

THE PERCEPTIONS OF ISRAELI TEACHERS TOWARDS PISA- INTERNATIONAL TEST

Prof. Sara Zamir¹

Dr. Yael Cohen-Azaria²

¹ Achva academic College & Ben-Gurion University, Israel

² Ashkelon academic College, Israel

ABSTRACT

PISA test is a comparative international large-scale test which was founded and edited by OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). This test measures the achievements of pupils aged 15 in approximately 80 countries worldwide.

This study examined the perceptions of teachers in Israel towards PISA. The study have found that many teachers are ignorant of the nature and objectives of PISA. It is evident that the teachers are outside the circle of action associated with PISA.

Hence, the main conclusion of the study is that all interested parties, academics, teachers and administrators alike, must operate in reciprocity in order to shape the future character of the education system's graduate. This will not only change the Israeli education system's achievements but also may improve the face of future society.

Keywords: *PISA, OECD, teachers in Israel, education systems*

INTRODUCTION

PISA- The Program for International Student Assessment is a international examination by the OECD- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in member and non-member nations planned to evaluate educational systems by measuring 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading. It measures problem solving and cognition in those subjects. From an OECD perspective, the PISA results are exceptionally valuable because it supports the strategic framework for member states to reduce the number of underachieving pupils.

PISA test stems from the idea of accountability of educational systems which actually influenced and changed the face of education. Standards based on accountability (SBA) have become the basis of activity in educational systems in the world . Hence, structural organizational changes of schools have increased, and its management gained greater responsibility.

PISA was initially conducted in 2000 and then repeated every three years. Its aimed to provide comparable data with so that countries should adjust their education policies and outcomes [1].

According to The European Commission, Education and Training (2018) Some EU Member States have improved their performance over time, showing that reducing underachievement is possible. Estonia, whose education system is marked by a continuing willingness to improve, is the best performing EU Member State when looking at underachievers [2], [3].

PISA also makes it possible to analyze national performance by gender, socio-economic status, and immigrant background. The test's results also reveals the wide performance gap in reading that exists between pupils in general education and those in vocational programs. A migrant background also has negative effects on pupils' reading performance [4], [5].

The aim of the study has been to study the perceptions of Israeli teachers towards PISA international test. Hence the research questions have been as follow: what teachers know about PISA? what is their opinion about the test's reliability? what is their opinion about its relevance to the Israeli education system? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the test?

METHOD

The methodology which was applied in this study was a qualitative methodology based on the assumption that perceptions are best presented through people's own responses [6]. This methodology also combined quantitative approach for illustrative purposes as graphs.

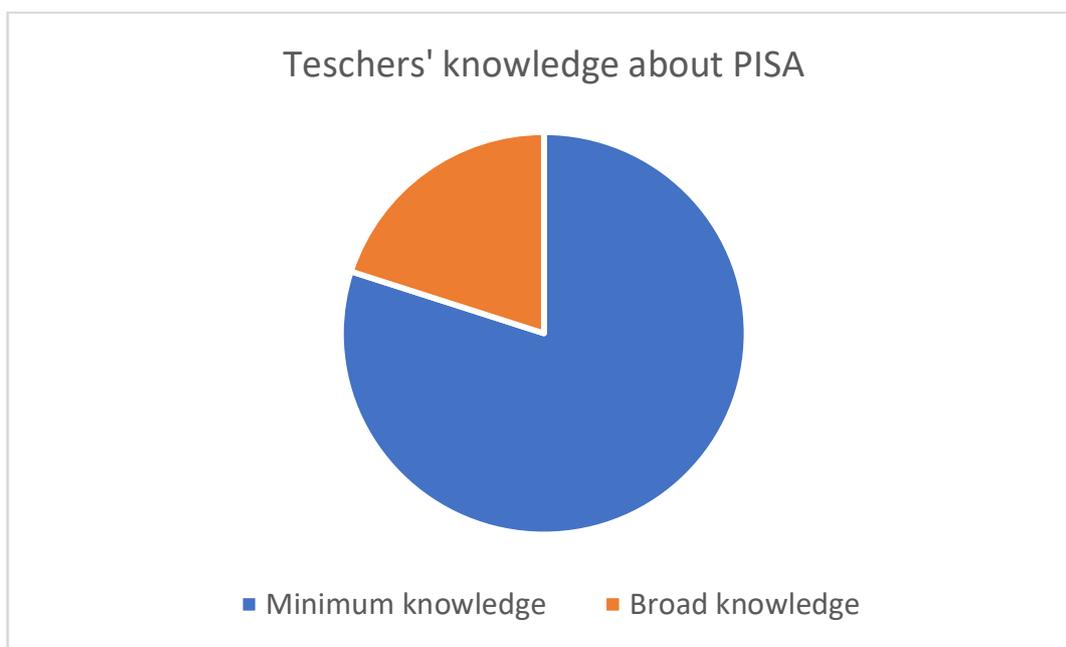
Research population: The study included 20 teachers from the state-general education system. Some were homeroom teachers and some are teachers of different disciplines.

