

## Disciplinary problems and school dropout

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### Introduction

“Dropout” refers to the situation where pupils discontinue their education due to a number of factors. In fact, there are two types of dropout: an overt dropout and a latent dropout. The main causal factors for this phenomenon are attributed to some factors, such as the low academic achievements and the sense of alienation towards learning. However, there are other factors in the equation connected with the inner school issues, such as pupils’ social status, teachers’ perceived attitude towards the learning process and some physical elements. In addition, there could be external factors related to the home situation, crisis of some sort and economic backgrounds.

Dropout often begins with latent dropout. In other words, the pupil is present in the school but he does not function as such, or through truancy, frequent absents, and lack of participation in school events, which eventually deteriorate into leaving the system altogether. Therefore, identifying the cause of dropout helps significantly to reduce it.

Data indicated that currently, there is a decrease trend in dropout in both junior high and high-schools. The data released by the ministry showed that the national ratio of youths of 14-17 who do not learn is 7.4%, but while dropout ration among Jewish pupils under 17 had been reduced to mere 4.5%, while dropout ration among Arabic pupil is 20.7%.The ratio of pupil who dropout in their final years and do not finish 12 years of education among Jewish youth is 10/4% while among Arab youth it is 31.7%.

This article is based on a study of in-school violence and disciplinary problems conducted in junior high schools of the Arabic sector in Israel. Naturally where disciplinary problems are present in school, there is a higher chance for pupils to be ignored or passed over. If such pupils have also academic difficulties, they may be marginalized and eventually dropout from the system altogether. The article will

present findings of a recent comparative study that examined similarities and differences between schools located in urban areas versus schools located in rural area and the ways these differences might shed light on the dropout phenomenon within the educational system of the Arabic sector in Israel. The findings described were obtained by combined qualitative and quantitative research methods.

### **Abstract**

The article describes the general situation in Israel regarding this problem and then goes in particular to the situation in the Arabic community in Israel. It attempts to ascertain the causal factors and thrives to recognize a possible solution or at least a direction for possible reduction of the phenomenon.

The article lists the various factors affecting dropout and differentiates between factors external to the school, and therefore not in system's control, and factors derived from within the system which we have the task to address and do our utmost to remedy. As we cannot change the society and the surrounding environment, we have to concentrate on what we can do. As educators, we have to rethink in our educational approach, reexamine our school facilities and learning conditions, and introduce change in perception of school management and more particularly in school leadership.

The writer expresses her views on the matter and offers recommendations to improve the dire situation. The writer sums up the possible effects of this phenomenon upon future society and the possible ramification of its spreading. She suggests certain measures that could be taken to harness and reduce dropout among school children in general and in the schools of the Arabic sector in Israel in particular.

**Key words:** dropout, crisis, motivation, ratio, phenomenon, school climate

### **Discussion**

Analysis of dropout phenomenon among youth in Israel reveals that it takes a different form among various segments of the youth population. Generally speaking, the dropout ration among Arabic youth is much higher compared to its ratio among Jewish youth. The dropout differentiation among certain segments of the Jewish youth

gives us a different angle regarding the entire phenomenon. The data showed that dropout ratio among new immigrants of certain countries is relatively higher than that among children of veteran Jewish population. The highest ratio of dropout within the Jewish population is found among immigrant from the Caucasus, while the highest dropout ratio among Arabic youth is found in the Bedouin segment of the Southern district.

The data gathered in my study revealed significant reduction in dropout ratio since the 1980s of the previous century. In fact, dropout ratio among Jewish youth decreased from an average of 20.5% to 4.5%, and dropout ratio among Arab pupils reduced from 48.7% which was the case in the 80ies of the previous century, to 20.7% today. <http://makomakan.cet.ac.il> [2010].

However, the data also revealed a considerable increase in latent dropout, which means that although the official numbers show reduction of the phenomenon, there is a clear increase in the ratio of children at risk of becoming dropouts. Those pupils are present in the school but they simply do not learn and there is no guarantee that they will return to the school after the summer.

These pupils "fall between the chairs": they are statistically included among those who attend school, but in fact they are "present absentees" who do not learn, do not participate in school activities, and if they keep quiet and manage not to call attention of peers or faculty, they remain unnoticed until somebody realizes that they submit no work and make no progress.

