functions. Adeogun (2001) asserted that education as a social service required adequate funding to procure, maintain and keep the school services going.

Perceptions regarding Effects of Financial Mismanagement on Students Enrolment

Findings obtained indicated that less than 8(19.4%) of the HTs, BOG chairpersons, Bursars and HODs were of the view that financial mismanagement had an effect on enrolments in their schools. During FGDs, one of the teachers was of perception that financial mismanagement had negatively affected enrolments. He reported, "due to mismanagement school had inadequate physical and teaching /learning facilities. Those schools which have adequate facilities and good examination results attracted high student population." However, during FGDS, one of the teachers reported, "Due to variation in the distribution of teaching learning facilities students practice nomadic life" Another teacher remarked "A student may learn in six different schools in four years before sitting for KCSE."

During observation, results obtained revealed that in some schools, the enrolment was low while in others student population was high. This was an indication that where funds meant for school facilities was spent for the same purpose, schools improved the availability and adequacy of resources and this attracted high enrolments. However, in general student population had increased in all schools. This could be due to the fact that a part from financial mismanagement there could be other factors that contributed to school enrolments. Such factors included the historical background of the schools, geographical position of the schools, leadership styles and the political will of the community and parents. For the case of this study it could be due the provision of Free Secondary Education (FSE). This finding is similar to that of Chuck (2009) who found that due to provision of free primary education in Kenya, enrolment increased by 39% from 5.9 million to 8.2 million in 2008.

FINDINGS

Effect of financial mismanagement on school workers

The study found out that due to financial mismanagement schools employed unqualified teachers, laboratory technicians, bursars and storekeepers. A few BOG teachers employed were not paid regularly and hence opted to move to other schools which were assumed to pay well. This affected syllabus coverage as some subjects went unattended. Money meant for seminars were misused and teachers were not able to attend to workshops. This lowered the teachers' morale. Due to doubling of roles principals employed form four leavers to teach their lessons. Such teachers did not teach well as they lacked skills in teaching methodologies. Mismanagement resulted to interdiction of head teacher which caused wrangles on who should head the schools. During this time, teachers relaxed from their teaching activities as there was none to supervise the teachers' conduct.

Effect of financial mismanagement on KCSE performance

The study revealed that money meant for internal examinations were not channeled to examination committee in schools under study. At time, principals failed to register students and this affected schools' performance. Due to financial mismanagement suppliers supplied schools with low quality equipment for practicals which in-turn affected performance in sciences.

The study found out that the district's performance had remained averagely at a mean score of 3.970 an equivalent of D plain and schools which used to perform very well in the 90's had completely furnished from the map of Kenya in terms of performance. All this was attributed to financial mismanagement.

Effect of financial mismanagement on Enrolment

The study found out that, HODs, teachers and bursars were of opinion that financial mismanagement had affected school enrolment negatively. Schools where funds were utilized properly, instructional and physical facilities had improved and they attracted high enrolment. Schools with poor facilities resulted to students' transfers. Mismanagement of funds resulted to inadequate facilities which in return directly affected examination performances.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found out that schools employed unqualified teachers, bursars, laboratory technicians, librarians and secretaries who were poorly paid. The study concluded that financial mismanagement had a negative effect on the quality of school workers as it determined the nature of people to be employed and how much they were to be paid.

Concerning the schools KCSE performances, it was evident that schools had poor results with the district mean score of 3.970 in the year 2010. The study therefore concluded that financial mismanagement had contributed to poor KCSE performances as schools had inadequate or lacked teaching/learning facilities, physical facilities and unqualified teachers among the factors that contributed to good performances.

The study found out that schools which supplied instructional and physical facilities attracted high enrolment. The study concluded that financial mismanagement had an effect on enrolments as it affected the quality of resources in schools. Schools that experienced high financial mismanagement had inadequate facilities and this attracted students' transfers from one school to another. This had an effect on the quality education as it affected syllabus coverage which directly impacted on performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strict disciplinary measures should be imposed on the head teachers found practicing financial mismanagement. This will help to minimize future reoccurrences of the same
2. In order for a school to manage its finances effectively and efficiently a school finance policy should be developed, adopted by all the relevant stakeholders and implemented accordingly. The finance policy should clearly outline the duties or responsibilities of the treasurer, finance officer, auditor, finance committee, the principal, and other persons (for example, educators) delegated for specific tasks.
3. The school should establish and implement sound internal financial control systems to ensure the reliability and accuracy of its financial transactions.
4. The government should appoint a financial committee at the school level comprising of members from other stakeholders to assist principals in managing school finances. This will reduce the principals powers of controlling finances by themselves and increases levels of accountability and transparency.
5. A government policy should be formulated defining clearly the number of years a head teacher should head a certain station. This will act as checks and balances for principals who would like to have

clean financial records as they leave one station to another.

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Full Length Research

Self-Esteem and English Achievement among Religious School Students

¹Nik Rosila Nik Yaacob and ²Faridah Mahadi

¹School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang Malaysia. E-mail: nikrusila@usm.my

²Sekolah Kebangsaan Ayer Hitam, 06150 Ayer Hitam, Kedah. E-mail: faridah_mahadi@yahoo.com

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The study is to identify the relationship between self-esteem and English achievement among students from Government Assisted Religious School (SABK) in Kedah, Malaysia. The sample of this study consists of 173 students from SABK schools in Kedah, Malaysia. The data of self-esteem is collected by using Self-esteem Scale. Self-esteem Scale is developed by Morris Rosenberg consisted of 10 items and has been translated into Malay language version. The data on students' achievement in English is retrieved from Lower Secondary Examination (PMR) conducted by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The data is analyzed by using SPSS version 18. The result from Pearson correlation and t-test revealed that there is no significant relationship between self esteem and English achievement.

Keywords: self-esteem, English achievement, religious school students

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INTRODUCTION

Education during the colonial period was dualistic in nature. It was between secular education on the one hand and the traditional on the other hand. This brought about a division not only among Muslims but also among non-Muslims. Racial problem was a major issue, and dual personalities and systems were also prevalent (Azyurmadi, 2004). After independence, Education Act 1961 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1988) provided a space for Islamic religious subject to be taught to Muslim students. Traditionally, Islamic religious subjects were taught privately in traditional ways by individuals and groups at non-formal school such as at private schools and mosques. Most of these schools were devised by Muslim scholars and funded by religious authority of the states in the country (Azyurmadi, 2004). Though the emergence of non-formal religious school has a great

impact on psychospiritual development of the students, several important aspects of educational management should not be swept under the carpet. Issues such as school administration, human resources management, students' achievement, teaching and learning development, and school facilities are amongst the important problems that should be reviewed. Study by Zakaria (1995) shows academic performance and the quality of services in these schools are very poor and need to be improvised. The quality of services is referred to school administration, staff management and the quality of teaching and learning. In order to strengthen the quality of school administration, Zakaria held the department of education need to improvise some aspects in human resource management including training to academic and non-academic staff; upgrading teachers'

skills and competencies and the used of technology in teaching and learning. It is undeniable that some elements in science and technology have been integrated in national curriculum programme (Ministry of Education, 1988; Sidek Baba, 2009).