Research tool: The tool was an open questionnaire aimed at answering the research questions.

RESULTS

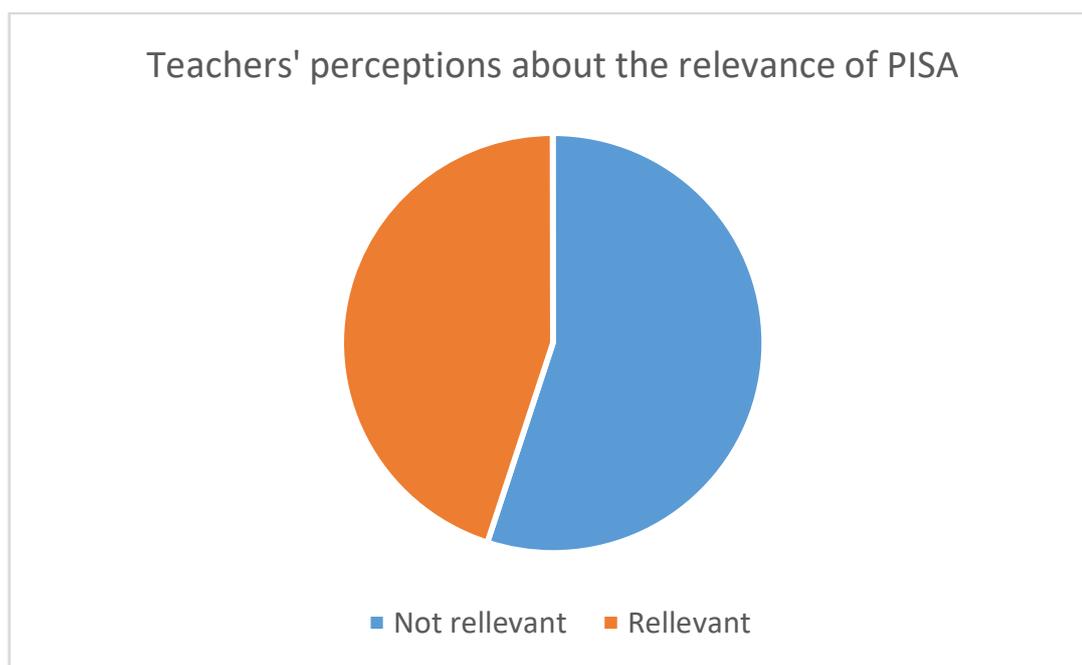
The study have examined what teachers know about PISA, what is their opinion about its reliability and its relevance for the Israeli education system, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the test.

* All graphics presented here were created by the authors Zamir, S. & Cohen-Azaria, Y. (authors' source).



Graph No. 1: Teachers' knowledge about PISA test.

Only 20% of the teachers in the study had broad knowledge about the essence of the test.



