Strategies to Encourage Elementary School Students to Study and Conduct Research in Alborz province

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Abstract: The present study is conducted in an attempt to find out about the strategies to encourage elementary school students to study and conduct research on the basis of descriptive correlation method. The population is 12848 which consist of all students and teachers in the fourth and fifth grade and administrators in Karaj elementary schools in the academic year of 2012-2013. The subjects of the study who are 613 ones (375 subjects are students; 162 subjects are teachers and 72 participants are administrators) are selected on the basis of random cluster sampling according to Morgan's table for determining the sample size. The tool for data collection is a questionnaire which was prepared by researchers themselves and its validity is approved and confirmed by 20 experts. In addition, its reliability is calculated as 0.88 on the basis of Cronbach alpha. According to the obtained results the most important strategies to encourage elementary school students to study and conduct research are: training teachersandadministrators, educating families, upgrading level of parental education, providing a curriculumwith specific time for studying and doing research within the weekly schedule, making students be interested in using the library in the school, holding school-level competitions, making students participate in camps, holding training workshops and appreciating students.

Key words: Studying and Doing Research · Students · Encouragement · Primary schools

INTRODUCTION

One of the indicators of developed countries is the capita rate of having access to information resources and research community. It is such that today's world is called as a network community. The network society would wipe out temporal and spatial intervals.

The most outstanding feature of a network society is the usage of information and having easy access to them. Doing research, studying and conducting a research are performed in different ways (written, oral, visual and auditory) within a network society.

In the current century, despite the spread of mass media and usage of computers and internet, books and reading not only are still important but also conducting research and studying are considered as two main and necessary processes of the explosion age. Moreover, these two processes are considered among the goals of the higher education in every community.

Regarding the importance of studying and its role in personality, knowledge and culture development, many articles and various researches have been written and conducted till now. However, that would not be enough and greater prospects and studying are still required. One point which must be taken into consideration is that one of the ways to evaluate the progress of culture and civilization within communities is the rate of studying, books and reading.

Studying and conducting research would lead to fundamental changes in many fields in every society. However, they are influenced by many factors which must be recognized. In fact, documenting the factors affecting studying and conducting research and preparing the ground for the next generation within a society is of a great importance since it would lead to the overall development of the community. Studies have shown that the rate of studying and reading within our society is not satisfactory and its per capita rate is the lowest on the

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basis of calculations carried out. According to the obtained results of the research conducted on 3500 high school and pre-university students and 1500 employed and unemployed people and housewives by Aria Strategic Studies Center, per capita for reading books except textbooks for students and reading periodicals and newspapers for others has been estimated as 18 minutes; also, per capita for studying textbooks has been estimated from 44 minutes to 6 hours depending on the grade [1].

Attempt to develop a love for books and reading book would have its roots t within the family. Generally Psychologists have proven that the child's personality and identity are firstly formed within the family. Therefore, the parents who are naturally interested in reading books would have children that love books and reading and vice versa. Most scholars and scientists have been grown up within families whose parents were interested in studying and conducting research or at least they encouraged their children to acquire knowledge [2].

In addition, the experiences have revealed that in illiterate environments which are not developed in terms of education and literacy, the main problem is parents themselves who are not aware of the fact that how much studying and reading are required and necessary for their children. Those who are not literate or those who are literate but probably they are not used to studying and reading not only are not aware of the importance of studying and reading but also they don't even believe in it. This kind of viewpoint normally affects their children, too [3].

The second phase of education and training happens when a child goes to school. Thus, during the first years of education in the elementary school, the main goal is to train them in reading skills. Afterwards, during the higher levels, students are to be taught about analyzing the passages they read and applying that information in their real life. In fact, the most important goal of education system is not only to add to their knowledge but also to educate students to solve their problems during their adulthood by using the information they have read previously [4].

Therefore, as Yousefi (2010) says, education system is the largest education institution within the country which can enhance students' interest in reading books through careful and long-term planning. In addition, great teachers not only can be successful models in different fields of science but also they can expand and boostthe culture of reading books, studying and conducting research [5].

As it was also quoted by Parsa (2005) school and education system are regarded as the second social and educational context where a child steps in. Education system as the largest training institution within the country has a crucial role in establishing education fundamentals in a more appropriate way. For example, paying more attention to studying and conducting research through a long-term and careful planning can make the new generation more interested in such activities. Afterwards, students are to get acquainted with why they study and how it may develop the country. This great responsibility is up to teachers at elementary schools. As psychologists such as Watson, Locke did believe, a child's mind is like a tabula rasa on which the environmental experiences might be curved [6].