Unfortunately, these children are at risk, rather than destined to become contributive members of the society. They are going to add social problems since they did not obtain the skills and knowledge required today from their surrounding society.

Another worrying variable found in the study is that dropout is more common among pupils from low socio-economic layers and pupils from broken homes or single parent families. Dropout begins in latent dropout of pupils characterized with difficulties to adjust, low academic scores, and afflicted with truancy and behavior problems such as using addictive substances or involvement in criminal activities.

Table 1 shows significant statistical difference in dropout ratio according to residence location and gender:

**Table 1**

Average, standard deviation test F statistics and significance level of fallout according to gender and school type:

	School	Gender				Test F statistics significance level Of freedom grade
		Male		Female		
		Average	S Deviation	Average	S Deviation	
Fallout	Rural	1.09	0.65	1.57	0.86	(F(1,156)=11;P=0.001)
	Urban	1.70	1.10	1.97	1.10	
(F(1,156)=6.031;P=0.015)						(F(1,156)=0.425;P=0.516)

The writer of this article noticed that there is a higher dropout ratio among urban pupils compared to rural pupils, and there is a higher ration of dropout among girls, compared to boys. [[www.drroren.com](http://www.drroren.com)]

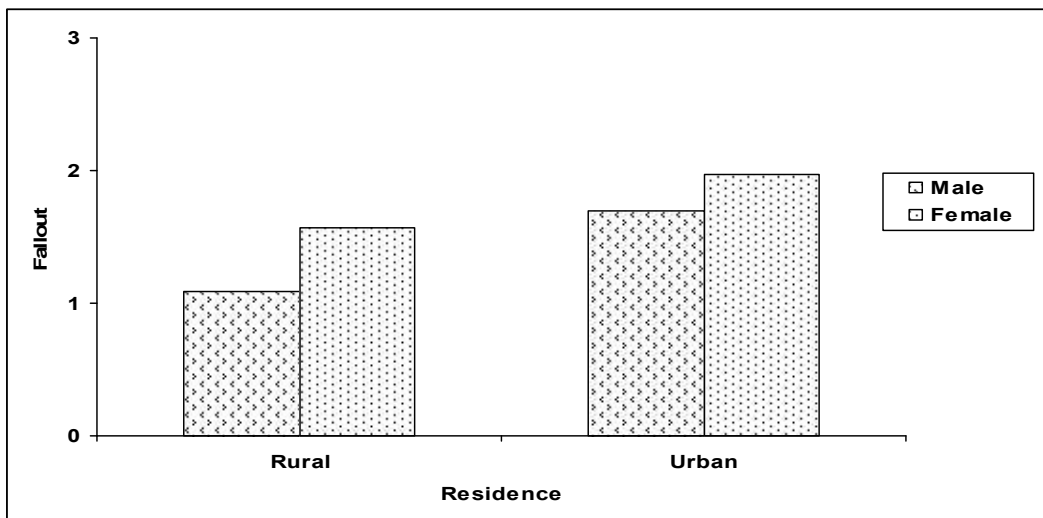
Another external factor affecting dropout found in the study is the school's location regarding pupils' exposure to environmental stimuli, which are abundant in urban area and almost non-existent in rural area. The city offers several stimuli to young people which, some of them can be in the immediate vicinity of the school. Some pupils cannot resist the temptation of a nearby mall, amusement park and other types of commercial center, while the rural pupil is only glad to exchange the dreariness of the village with the diversion offered by driving away with peers and the new horizons open to him by the school.

The above- mentioned factors are external ones that the system cannot ignore. These factors cannot be addressed by the school, but they should be brought into consideration whenever the issue is being discussed by school representatives and system officials, community factors and municipal authorities.