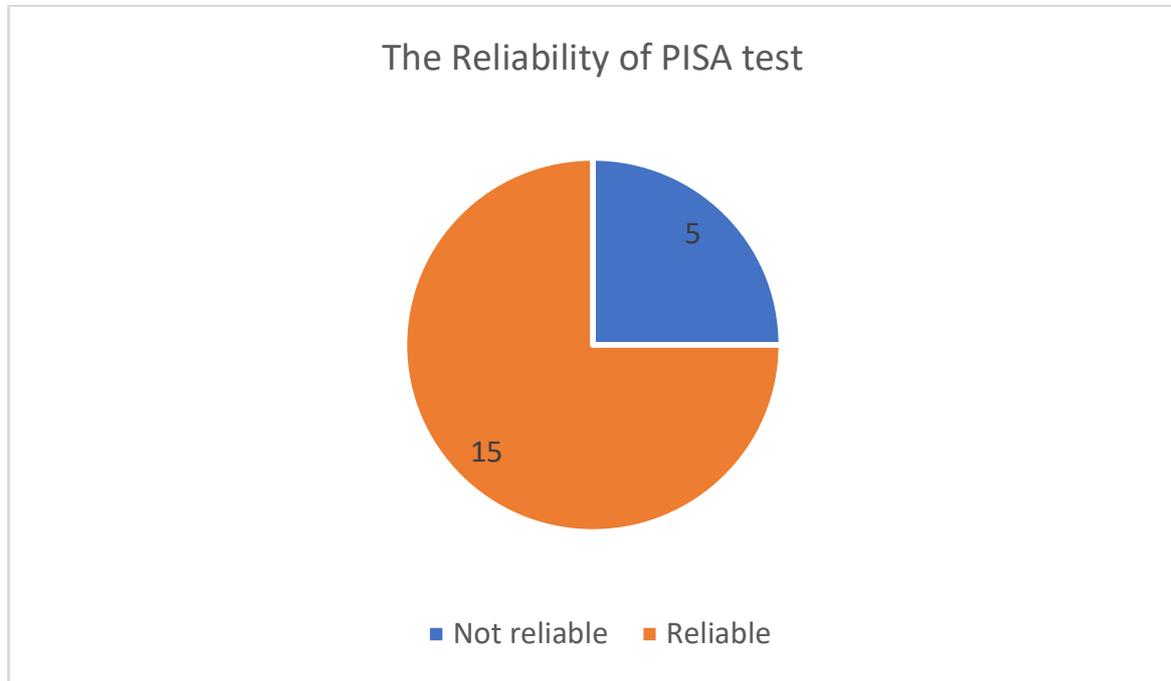
Graph No. 2: Teachers' perceptions about the relevance of PISA to the Israeli education system.

11 Teachers, which constitute 55% of all the teachers in the study, found the test of "Not relevant" to the Israeli education system.

Representative statements for irrelevancy: "Redundant ,educational achievements should not be measured according to international achievements ".

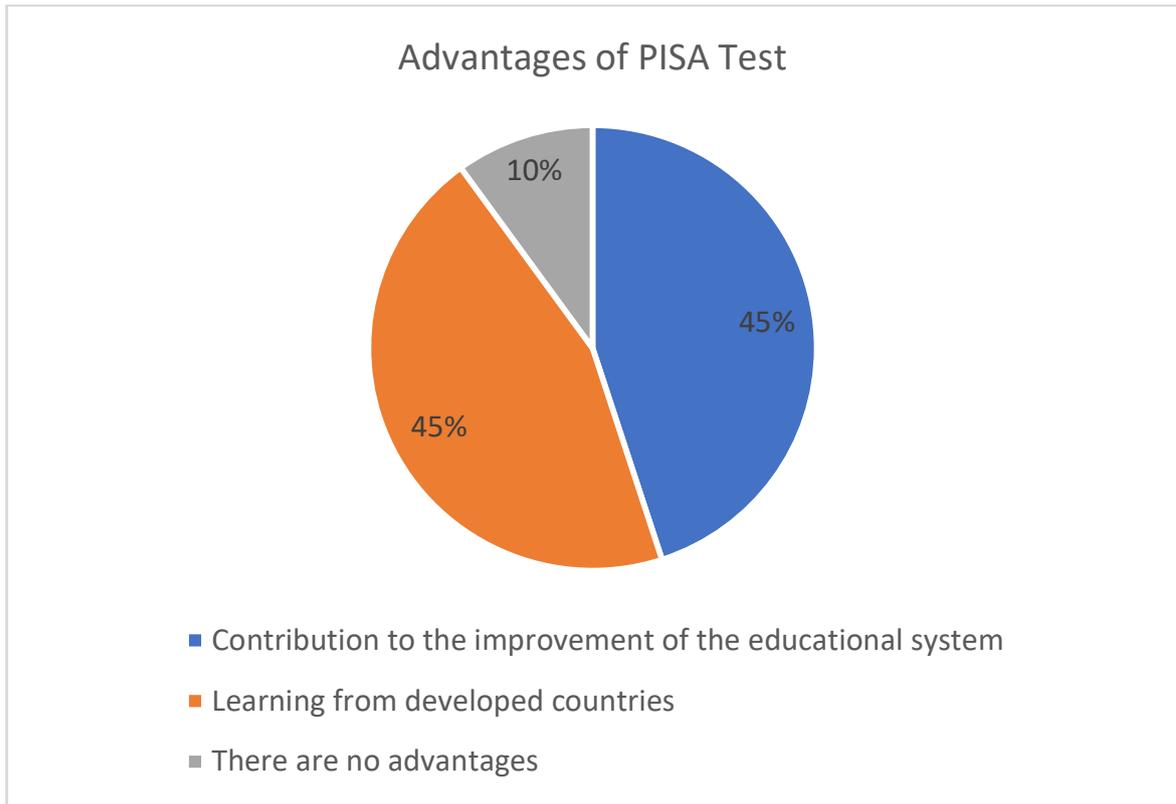
"There is no benefit from the lowest rating of Israel" & "PISA harms the morale of the education system".