The Ministry of Education has devised a new programme known as "Government Assisted Religious School" (SABK) in order to strengthen the quality of religious schools in Malaysia. In this case, The Ministry of Education and The State Government will collaborately administered SABK schools. The role of The Ministry of Education is to improve the school administration, human resources management, school facilities and the quality of teaching and learning. The State Government is given an authority to maintain the existed curriculum (i.e Islamic subjects) and also to ensure humanities subjects (i.e science, mathematic, English, history, geography ect.) will be taught along with Islamic subjects (Dangiran, 2008; Department of Education Pahang, 2004; Azizi and Supyan, 2009). The attempts to teach Islamic subjects along with humanities and sciences subjects have marked the bold steps taken by the Ministry of Education to provide integrated approach in education. Malaysian educational policy intends to bridge the gap so that Muslim students could have a strong basic understanding and practice of Islam and at the same time they were prepared to become professionals in their carier (Sidek Baba, 2009; Dangiran, 2008). This is in parallel with the aim of Muslim education as drawn in The First World Conference on Muslim Education in Makkah 1977 (Syed Muhammad Naquib, 1993). The Conference recommended;

"...vigorous and planned efforts should be made to provide free, compulsory and universal education to all children so that they are able to read, write, understand and express the fundamental teachings of Islam and other sciences and arts which may enable them to understand the nature of creation and man's place in the universe as the vicegerent of Allah".

English achievement

In Islamic perspective, education is a form of worship that Muslim share a common set of values based on Quran (the fundamental and most reliable source for many fields of knowledge in Islam) and Sunnah (the tradition of the prophet). Beside Islamic subjects, SABK's student also learn English subject at primary and secondary level. With the emergence of modern technology, English is regarded as an important subject, in particular to understand the knowledge of science and technology (Yew Lie Koo and Hazita, 2010). Though there are efforts from The Ministry of Education, Malaysia (2011) to

enhance English achievement among the SABK students, their result are still low (Yew Lie Koo and Hazita, 2010; Hee Kiew Loo, 2006). The result from Lower Secondary Examination (PMR) in 2011 indicates students who achieved A for English subject is increased from 17.6 (2010) to 18.4 percent (2011). Although the percentage is increased (0.8 percent), the percentage of candidates who are unable to achieve a minimum grade for English is still high, i.e 21.3 percent (Ministry of Education, 2011). This situation implies students' achievement in English is still poor. Many researchers (Jalim, 1999; Dalinah, 1998) urged educators and The Ministry of Education to take a vigorous action and plan serious programs to enhance students' achivement in English subject.

English achievement among SABK students in Lower Secondary Examination (PMR) in 2008 showed 75 percent achieved D grade and 40 percent achieved E grade for English subject (<http://www.smad.bpi.edu.my>). The result depict students' achievement in English subject is weak. Though the SABK schooling system is more focused on Islamic subjects, the importance of English subject as a second language should not be denied (Siti Hamin, Nadzrah and Rozmel, 2007). Many researchers viewed English is the most commonly used language among foreign language speakers. Throughout the world, when people with different languages come together they commonly use English to communicate (Saadiah and Kaladevi, 2009; Hazita, 2004; Ali Akbar & Zahra, 2014). Moreover, in certain subjects in school such as science and mathematic, English terminologies are widely applied. Hazita (2004) stressed that no matter how, the students need to mastery English subject especially at primary and secondary school level. Students who are well-versed in English language were easily enrolled in job market compared to their peers who are unable to communicate well in English (Ali Akbar, 2013; Saadiah and Kaladevi, 2009; Hazita, 2004).

According to several researchers (Sulaiman 1990; Azyurmadi, 2004; Mohd Ismail et.al, 2004; Sidek Baba, 2009), SABK students are weak in English is due to the goal of the school. Since SABK educational orientation is grounded upon Islamic curriculum (such as Islamic creed, worship, moral, Arabic language, jurisprudence, the science of the Qu'ran and so forth), the emphasis on these subjects are priority. This situation is also brought to the dichotomy in curriculum emphasis in which schools run by the government, mathematics and science subjects (and also other humanities subjects) were taught along with Islamic subjects, whereas in SABK schools such subjects were less emphasized or neglected (Sulaiman, 1990). This resulted to a dichotomous nature of human capital involved in nation building. In prior, the aim of parents who sent their children to SABK schools are primarily to ensure their children gained Islamic religious knowledge as much as they can. The parents

also hope that the children can pursue their study in Islamic courses either in Malaysia or in Arabic country. Therefore, English subject is not their concerned (Mohd Yusof et.al, 2005; Mohd Ismail et. al, 2004; Azizi, 2001; Hazita, 2004).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is one of the most commonly research concepts in social psychology. Many early theories suggested that self-esteem is a basic human need or motivation (Sanrock, 2011). Teachers, administrators and parents are commonly concerned about student's self-esteem. Self-esteem is also associated with depression, anxiety, motivation and general satisfaction with one's life (Harter, 1986; Rosenberg, 1986). Given these associations, children and adolescents who lack of self-esteem may be more dependent on their parents and have lower academic and vocational goals. In addition, the belief is widespread that raising a child's self-esteem would be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole. Self-esteem can be defined as an individual's attitude about him or herself, involving self-evaluation along a positive and negative dimension (Sanrock, 2011; Rosenberg, Carmi, & Carrie, 1995). It is composed of two distinct dimensions, competence and worth. The competence dimension (efficacy based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which people see themselves as capable and efficacious. The worth dimension (worth based self-esteem) refers to the degree to which individuals feel they are the persons to be valued. Different studies have reached the conclusion that self-esteem and academic achievement are positively correlated (Bankston and Zhou, 2002; Lockett and Harrell, 2003).

Self-esteem has always played a crucial role in learning language, especially in English subject (Ali Akbar & Zahra, 2014). Many studies have been done to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and English language. Study conducted by Carr *et al.* (1991) found self-esteem to be a significant predictor of reading awareness as pupils with higher self-esteem were more able to read and reading compared to those with lower self-esteem. They had used pre-and-post-test, and found greater score among those with higher self-esteem. Grodnick (1996) examined the correlation between self-esteem and writing through fifty compositions of Union County College students. He used Coppersmith self-esteem Scale and writing course grades to determine the correlation. The outcome of this study supported the hypothesis that students' self-esteem level did not show a significant correlation with proficiency level of writing. Study by Hassan (2001) showed that writing apprehension of EFL students in Iran is negatively correlated with self-esteem. The study revealed low

apprehensive students had higher self-esteem and high apprehensive students had lower self-esteem. Wilson et al. (1980) investigated twelve studies related to writing apprehension, self-esteem and personal characteristics. Self-esteem and personality were examined and the outcome of the studies showed that apprehension and anxiety were inversely related to self-esteem. When self-esteem increased, writing apprehension and anxiety decreased; and when self-esteem decreased, writing apprehension and anxiety increased.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to identify the correlation between self-esteem and English achievement; and the correlation between self-esteem and gender.

METHODOLOGY

Sample of this study is 173 from four SABK students (88 male and 85 female). Rosenberg self-esteem scale is used in this study that consisted of ten questions. The instrument of self-esteem has been translated into Malay language. The translated version has been verified by experts in Malay and English language. In order to identify the consistency of the instrument, pilot test has been carried out to 30 students. The result of alpha cronbach is 0.75. Pearson correlation and t-test were used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows English achievement has a low correlation with self-esteem ($r = -.052$). The score for $p = 0.495$, which is above the significant level ($p < .05$). Thus, there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and English achievement.

Table 2 is a correlation analysis between self-esteem and gender. The result shows the score for t-test is $t = 2.368$, $df = 171$, $p = 0.019$. There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and students' gender. The finding also indicates female students have high self-esteem than the male students (min difference = .8656).