In what follows, we'll review some of the researches conducted with regard to reading habits and interests, the role of libraries in increasing the tendency towards reading and methods of persuading students to study and conduct research.

In 2009, Edrisi tried to investigate methods of persuading junior students to study and develop reading habits among them. He concluded that there is a relationship between students' interest in studying and their families' culture and training status [7].

Abroshan in 2007 investigated the relationship between students' academic achievements and personal traits and the reading methods. He revealed that there is a significant relationship between them and the reading method affects students' academic achievements [8].

Also, Nickpanah (2009) in his study showed that students' interest in studying significantly and positively correlates with teachers' attempts [9].

Moradi (2010) additionally in his study concluded that training students in research methodologies would significantly affects their motivations for conducting research [10].

Mirhemayat (2007) investigated the methods of encouraging teachers and students to conduct research activities and he revealed that there is a positive relationship between gender with applying the findings and encouraging teachers and students to conduct research [11].

Yousefi (2010) in his study investigated how much students may read books other than their text books. He concluded that students' rate of reading and studying is very low compared to their other activities; it is so low that the per capita of their daily reading is about 12/12 minutes. In addition, more than 70 percent of the topics

they read or study are not goal-oriented; mostly they are not encouraged to read books other than their text books by a person or a stimulus at home, school or in the community [5].

Mardani nokande (2006) in his study on how to increase the rate of reading and studying in the society highlights the role of families, schools, teachers, newspapers, holding competitions, introducing models, equipping libraries and enhancing their sources in boosting the rate of reading and studying among teenagers and young people [2].

Clare (2006) also indicates that the library is a center for training individuals in reading skills. She believes that a literature teacher and the librarian in a school are required to assist students not only in studying but also in understanding what they read [12].

Zufia (1998) declares that one of the important and continuous purposes of the school about studying and reading is to provide students with a positive attitude towards books, reading and studying on the first ground [13].

As Larick (2007) states in her paper, the setting which is selected to be a library not only should be large enough but also it is required to be attractive. For this purpose, its decoration must be taken into consideration. However, by decoration, we don't mean costly decorations; we mean those beautiful pictures of nature, flowers and plants which surely add to the beauty and attractiveness of the library. Thus, the physical environment of the library can be regarded as a principal factor in reinforcing students' interest in reading and studying [14].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is conducted in an attempt to find out about the strategies to encourage elementary school students to study and conduct research on the basis of descriptive correlation method. The population is 12848 which consist of all students and teachers in the fourth and fifth grade and administrators in Karaj elementary schools in the academic year of 2012-2013. The subjects of the study who are 613 ones (375 subjects are students; 162 subjects are teachers and 72 participants are administrators) are selected on the basis of random cluster sampling according to Morgan's table for determining the sample size. The tool for data collection is a questionnaire which was prepared by researchers themselves and its validity is approved and confirmed by

20 experts. In addition, its reliability is calculated as 0.88 on the basis of Cronbach alpha. This questionnaire contains three parts for students, teachers and administrators. Each part includes 5 five-choice questions on the basis of Likert's scale. In order to analyze the data descriptive statistics like Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and variance and inferential statistics are applied. The correlation coefficient and t-test were calculated by SPSS software.

RESULTS

First Hypothesis: There is a correlation between having a library and students' amount of studying and conduction research.

The data illustrated in Table (1) reveals that the highest coefficient correlation is allocated to the existence of students' favorite books.

The data in Table (2) indicates that the existence of library would enhance the rate of interest in studying and conducting research. In other words, a library is a suitable place for students' studying. Regarding the obtained correlation, the students' gender doesn't have a special role in taking advantage of libraries; in other words, only by 14/97 percent, girls may benefit from libraries more than boys.

Second Hypothesis: There is a correlation between curriculums, course hours and research topics and students' interest in studying and conducting research.

The results in Table (3) show that the highest rate of correlation is allocated to training teachers and administrators.

The data in Table (4) reveals that there is positive and significant correlation between students' hours in their weekly schedule and conducting research in different courses.

Third Hypothesis: There is a correlation between students' motivation for studying and conducting research and their participation in school competitions.

The data demonstrated in Table (5) presents that the highest correlation exists between students' participation in competitions and holding competitions at schools.

Table (6) shows that there is a positive correlation between participating in competition calls and persuading students to study, conduct research, benefit from libraries more and granting different awards at school.