One major factor affecting pupils' dropout is the family pressure to leave school in order to help and contribute to its income. This aspect affects girls more than boys for the following reasons: a. girls are needed to baby-sit younger sibling and help the mother in various house chores, b. the fact that when a girl reaches 16, their heads may be elsewhere, since the family starts to discuss and suggest a suitable groom to be, due to time honored tradition of patriarchal society; girls are not expected to participate in extra-curricula activities and are less encouraged to seek higher education. Things are changing but slowly [[www.drororen.com](http://www.drororen.com)] [see the graph -1]

**Graph 1**

Fallout ratio according to gender and school type



Thus, reduction of dropout requires a cooperation of all factors involves\_ school management, community, municipal and government agencies

However, there are certain internal factors within the system that also contribute big time to the dropout phenomenon. The finding of this study revealed at least three major internal factors, the first one is related to the conditions and the other two are derived from school climate and interrelations. The following are the internal and external factors:

**A. Learning conditions:** They can be a major factor, especially if the facilities are inadequate, and the classes are overpopulated. In such conditions, the teacher cannot possibly pay attention to each and every pupil, and those who are in greater need for

help or encouragement may suffer the consequence. They may straddle behind and cling on for a while, and then some of them announce their disappointment, disrupt the entire class by creating a visible recognized problem.

On the other hand, when the case involves timid pupils, they might give up, become marginalized and eventually lose interest and turn into present absentees. These individual are pupils at risk since in fact they become "latent dropouts" long before they become official dropouts.

**B. Teacher-pupil relations:** A good teacher-pupils relations create mutual respect and trust. Teacher's accessibility to his pupils can prevent pupil's marginalization, a negative phenomenon leading to latent dropout. The heterogeneous structure of most current classes can challenge the teacher's professional expertise. However, a dedicated caring teacher notices a pupil in jeopardy. If the problem is academic difficulty, the teacher can arrange for the pupil to get some extra-curricula help.

A fairly-staffed school will have educational adviser and some backup mechanism for pupils with academic and/or learning difficulties. Sometimes the corrective measures require active involvement of the parents, while other solutions, including placement change, require parental consent. If a pupil's difficulty is noticed by the home teacher or any sensitive faculty member, it can be treated either internally or with the assistance of other involved factors.

Teacher-pupil relations are also affected by attitude, behavior, motivation and apparent efforts invested. Once the teacher realizes that a certain pupil does not participate, it is his duty to find out why. Unfortunately, in overpopulated class, the teacher might not be able to notice such problem in time, or might not have the tools the time or the opportunity to deal with the given problem. Therefore, it is the duty of the school management to provide teachers with support mechanism that will help them to take care of such problems and prevent such negative results.

**C. Social climate:** The school is a social entity sub-divided into smaller social units. The most common social unit is the class. The main difference found in this aspect between urban school and rural school is the scope of the social ties and the presence

of pre-recognized social status. Pupils in urban school have lesser previous social ties, and have no social ties at all with the faculty, while pupils and teachers in rural school come from the same community. Thus, in general, there is a higher sense of belonging among pupils, and a higher sense of responsibility among faculty members.

When the schools are graded according to academic achievements, educational values can get lower priority and internal social relations can deteriorate. The class does not function as social unit and there are no support mechanisms for pupils. Lack of social values such as considerations, attachment, sharing, cooperation and mutual respect damage the collective and the sense of belonging and commitment. Pupils can be abused verbally and physically by their peers; they can also be picked upon, become target to mockery, humiliation, harassment and bullying.

The school becomes unattractive for pupils who feel unpopular, disregarded, marginalized abused or insecure. They feel out of place, lose interest and want to go out. The findings of this study indicated that pupils who do not fit socially are at high risk to dropout from the system.

### **Summary**

Dropout is a complex phenomenon of diverse factors. As educators, we must recognize our options and limitations. To positively affect external factors we have to work and cooperate with several other state and municipal agencies since improvement of the situation requires change in priorities, regarding the allocated state and municipal resources.

However, positively affecting internal factors require changes which are within our realm. We need to introduce certain inner structural changes, and significantly improve school's climate. The school should thrive to create a supportive, challenging positive place for the pupils.

The school management should thrive to improve learning conditions and reestablish social and educational values that will provide the pupils a sense of belonging to the school as an organization, to a layer/ age group, and feel like accepted and respected members of their class. We have to nurture local patriotism and find ways to make the pupils proud of their school and class affiliation. Pride leads to satisfaction, loyalty

and willingness lead to contribute which, in turn, raise motivation to succeed, accomplish the goals and meet expectations. Therefore, it seems that the best way to reduce dropout is to revive social and educational values.



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