The main finding of the study shows there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and English achievement. The current study suggests that self-esteem might not be a good indicator to achieve a good result in English subject. This finding is in parallel with the previous studies (Habibollah, Rohani, H. Tengku Aizan & Jamaluddin, 2009; Emamzadeh, 2004). As we speculated, the present study demonstrates the girls have higher self-esteem compared to the boys (min difference = .8656). The finding is in consistent with other

Table 1: Correlation analysis between self-esteem and English achievement

English Achievement	Esteem	
English Achievement	Pearson Correlation	1
N	Sig. (2-tail)	-.052
	173	.495
		173

Table 2: Correlation analysis between self-esteem and gender

Independent sample	Min diff. (girls-boys)	N	S.P	t	df	P
Self-esteem						
Gender	.8656	173	.8194	2.368	171	.019

studies (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Zalizan et.al 2005; Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2000; Sar Abadani Tafreshi, 2006; Vishalakshi and Yeshodhara, 2012; and Habibollah, Rohani, Tengku Aizan and Jamaluddin, 2009; Eccles, 2002).

This study has important implications for SABK's students. Though self-esteem has no significant relationship with English achievement, it is regarded as a main motivational factor in academic performance (Pullmann & Allik, 2008; Zalizan et.al, 2005). Other study also supported that individuals with higher self-esteem have been found to engage in more beneficial problem focused coping such as active coping and planning than individuals with lower self-esteem (Griva & Anagnostopoulos, 2010; Lo, 2002; Smith & Dust, 2005; Ali Akbar & Zahra, 2014). Low self-esteem, on the other hand, does not necessarily depict a poor academic achievement. Research by Pullmann & Allik (2008) showed that low self-esteem is a significant predictor of superior school performance.

From the study, we opined that pedagogical techniques such as teaching and learning strategies, learning environment and learning tools should be improvised. School can create appropriate learning environment by providing more reading materials to the students, optimizing the used of media and technology in teaching and learning, and designs creative activities to encourage students and also staffs to communicate in English language. Prior to that, peer study is significant in stimulating self-esteem, self-confidence and strengthening students' communication skills. Students are more likely to share ideas and problems to their peer friends than parents or teachers. Thus, teachers can play their roles in developing active peer group

discussion in classrooms. Ali Akbar & Zahra (2014) recommended several pedagogical strategies in enhancing students' achievement in English language (EFL). Both researchers believed that positive learning environment and creativities in teaching and learning are amongst the factors that should be reviewed by the teachers.

Gender is generally asserted to impact upon the growth, demonstration and manifestation of self-esteem. Studies (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Tinku and Biswas, 1994; Eccles, 2002; Shobhna Joshi and Rekha Srivastava, 2009) reported that female students tended to get higher grades than boys. According to Zalizan et al., (2005) and Ministry of Education, Malaysia (2000) female students are more capable in time management, well-plan in their study and having higher self-esteem compared to male students. Given these situations, we viewed motivation in school is inevitable. This is because motivation is regarded as the main tool in strengthening students' self-esteem and increasing students' psychological well-being (Rahil et. al., 2006; Fathman, 1986). Despite motivation, parents should play significant role to devise their own strategic approaches in enhancing students' self-esteem and their academic achievement at home. At the same time, parents should believe that curriculum designed for SABK School is purposely to educate students' competencies and to nurture their potentials physically and psychologically. Rosenberg (1965) opined that students who believed that their parents lacked interest in them had much lower levels of self-esteem. Again, parental involvement as is the case of teacher's involvement could account for the disparity in low and high performers. Scarr and Thompson (1994) offered the perspective that children's academic and social

competence can be predicted mainly by their family background, parents' psychological support and the most influential being other sources of support.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, although self-esteem has no significant correlation with English achievement, we believed that self-esteem played an important role in students' academic achievement. High level of self-esteem brings a high level of confidence, problem solving abilities and assertiveness and thus, elevates students' academic achievement. The finding of this study revealed that pedagogical strategies should be reviewed especially at SABK School. This means teachers who taught English subject should be trained to apply appropriate pedagogical approach to this group of students. In fact, it is utmost significance if self-esteem could be inculcated across the entire curriculum. School authorities should work out guidelines as well as develop program that help students to cope with low self-esteem. By this program, it is hoped that students are able to overcome their negative feelings and involve actively in learning especially in English subject. Also, school authorities and all stakeholders in education must help students to appreciate the connection between self-esteem and academic performance by initiating programs that help to grasp and subdue challenges.

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Full Length Research

Promoting a Feeling of Pleasure: Empiric Research in High Education Based on Spinoza's Philosophy

¹Abraham Mounitz and ²Alonit Berenson

¹Ph.D. is a lecturer of Philosophy and International Relations in Zefat Academic College, Israel.

²Ph.D. is a lecturer in the Social Science department and the deputy head of interdisciplinary Program in Zefat Academic College, Israel. Corresponding author's E-mail: alonit@bezeqint.netdrumounitz@gmail.com

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This study aimed to explore the relationship between an ability to implement theories and feeling pleasure and self-assurance, based on Spinoza's philosophy that when the mind regards its self and its power of activity, it feels pleasure. The research presents results of a study among students at the Safed Academic College, Israel. A high correlation was found between feeling pleasure and self-assurance, and an ability to implement theories learned about a specific case. The 3-year long research in practical courses used 249 questionnaires in heterogenic classes (Druze, Muslims, Christians and Jews) and included women and men aged 18-50. One of the most famous of Spinoza's universal teachings uses a practical system to promote human pleasure. This is a pioneering study following the identification of student's satisfaction in practical lessons. The interesting finding of the study that founded no differences between students based on gender, religion, personal status and age. The research findings validate Spinoza's claims in Ethics from 350 years ago.

Key words: research; Spinoza's Ethics; theory implementation; educational-practice; experience

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INTRODUCTION

This research intends to validate Spinoza's claims from 350 years ago in Ethics, that when the intellect merges better in daily life, this leads to happiness and pleasure, i.e. he is more content. For example, in Definition of the Emotions Part 3, Self-contentment is pleasure arising from a man's contemplation of him-self and his power of activity and, Self-contentment can arise from reason, and only that self-contentment which arises from reason is the highest there can be (Spinoza, 2002a).

To achieve this goal, Zefat Academic College in Israel carried out a three-year- research program. This program included practical courses, in which students were

required to apply theories from case studies in 'International Relationships'. Students studied four theories and applied them practically. In addition, 'Philosophy of Education', in which five philosophical methods were applied in early childhood education. The contribution of the research, given the results, using practical exercises of theories brings satisfaction increased the motivation that accompanies learning practical achievements.

In order to test Spinoza's assumptions that When the mind regards its self and its power of activity, it feels pleasure (Spinoza, 2002a), the authors conducted an

empirical research based on a survey with data collected from a sample of Zefat Academic College students (N=256). Based on 10 questions from the survey, the authors built the Student Satisfaction Index (SSI, ranking from 1 to 10, where 10 indicates highest satisfaction). SSI and grades were found to be statistically related: satisfaction is greater with higher grades, with a statistically significant correlation of 0.618 (Spearman's rho).

The study included Druze, Muslims, Christians and Jews with both women and men aged 18-50. It should be emphasized that Spinoza's Ethics is undeniably universal and deals with the person as a person, eliminating any aspect unrelated to his nature from birth (nation, religion, creed, culture, language, etc.) he says that the greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all mankind, and can be enjoyed equally by all (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza's Ethics

One of the most famous of Spinoza's universal teachings uses a practical system to promote human pleasure. All theoretical knowledge can be implemented. He implements the Euclidean geometric theory on behavioral, emotional, intellectual and even metaphysical content. He says that he should attempt to treat of the faults and follies of mankind in the geometric manner, and that he should propose to bring logical reasoning to bear on what they proclaim is opposed to reason; vain, absurd, and horrifying. However, his argument is that in Nature nothing occurs which can be attributed to its defectiveness, because Nature is always the same, and its force and power of acting is every-where one and the same (Spinoza, 2002a).

In this case, he himself feels a sense of pleasure (Steenbakkers, 2009). According to his approach, the value of philosophy is measured by its practical results, the extent to which a person is empowered, directing his emotions and leading him to happiness and pleasure (Ben-Shlomo, 2012).