Table 1: Correlation between the library and students' rate of interest in studying and conducting research from students' viewpoint

	Benefiting from the library by students	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
Students' interests in studying	375	257/0
Students' interests in research	369	116/0
Students' interests in doing research in each course	368	186/0
Opportunities for students to study	366	147/0
Books and reading competitions and cultural events	370	198/0
Favorite books available in the library	356	401/0
Student gender	375	196/0

Significant at P < % 1

Table 2: Correlation between the library and students' rate of interest in studying and conducting research from teachers' and administrators ' viewpoint

	Benefiting from the libraries and richness of subjects available in the library	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
Library's quality and encouraging students to study and conduct research	238	263/0
Competitions and promoting studying and research	235	301/0
Book fairs at school	236	386/0
Introducing students of the previous years	237	502/0
Training teachers in studying and conducting research methods	238	519/0
Culture studies and research work	238	339/0
Providing adequate facilities in schools	237	352/0

Significant at P ≤ %1

Table 3: Correlation between students' weekly course schedule, topics of studying and their interest in studying and conducting research from teachers' and administrators ' viewpoint

	Course weekly schedule and research topics	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
Book fair at schools	236	317/0
Conducting competitions at schools	234	295/0
Participated in tours	237	253/0
School Library Enrichment	238	277/0
Introducing successful students of the previous years	237	440/0
Training administrators	238	417/0
Teacher Education	238	479/0
The Role of Research on sustainable learning	238	532/0
Allocate appropriate time to studying and conducting research at schools	238	291/0
Adequate facilities at schools	236	233/0
Equipping schools	236	328/0
Workshops	233	252/0
Training families	236	388/0

Significant at P ≤ %1

Table 4: Correlation between students' weekly course schedule, topics of studying and their interest in studying and conducting research from students' viewpoint

	Course weekly schedule and research topics	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
The rate of interest in students	375	122/0××
Doing research in various subjects	357	164/0××

Significant at P ≤ %1

Table 5: Correlation between motivations for studying and conducting research and participating at school-level competitions from students' viewpoint

	Participation in competitions	
Variables	n	Ccorrelation coefficient
The rate of interest to study	372	114/0
The rate of interest to research	366	108/0
The competitions at schools	363	429/0
Benefiting from the Library	354	198/0
Subjects of investigation	355	214/0
Gender	373	219/0

Significant at $P \leq \%1$

Table 6: Correlation between motivations for studying and conducting research and participating at school-level competitions from teachers' and administrators' viewpoint

	Students' course weekly schedule and research topics	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
Granting awards	236	520/0
Book fair	234	313/0
Holding school-level competitions with specific topics	226	348/0
Free magazine subscription	232	422/0
School library enrichment	235	301/0
Training administrators	234	244/0
Training teachers	231	222/0
Training families	234	344/0

Significant at $P \leq \%1$

Table 7: Correlation between appreciation, granting awards and letter of appreciation and students' rate of interest in studying and conducting research from students' viewpoint

	Participation in competitions	
Variables	n	Correlation coefficient
The rate of interest to study	372	203/0
The rate of interest to research	365	168/0
Subjects of investigation	354	161/0

Significant at $P \leq \%1$

Table 8: Correlation between appreciation, granting awards and letter of appreciation and students' rate of interest in studying and conducting research from teachers' and administrators' viewpoint

	Students' course weekly schedule and research topics	
Variables	n	The correlation coefficient
Holding competitions and promoting students' level of studying and conducting research	126	530/0
Selecting appropriate methods to encourage students to participate in competitions	123	253/0
Introducing successful students of the previous years	127	346/0
Training administrators	128	330/0
Developing study and research culture	128	183/0
sustainable learning	128	318/0

Significant at $P \leq \%1$

Table 9: The Summary of Independent t-test relating to the relationship between maternal education and other variables which are effective in motivating students to study and conduct research

Mother's education	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	T Calculated
Gender	4	031/0××	618/10a
The rate of interest in conducting research	8	006/0××	376/21a
Doing research on different subjects	8	007/0××	168/21a
Having opportunities to study and read books at home	8	007/0××	179/21a
being interested in reading books on various topics by children	8	046/0××	740/15a
Having the opportunity to read books other than textbooks	8	022/0××	203/14a
Participate in reading events	8	002/0×	791/23a
Students' interest in newspapers and magazines	8	006/0×	710/18a

×Significant relationship at 1%

××Significant relationship at 5%

Table 10: The Summary of Independent t-test relating to the relationship between paternal education and other variables which are effective in motivating students to study and conduct research

Father's education	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	T Calculated
Gender	4	003/0×	749/15a
Children's interest in doing studying	8	007/0×	063/21a
Children's' interest in conducting research	8	001/0×	201/25a
Having opportunities to study textbooks	8	014/0××	213/19a
Encouraging children by parents	8	002/0×	999/24a
Having opportunities to read books other than textbooks	8	008/0×	596/20a
Selecting the type of studying (personal or in groups)	8	007/0×	224/14a