Spinoza's claims in his seminal book Ethics resulted from observing human beings and from his own self-reflection as a philosopher. The results of this research form an intergenerational bridge that links his behavioral theory to current empirical research. Apart from validating Spinoza's claims, validating the research question that emanates from his Ethics offers us a philosophical perspective on contemporary empirical work in the behavioral sciences.

This research is based on three of Spinoza's basic principles: Firstly, a human being is part of nature and not a separate world within it. Secondly, since man is part of nature he is governed by the laws of nature, where the basic law that governs his behavior is the law of self-preservation (Conatus) according to which all things in

nature (inanimate, plants or animate) strive to the best of their ability to preserve their existence. Thirdly, the law of self-preservation includes within it man's desire to improve his state of being. Man is concerned with advancing from an existence based on purely physiological needs to more sophisticated levels of existence, the highest being intelligent management of daily life. This involves man-implementing knowledge gained through learning or experience to improve and enhance his existence in order to fulfill himself, in such a way that when assessing levels of happiness and sadness or pleasure and pain he will be less sad and/or happier. The main advantage of such implementation means that when he is faced with difficult situations his intelligence, reasoning and awareness of reality will help him deal with his surroundings. Even if he acted appropriately and did not manage to overcome the difficulty, his rational and practical understanding will prevent him from sadness. Spinoza uses the concept 'happiness' in various expressions where the highest is 'blessedness'. Other uses in Ethics include happiness, enjoyment, peace of mind, self-fulfillment, pleasure and lack of pain, each according to the level of Human existence.

This article is an interpretation that adheres to the text, built in an additive form – each statement of Spinoza's statement discussed is added as an interpretative layer to those preceding it until a full model is achieved, reinforced by the empirical research and discussion at the end of the paper.

The Importance of Implementation in Spinoza's Ethics

Spinoza's Ethics supports a functional connection between the metaphysical discussion concerning the deterministic structure of nature that was discussed in Part 1 and the remaining parts of the method that discuss behavioral and educational aspects. Most of the norms recommended by Spinoza when guiding the reader to govern their lives with knowledge and knowledge according to Spinoza is understanding nature including human nature and acting accordingly within the laws of nature whilst being continually aware of our role in nature.

Part four of Ethics uses formal terminology for values such as good, good quality, ion, freedom, useful etc., all describing ways of promoting self-preservation. Spinoza regards the principle of self-preservation as an aspect of the metaphysical laws of nature, a law that includes man within it. In Ethics part three proposition six he says, Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being (Spinoza, 2002a). Spinoza aims to direct the reader from understanding the metaphysical foundation of nature, to the goal of the method, which is

to be a happy person. In Della-Rocca's words, Spinoza stresses that we strive not only to persist but also to increase what he calls our power of acting (Della-Rocca, 2009).

A person who is founded on wisdom is free from the influences that cause him to make mistakes that lead to sorrow and sadness. Someone who implements the metaphysical aspect of nature - including human nature - and lives within its framework as an integral part of nature will function within the framework surrounding him with understanding, spiritual freedom that is accompanied by self- fulfillment and joy according to the extent to which his knowledge is implemented in everyday life. Spinoza claims that, so long as man is a part of Nature he must follow the laws of Nature, and this is divine service; and so long as he does this, it is well with him (Spinoza, 2002a). The same as we found in the research, that has its reference point in the philosophy of Carlo Ponti, and the criticism of empiricism and neo-Kantianism, with the Swedish National curriculum for compulsory education in the background. There, Bengsson (2012) states that the practical education causes people to be not only subjective but also objective and so to be involved with what is going on around them in nature. People learn in this way to extend their lives and worlds.

A central aspect in aspiring to survive is striving to improve the existential framework to reduce pain, suffering, depression or anything that disturbs existence to a minimum, and to promote enjoyment, happiness and pleasure. According to this principle, there is a hierarchy, in which a person can make progress with his ability. Of course, a thing can be the cause of a certain effect to a greater or lesser degree. These varying degrees of ability are, for Spinoza, varying degrees of power of acting (Della Rocca, 2008). In order to achieve this aim, Spinoza explains how to internalize the theory presented in his method and to bring man to maximum completeness, as far as possible, by implementation in daily life. This process begins in Ethics by man defining good and bad: By good, I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us and by bad, I understand that which we certainly know to be an obstacle to our attainment of some good (Spinoza 2002a). Spinoza connects good and bad with joy and sadness in a more complex definition: Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it. We call good or bad that which is advantageous, or an obstacle, to the preservation of our being. That which increases or diminishes helps, or checks, our power of activity (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza's definition of 'good' necessitates that good must be something we consider to be good and only then do we desire it, and then only from our internal actions. It should not be something we covet as a result of an external stimulus causing us to think it is good, which would make us passive drawn only by external stimuli

(Spinoza, 2002a).

Knowledge that some good is always a means to perseverance can help one to know when he is or is not acting in the way a free man acts (LeBuffe, 2010). Spinoza's definition of good is designed to correct the common materialistic definition of good, which, in essence, is a prison within which man lives his life passively. If a human being lives his life according to Spinoza's definition, he will release himself from this incarceration (For further discussion see LeBuffe, 2010: 160-174).

Spinoza's pragmatism regarding the importance of the definitions of good and bad is the basis on which his ethical approach can be understood, as the aim of the theory of values (understanding values) will be meaningful only when it is actually implemented. Its value is in its implementation in practice and is the force for striving for a sense of joy; by the guidance of reason, we pursue the greater of two goods and the lesser of two evils (Spinoza, 2002a).

The knowledge that something is good due to its self-existence and preferring what it actually is and not because it is something that I want, is not only understanding the metaphysical law of self-preservation but also implementing it in practice. Even more so, according to Spinoza this understanding helps man know when he is being active or passive. This promotes the idea that knowledge and experience work together and advance man's goals from basic existence to higher levels of joy and happiness (Mounitz, 2011). Katz (2014) emphasizes the practicality of Spinoza's Ethics as a guide for continual improvement of human existence and how Spinoza offers a direction from theory to practice as, a means of allowing the individual to progress towards happiness. LeBuffe (2010) expresses the results of resisting urges by internalizing the metaphysical principles of Ethics that in order to attain value, individual must resist passion, secure the means to perseverance, and be able to know when he is doing so successfully.

Frogl (2009) develops this discussion. In his chapter concerning happiness, he stipulates that Spinoza does not promise happiness, not even to a learned person. Happiness can be found in people who adhere to the practical way, as this is the ultimate driving force behind man's self-awareness of his abilities.

A central aspect of implementation in Ethics that Spinoza discusses in the preface to Part 3 is the geometrical aspect in his method. He considers human action and appetites just as if it were an investigation into lines, planes, or bodies" (Spinoza, 2002a).

Research of Spinoza in recent years has revealed a turning point regarding the implementable links of theoretical knowledge. This turning point can be found in the claim that the geometric system used by Spinoza in his philosophical discussion in Ethics is relevant regarding content and not only form.

How Spinoza Links Implementation and a Sense of Joy?

The following discussion will show that on the ethical plane, the law of preservation primarily has a practical-behavioral aspect, similar to geometry in his system. With this, the human as a behavioral actor, bares the metaphysical knowledge and carries it to the practical world of his life. The mere capability to understand this logic is the freedom that transforms him from passive to active. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the idea that the two levels of discussion are the foundation stones in the system: the relationship between the theoretical-metaphysical aspect and man's happiness as central point in his empirical act for preservation (Mounitz, 2011). For example, When the mind regards its own self and its power of activity, it feels pleasure, and the more so the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of activity. Man knows himself only through the affections of his body and their ideas. When therefore it happens that the mind can regard its own self, by that very fact it is assumed to pass to a state of greater perfection, that is, to be affected with pleasure, and the more so the more distinctly it is able to imagine itself and its power of activity (Spinoza, 2002a).

In contrast to the older school of thought and interpretation led by Wolfson (1934), Steenbakkers (2009) claims that the geometrical arrangement of Ethics is not only an external framework for the method, but is also content by itself, content that turns the Euclidean theory into practice. The geometrical structure of Ethics is not simply a matrix into which Spinoza fits the contents of his method, but is inherently connected to the contents. A structural rationale fits with human logic embedded in the reader's awareness as part of the behavioral and educational contents of Ethics. It can be said that the geometry is designed for practical ethics, to contribute to the understanding of the method, and to bring the reader to the desired happiness (Steenbakkers, 2009). In this vein, Barbaras (2007) claims that Spinoza himself perceived between the joy of doing mathematics and the philosophical 'therapy' he developed the Ethics. What the Euclidian mathematician experiences when gradually disclosing the universal ballet proportion is an unequalled joy.

Since Spinoza himself experienced the therapy of developing a philosophy by means of a mathematical method, then, practically speaking, the geometry turns the formal structure of the philosophy into practical ethical content that contributes to the positive feeling of self-fulfillment and pleasure (Steenbakkers, 2009).

Koistinen (2009) claims that the process of understanding is in essence a move from a supposition to a conclusion and is an act that is positive, not something vague that merely happens to a person. In an active operation of this kind, it is clear that the feeling of the

agent involved in this process is not to avoid difficulty, to see reality as it is, to prefer to deal with the situation and reach the proper conclusion. Regarding the Euclidean structure, apart from the main connection between the axioms and the statements and between the statements and the explanations, the geometrical order settles the metaphysical aspect with the ethical-behavioral claims using Spinoza's naturalistic method. Implementation in this way is what determines the status of the agent between bondage and freedom (LeBuffe, 2010).

Spinoza discusses different levels of self-satisfaction. The agent advances gradually according to his ability from a basic level of self-preservation, to the implementation of the knowledge presented in Ethics into his daily life. The more perfection a thing has the more active and the less passive it is. Conversely, the more active it is, the more perfect it is (Spinoza, 2002a).

Part 3 proposition 53 in Ethics discusses the active nature of the soul where the emphasis is placed on the words 'the power of activity'. When Spinoza talks about this ability, he is referring to man's ability to live his daily life according to the theoretical tools he has acquired. Internalization of the metaphysics as an ethical guide is designed to be implemented in daily life and this is what leads to the feeling of 'blessedness' as the desired goal. In's words in the Appendix to Part 4 in Ethics Spinoza says that the endeavor of the better part of us is the harmony with the order of nature (Spinoza, 2002a).

The title of Part 5 of Ethics is "Of the Power of the Intellect or of The Human Freedom". This title clearly reflects Spinoza's comparison between human freedom and intellectual ability. In Part 3 proposition 53, Spinoza discusses this ability and describes it as the soul's delight, continuing with an example of this statement asking, what is this delight? His answer is, 'Pleasure' is man's transition from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection and 'Pain' is man's transition from a state of greater perfection to a state of less perfection (Spinoza, 2002a).

In Part 3, proof to proposition 9, Spinoza expands on the power of the mind as power of understanding, power of activity. So no emotions of pain can be related to the mind insofar as it is active, but only emotions of pleasure and desire, which are to that extent also related to the mind (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza connects adequate intellectual ideas, as those that match reality with the power of actions. The power of actions can only be expressed by intelligent implementation of knowledge in situations that a person is faced with in daily life. Ethics as a practical guide is worthless when the person who acquired it merely understood it, even delighting in the moment of understanding, as this delight is limited. Acquired knowledge that is not implemented is likely to be forgotten sooner or later, and the satisfaction and self-fulfillment achieved at the time of learning will vanish with

it. Aristotle (2014) noted this in *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he regarded a life of study as a continual activity and a purpose in and of itself accompanied by activity having an excessive element of seriousness, and later the Stoics, who were more consistent regarding the aspects of implementation of knowledge as a central element in man's happiness (Senecae, 2010).

The stated aim of Spinoza's method is for the individual to progress from a state of excessive sadness to a state of excessive joy, in other words, to ensure that happiness plays a greater role in daily life than sadness as far as possible. The aim, then, is to 'redeem' man from his passivity (*passio*), where he is dragged along with events to a state of activity (*actio*). Spinoza says that his final task is to show what practical advantages accrue from knowledge of his doctrine and, Therefore, this practical doctrine, apart from giving us complete tranquility of mind, has the further advantage of teaching us wherein lies our greatest happiness or blessedness namely, in the knowledge of Nature alone (Spinoza, 2002b).

Thus, we are bound in one way or another by the rules of nature, often being pulled by the order of our surroundings and random coincidences, even though we are frequently able to act of our own accord in this reality. It is this natural ability that Spinoza tries to improve by way of instilling knowledge that will become intellectual property. When this knowledge is implemented, it will express our strength, which is freedom to act, within our natural human surroundings – reality. This is the ability to overcome random events even if we find it uncomfortable, in the encounter between study and action (Gilead, 1986), an ability that is accompanied by contentment-happiness-joy.

The findings in this study reveal that this force of action expresses an internal determination of the mind that prevents us from being drawn by coincidental events. Implementing knowledge in daily life can be expressed in different aspects and at various levels and expresses an action determined by the agent's nature, his presence in reality as judged by himself and not dragged along by events.

Knowledge itself awakens positive feelings, but when these feelings are accompanied by actions, we really feel good. Knowledge itself, i.e. knowing what is true, correct and good still does not prevent us being drawn towards error, badness and sadness.

Daniel Gilbert(2007), in the fifth section of his book *Stumbling on Happiness* maintains that in order to achieve ultimate pleasure and minimize pain we need to be able to identify experiences with the circumstances that caused them. However, we must also be able to explain how and why those particular circumstances caused those particular experiences. Gilbert (2007) claims that all the physiological indications such as EEG, PET or MRI scans are inferior to a person's own personal expressions about his feelings. The person who actually

had the experience is the only one able to see inside himself and therefore his statements act as a baseline from which feelings of happiness can be compared, and this research has been undertaken bearing these factors in mind.

One of the central conclusions in the research of Arnd-Michael Nohl (2015) about learning application-transformation, where the range of differences in, age, gender, education and ethnicity, points to a connection between practical educational achievements and the positive feeling of new life experiences, as well new and unexpected life horizons.

Under the heading, "Unity of Study and Action" Yovel (1988) describes Moshe Hess (1950) as being the first to determine the need to conduct oneself not only by understanding concepts but also by actions. Indeed, Hess truly expressed the practical aspects of Spinoza. Under the heading, "The Philosophy of Action" in his book *Selected Articles* he calls Spinoza's *Ethics* the philosophy of action (Hess, 1950). According to Hess, Spinoza had a profound influence on the theory of Karl Marx. In his view, understanding is for action, and action creates a new basis for understanding. Even then, Hess claimed that the metaphysical part of *Ethics* prepares the practical side that emanates from it, starting in Part 3 of the book. The individual, who clearly understands his own emotions and actions as they flow from him causally from his nature and desires, can act in a decisive manner. This is Spinoza's ethical basis from which social ramifications are derived, i.e. socialism is grounded in the ethical part of Spinoza and is its nucleus. This is based on the concept that action carried out joyfully will make the agent free and happy (Hess, 1950).