×Significant relationship at 1%

××Significant relationship at 5%

Table 11: The Summary of Independent t-test relating to the relationship between students' last year-average and motivating students to study and conduct research

Students' last year-average	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	T calculated
Opportunity to study the textbooks	258	007/0×	645/317a
The rate of father's reading and studying at home	258	018/0××	228/307a
Opportunities to study and read at home for students	254	002/0×	764/324a
The competitions at schools	260	004/0×	432/324a
Selecting the type of studying (personal or in groups)	130	001/0×	336/189a
The rate of interest to research	258	002/0×	101/328a

×Significant relationship at 1%

××Significant relationship at 5%

Fourth Hypothesis: There is a correlation between appreciation, granting awards and letter of appreciation and increasing the rate of studying and conducting research.

The results within the above Table (7) reveal that the highest correlation goes to the amount and kind of appreciation at schools which can significantly affect the students' encouragement to study and conduct research; it may also enhance the number of researches conducted.

The above Table (8) shows that appreciation and praising at schools can be depicted by holding school-level competitions or introducing students from previous years which consequently would develop the culture of studying and conducting research at schools.

Fifth Hypothesis: There is a correlation between mothers' education and their children's' tendency toward studying and conduction research.

The test demonstrates that mothers' education would enhance children's interest in studying and conducting research; they will have more opportunities to study. There is also a positive relationship between children's' interest in studying textbooks and their interest in reading other books, magazines and newspapers.

Sixth Hypothesis: There is a correlation between fathers' education and their children's' tendency towards studying and conducting research.

The test shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between fathers' education and encouraging their children to study and conduct research; fathers' education also correlates with providing children with opportunities to study textbooks and non-textbooks and choosing the kind of studying. According to Table (2), fathers' education at elementary level is 28 percent; 22 percent of them have junior degree; 18 percent have been graduated from high school and 19 percent have continued their studies at universities and got their degrees. Only 12 percent are illiterate. Thus, the more fathers' education is, the more interested the children are in studying and conducting research.

Seventh Hypothesis: There is a correlation between students' last average scores and persuading them to study and conduct research.

The test indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between students' last average score and variables like opportunities to study textbooksand non-textbooks and their parents' rate of studying and reading.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Studying and conducting research are considered as two main purposes of education system. Therefore, it is required to train students in such skills since they as member of the community can develop the society in all aspects by studying and conducting research.

According to the findings in the present study, the strategies to encourage students to study and conduct research are determined. In this study, it was revealed that there is a relationship between parents' education and their children's interest in reading and studying which was also previously confirmed by Edrisi (2009) who introduced parents a model for their children and highlighted the role of having higher education in making children be interested in studying [7].

For instance, if parents as their children's model have higher education, they will check their children's homework more appropriately which may boost their average; findings in the present study highlighted the role of students' average in the amount of their studying ad conducting research. Also, by training families at school, students' interest in studying and reading may be enhanced.

Another issue which was highlighted in the present study was the role of library in encouraging students to study and conduct research. The obtained results go on

the same track with previous studies conducted by Nikpanah (2009) and Yousefi (2010). However, libraries with suitable facilities, conditions and students' favorite books are not clearly described in this study. There was not a significant difference between boys' and girls' schools in different areas in this regard [9, 5].

In this study, it was additionally concluded that from the administrators and teacher's perspectives, various variables such as workshops, allocating special hours to studying and conducting research in students' weekly schedule, students' participations in camps and training families and administrators may boost students' interest in studying and conducting research. This result is also confirmed by Edrisi's findings since he also highlighted the role of media and educational facilities and equipment and suitable settings in encouraging students to study and conduct research. Also, Moradi (2010) indicated that there may be a relationship between allocating hours to studying and conducting research in students' weekly schedule and encouraging them to study. He mentions that such relationship would boost students' motivation for conducting research; he also declares that training students in how to write articles can be regarded as one of the factors which correlate with their motivation in research. Also, it is concluded that there is also a relationship between holding scientific conferences for students and boosting their motivation in conducting research [7, 10].

In addition, it should be noted that there is probably a positive relationship between students' interest in studying and being appreciated in the presence of others which is confirmed by all psychological theories with regard to meeting the needs to be respected and belonging to others as Moradi (2010) also found that students' motivation for conducting research significantly correlates with appreciation publicly [10].

In addition, Mardani Nokande (2006) highlights the role of families, schools, teachers, newspapers, holding contests, introducing models and equipping and developing libraries' sources in boosting the rate of reading and studying among children and teenagers, which completely goes on the same track with the obtained results of the present study [2].

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