Yovel (1988) enumerates the stages between study and action:

1. I must know myself therefore I must know what private things are in general.
2. How worldly matters affect one another and how emotions are formed in this relationship between affect-effect.
3. How the social environment is created and how it affects the individual.
4. How personal and social emotions are determined within the causal context that influences me externally.
5. I use this theoretical knowledge to reflectively decipher my essence as an object examined from outside myself.
6. From now on, after gaining scientific knowledge of myself from various complementary causal aspects, I can rearrange my cognitive components, thus orientating myself in the natural world in general and in the social world in particular, and function in that world clearly and coherently.

Table 1: Statements for the Student Satisfaction Index

	Statements
1	When I look at what I have acquired in the course, I feel I got tools that make me feel satisfied with myself.
2	The applied learning performance has given me tools that are not obtained in regular theoretical learning. [Capability]
3	Compared to other theoretical courses I feel greater satisfaction. [Feeling]
4	As I increased my application skills, so my satisfaction increased.
5	The ability to apply theory in a concrete case in life gives me a sense of power in relation to my previous situations.
6	The practical knowledge that I acquired raised my satisfaction with myself.
7	In my view, the ability to apply knowledge equals power and inability to apply knowledge equals weakness.
8	In my opinion, the ability to apply knowledge equals feeling of happiness.
9	After completing the course, I have applied a higher ability to look at myself and my abilities.
10	The acquisition of applied knowledge contributed to my ability to help others, and it gives me happiness.

It is easy to discern that these six stages are dependent on the reflective ability of the self-reflection. The combination of the reflective and the application leads the student to very sophisticated abilities in the stage of learning and practical life. The importance of implementation in education is prominently expressed in the research that suggests exercise and request for reflection in the medical profession. Apart from the essential need of professional medical worker, is the reflectiveness ability development of the student -The ability to look at his actions, to examine them and to look back at the way to achievements (Saperstein et al., 2015). The researches questionnaire was built accordingly and the results showed that advancement of application ability by itself also improves the reflective abilities.

In proof to proposition 59 Part 3, Spinoza (2002a) expresses the connection between active intelligent action and happiness and passive unintelligent action. A functional connection does in fact, exist between the metaphysical section of Ethics and the other aspects of the behavioral and educational method (LeBuffe, 2010) and this is what guided us in our choice of research question: Is there a connection between the implementation of theory and a sense of joy or happiness? Consequently, in the design of the questionnaire presented in Table 1 comparing Spinoza's statements in Ethics and the results of our empirical research. The uniqueness of this article lies in the pioneering way that it brings the discussion of Spinoza's theories down from the philosophical ivory tower to the field of daily life.

METHOD

Participants

In order to test Spinoza's assumptions we conducted an empirical research based on a survey with data collected from sampled Zefat Academic College students. 256 respondents were surveyed, 122 of them Jews and 122 of them Israeli Arabs (62 Muslims, 42 Druzes and 18 Christians) (12 were others or not mentioned). About a half of those surveyed (47%), were men (6% did not mention); approximately 47% were single and 48% married (5% others or not mentioned) and the average age was 28.6 (SD = 8.24).

Procedure and Results

The grades in the course were coded by an ordinal measure, where 1 represents the grades between 90 and 100; 2 for grades between 80 and 89; 3 for grades between 70 and 79; and 4 for grades lower than 70. As figure 1 shows the grades were equally distributed, and the median grade was between 80 and 89.

The main quest of our research was to reveal the students' satisfaction with practical knowledge. In order to do so, respondents were asked to rank the extent of their agreement with 10 different statements on a 5-point scale (1, not at all; 10 to a great extent). As Table 1 shows, the statements are counted equal and we measure the basis to our dependent variable – the Student Satisfaction Index (SSI). The Index is measured, for each respondent, as the sum of all his statements (divided by 10) which gives us a rank from 1 (indicating the lowest satisfaction

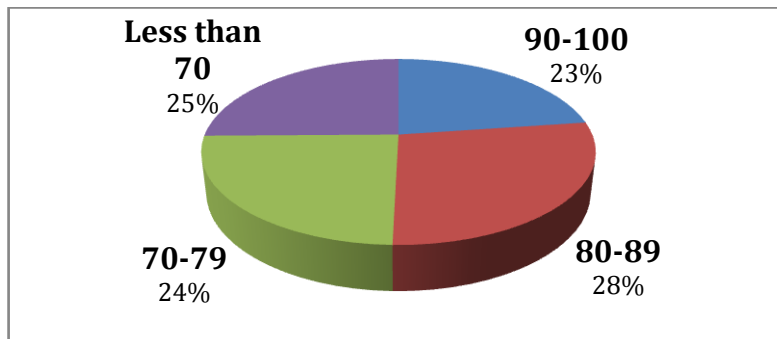


Figure 1: Grades Distribution

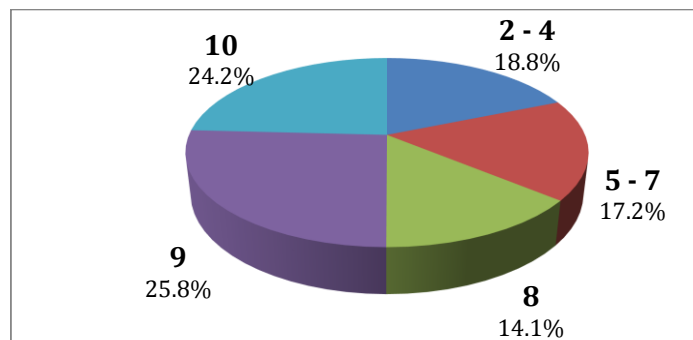


Figure 2: Distribution of the Student Satisfaction Index (N=128)

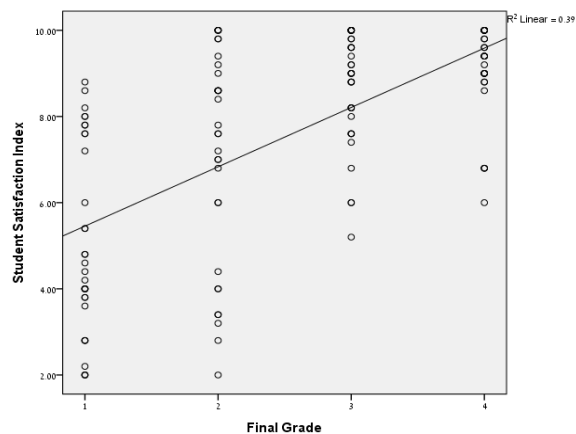


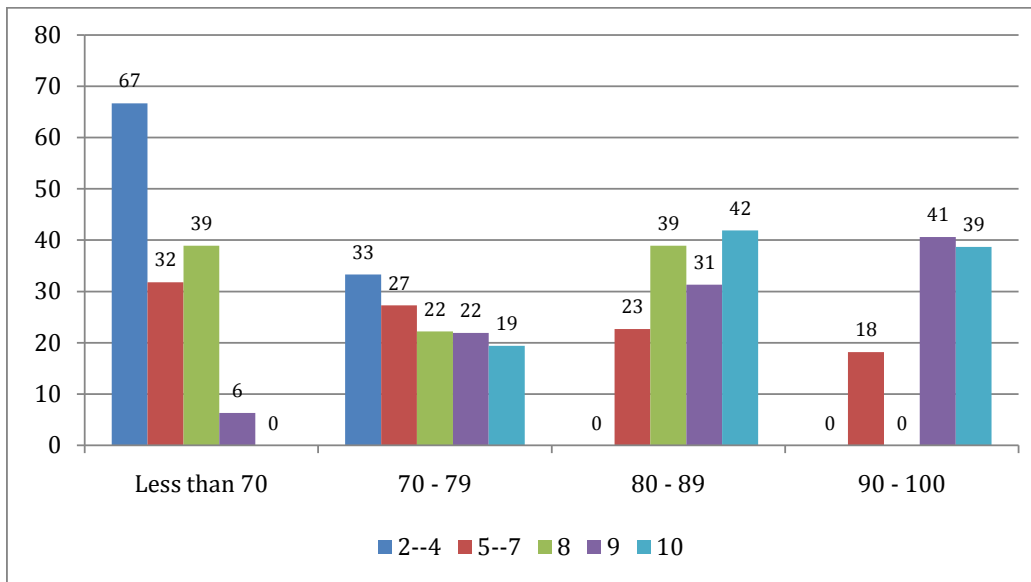
Figure 3: The Relationship between Grade and SSI

rate) to 10 (indicating the highest satisfaction rate).

Figure 2 shows us the distribution of the Student Satisfaction Index. Half of the respondents – 24.2 and 25.8% – received the score 10 and 9 respectively on the index, which indicates the highest satisfaction. About a third of the respondents (14.1 and 17.2%) received the scores between 8 and 5, which indicate a medium satisfaction rate, and about 20 received the scores between 2 and 4 which indicate the lowest satisfaction

rates.

The main object of our research was to examine student's attitudes toward, and expectation of, practical knowledge. The first stage, therefore, was in search of a relationship between SSI and grades. As Figure 3 shows, our main finding is that they are related to each other: satisfaction is to be greater with higher grades (4 = 90 to 100), with a correlation (Spearman's rho) of 0.618 and statistically significant ($p < .001$).



Note: Chi square test was 59.55 and statistically significant, $p < .001$;
Figure 4: Final Grades and Grouped Students Satisfaction Index

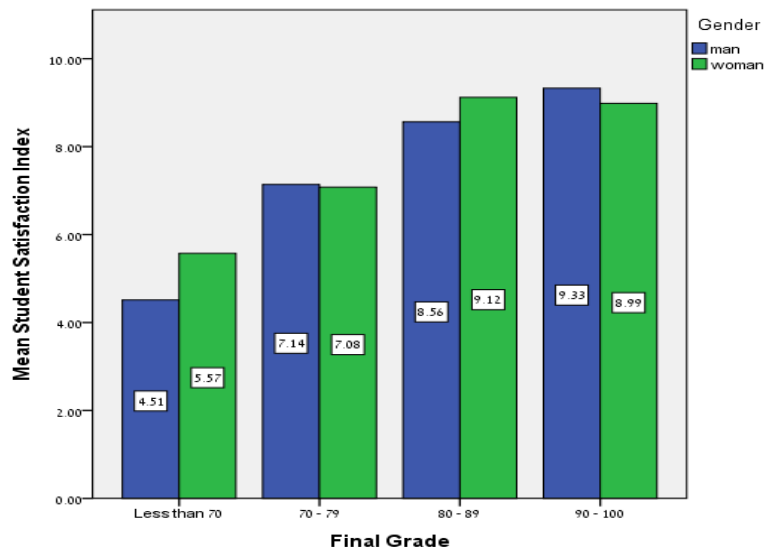


Figure 5: Final Grades and Average SSI by Gender

When the Student Satisfaction Index was gathered into five groups, it was evident that low grades are related with low satisfaction rates. 66% of the respondents who scored between 2 and 4 in the index received a grade lower than 70, and 33% of them between 70 and 79. On the other hand, a high level of student satisfaction with practical knowledge is evident in the high grades (between 90 and 100): 41 and 39% of the respondents (and a total of 80%) that scored 9 and 10 respectively received very high grades.

Given these results, our next stage was to search for the effects of four main explanations— gender, religion, personal status and age – on the correlation between student’s grades and the Student Satisfaction Index. The figures below show some interesting findings and more comprehensive results.

First, with regard to gender, it is evident that no significant differences exist between men and women. Figure 5 shows that the average Student Satisfaction Index is relatively high in both men and women when

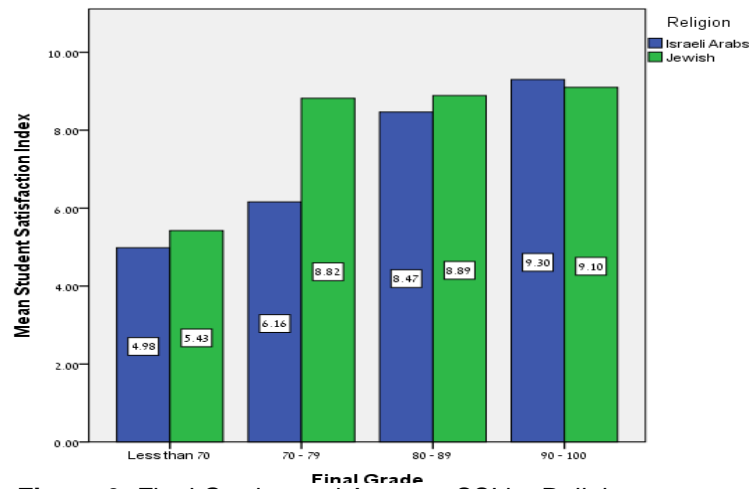


Figure 6: Final Grades and Average SSI by Religion

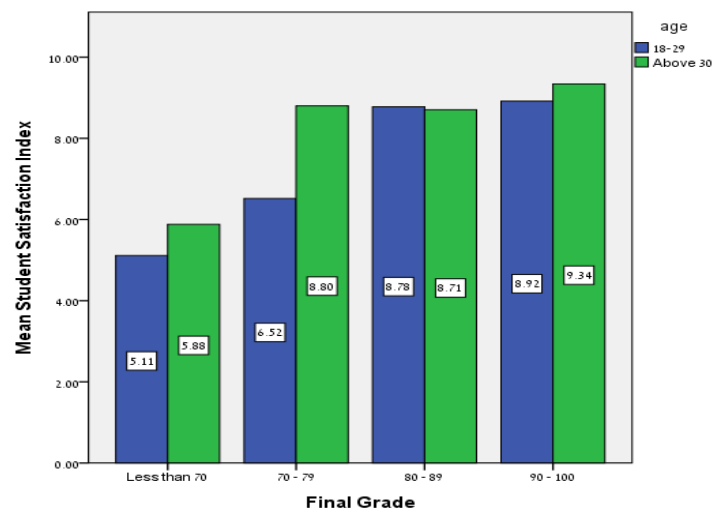


Figure 7: Final Grades and Average SSI by Age

grades are high and low when grades are lower. The correlation in both cases is positive and statistically significant.

Second, with regard to religion, no major differences were found between the sample of Jews and Israeli Arabs. As shown in Figure 6, there are almost no differences in the average Student satisfaction Index between Jews and Israeli Arabs in the high grades (above 80), with relatively high satisfaction rates in both groups. The only difference that we found is in the 70 – 79 grades, which can be related to the small sample at our disposal. In any case, correlations between grades and SSI in both samples are positive and statistically significant.

Last, but not least, age has an important impact on Student satisfaction Index (Pearson Correlation) of 0.422

($p < .001$). No major differences are reported between the younger sample (18-29 years old) and the older sample (above 30 years old) in the higher grades (above 80), and the gap found in the 70-79 sample is insignificant and due to the relatively low number of respondents.

One final note: statements 2 and 3 in the questionnaire and to some extent statement 9 were designed to be a substitute for a control group. Since we could not compare the feelings of the respondent who studied theoretical lessons only and not the implementation course, the above three statements are taken into account in the questionnaire to concrete respondents, who were the only ones that could experience the difference, and are themselves an implicit control group, without their knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The practical method in Spinoza's behavioral theories discussed above is reinforced by the results of this study. Man's desire to exist occurs on various levels where basic survival and bodily needs represent the lowest level of happiness. The higher levels refer to luxuries and quality of life that also lead to fulfillment, but according to Aristotle (2014), these are insufficient: man strives for continual happiness, which is expressed in spiritual pleasure. Indeed, Aristotle defined happiness as an ongoing activity.

The research corroborates Ben-Shlomo's interpretation of Spinoza, that the value of the philosophy is determined by its concrete results, i.e. the extent to which it reinforces man's power (Ben-Shlomo, 2012). The important aspect examined in the research is the practical one emphasized by Hess (1950). The questionnaire focuses on this specific aspect, and the high correlation emerging from its results indicates just how relevant Spinoza's philosophy is in the behavioral sciences and the educational sciences today.

It is not enough to experience a burst of pleasure such as when we gain and understand theoretical knowledge, for example when gazing at a piece of artwork or listening to music. Internalizing information and implementing it to solve problems or life situations, even if the incidents are unpleasant, increases our levels of self-satisfaction, providing us with a sense of security and calm to help us deal with daily life with an ongoing sense of happiness. This, as we have stated, is a higher level of happiness than that achieved by merely gaining theoretical knowledge, which may lead to a certain level of happiness, but is only temporary, and fades after a short while. We have seen, the responses collected from the students in the study, they experienced the differences between the two levels of happiness. The opportunity to implement the theoretical knowledge acquired in real time, and/or in an actual exercise increased, their sense of self-fulfillment and a move from minimal happiness to excess happiness on the scale between sadness and frustration to continual pleasure from happiness and pleasure (see Figures 3 and 5). This is referred to by Spinoza (2002a) in part 4, proposition 52, that there is no greater satisfaction than that which comes from understanding - practical understanding resulting from reason.

According to Della Rocca (2008), there is one crucial aspect where human striving and desire may not appear in the striving and desire of simpler organisms. In speaking of human beings in particular, Spinoza stresses that we strive not only to persist but also to increase what he calls our 'power acting' (Spinoza, 2002a). This fits well with Spinoza's claim that self-satisfaction equals happiness that comes from man's introspection on his own power to act. When Spinoza talks about a correct

idea, he is referring to the adequate idea that matches reality. This is the idea that describes the encounter between theory and the relevant incident, as the results show in all the Figures above, i.e. intellectual application of knowledge when attempting to find a solution for a specific problem.

The ability of self-reflection and its connection to implementation skills is clearly expressed in the formulation of the questionnaire. Almost every question requires self-contemplation. In addition, the necessity for self-contemplation is inherent in the questionnaire that requires a comparison of feelings from a previous situation of learning in a purely theoretical course to one that requires application of the knowledge, the subject of this study, and all this including the subjects' contemplation of themselves and their power of action.

The importance of perfecting the reflective abilities in the Ethics of Spinoza is expressed in the 6 rules that Yuval (1988) presented and in contemporary education with direct reflective teaching methods (Saperstein, Lilije & Seibert, 2015). All 10 statements in table 1 and especially 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 show the close relationship between application abilities and reflective abilities.

This conclusion relating to the positive feeling during practical studying matches the research of Nohl (2015) and is relevant to different groups, (gender, age and ethnicity) according to what was seen in tables 6, 7, 8 of this research.

In this context Katz (2014) emphasizes that it is an acquired ability and that in Ethics Spinoza shows that the ability to apply knowledge in and of itself opens up options for critical thinking to examine the success or failure of the action. The ability for reflection is a developed intellectual human skill that is part of his power of action.

Reflection is an essential cognitive element in the move from lesser fulfillment to higher fulfillment, not just, because self-contemplation would not exist without it, but because it is a skill in and of itself that is accompanied by feelings of fulfillment and self-realization, as indicated by the findings of this study.

Regarding the law of self-preservation at its various levels, including the desire for happiness, Spinoza's naturalism that expresses the unity of human nature, adopts a view of equality between all human beings. This statement of Spinoza's is also reinforced in the present study as we found that ethnic differences between the subjects were minor (see Figures 5 and 6 above). Spinoza's philosophy, as presented in this research, states that human nature, that is not a separate entity from nature as a whole, is constant in all places and at all times. This study showed that ethnic, religious, linguistic or other differences had no effect on the basic human characteristics, which drive us all some extent or another, and this fits with the hierarchical principle of the law of self-preservation., Plants and animals, according to of

nature laws, are also governed by the laws of self-preservation but at lower physiological levels. Intellectual abilities and the positive feelings emanating from them in all people regardless of cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic differences were encouraged in the research. The differences between the natural world and man are not in the principle of the law but in man's ability to achieve them and thus reaching self-fulfillment, to contemplate this achievement and rejoice in his abilities, thereby achieving a higher level of activity within the bounds of the laws of self-preservation. Being a part of nature each person has a common denominator deep in his structural make-up that is irrelevant to ethnic, religious or linguistic differences (Spinoza, 2002a; See also Della Rocca, 2008).

In this spirit and in accordance with Carlo Ponti, Bengtsson (2012) also sees the results of practical education as being motive power for development of expanding personality, experience and worldly concepts, involvement in the world and becoming an integral part of nature and humanity.

According to Spinoza, the key for the free man is this ability for implementation and LeBuffe (2010) emphasizes this in the differences between freedom and bondage. In the theory that has been studied, internalization and implementation provide the difference between them (LeBuffe, 2010).

The correlation between seeing the achievements of implementing knowledge and feelings of happiness found in the study is also supported by the interpretation of the law of self-preservation (Conatus) provided by Katz (2014) regarding overcoming or reducing mental power of action. Climbing the ladder between these opposites is a copy of the move from sadness to happiness. Katz (2014) also claims that this expresses the power of the agent.

CONCLUSION

The research findings validate Spinoza's educational claims in Ethics from 350 years ago and it contribute the value of contribution of using practical exercises of theories which leads to self-satisfaction and increased the motivation of learning achievements.

In addition, companion benefit of this study is the understanding that human nature is universal due to the spirit of Spinoza's educational approach in Ethics. The results of the study reflect a high correlation between a feeling of self-assurance and pleasure and achievement levels more than six months after completion of studies. All the respondents also studied theoretical courses without the practical aspect and were able to notice the results. Thus, the correlation reflected from the results show that the test group on the low achievement level felt a corresponding low measure of self-satisfaction.

The results correspond with Spinoza's claims in Ethics, e.g. Spinoza maintains that implementing theoretical knowledge brings about empowerment and enables some freedom of activity on a daily basis, but within a deterministic environment. The research findings reveal that a combination of theory and practice creates 'internal attendance' of the actor, a kind of determination of the soul without dragging along passively after random events. Man performs actively in a natural way and then, as now, intellectual implementation establishes man's presence in reality when he decides for himself rather than as someone being pulled along after events.

The findings of this study show that there is a high correlation between gaining the ability to implement theoretical knowledge and happiness. The research question that was necessitated by Spinoza's views was reinforced by the present study and showed that his claims from the 17th century are still relevant today. This reinforcement of the metaphysical aspect of the law of self-preservation enlightens the empirical research with a philosophical viewpoint and is an integral part of the discussion presented here.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the encounter between Spinoza's theory and the results of the study, a theory that is learned but unapplied is nearer to the bookshelf than to the students' cognitive awareness. A theory that has been applied means that it has been taken from the bookshelf and placed into reality, into daily life. A person who applies a theory turns it into a useful tool and a person who works with tools is more efficient than someone who works with his bare hands. The student who applies his knowledge becomes an active agent between the bookshelf and reality; he senses, he feels, he is happy. He - and only he - can assess his own abilities reflexively according to the criteria of moving from a lesser fulfillment to a greater fulfillment than he had previously, from indifference to happiness that increases his power of action.

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