Representative statements for relevancy: " One can learn from the results of the test and improve accordingly ". "Identification of weaknesses within the system ", "The test aims at high cognitive thinking levels."



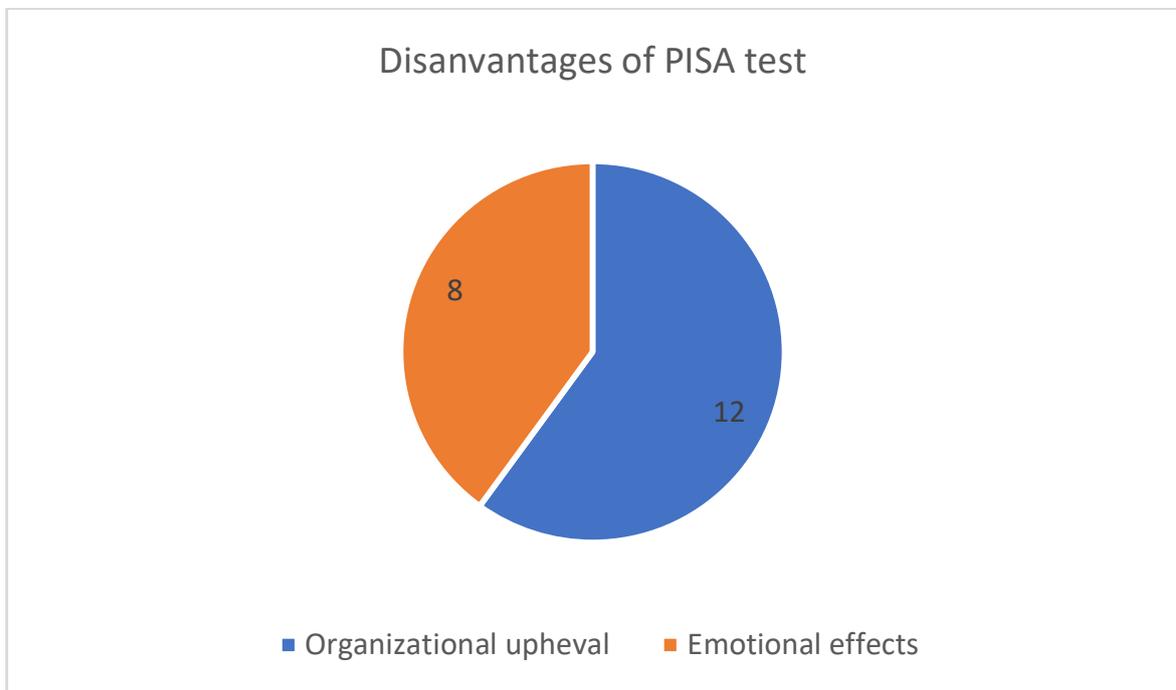
Graph No. 3: Teachers' perceptions of the reliability of PISA test

Most of the teachers found the test reliable. Representative statements of the subgroup that negated the test's reliability: "PISA does not reflect Israeli accomplishments", "PISA suits the educational systems in EUROPE".



Graph No. 4: Teachers' perceptions of the advantages of PISA test

Representative statements: "The test has beneficial impact on pedagogical achievements", "Pisa grants positive motivation for teachers".



Graph No. 5: Teachers' perceptions of the disadvantages of PISA test

Representative statements: "PISA puts pressure on teachers and pupils alike", " It causes redundancy of tasks", "It impairs the image of the Israeli education system".

DISCUSSION & CONCLLUSIONS

Till 2020, the PISA test has been conducted in Israel for six times. Evidently, the publicity of the low achievements of the Israeli students, in comparison to their peers abroad, exposed the general population in Israel to the educational meanings of the very test. The exposure to the low grades as well as the poor comparison tables increased the public's disappointment from the education system in Israel and created feelings of uneasiness among the Israeli teachers and educators. As a result, a great tension was created within and outside the education system to seek the guilty ones [7].[8].

The answers of the teachers in this study revealed ignorance concerning teachers' familiarity with the PISA test, its contents and its essence .Although the test was carried out six times in Israel, the teachers reported that they have not received proper training ,and no changes have been made in the realm of learning based comprehension. Many teachers were not familiar with the significance of the initials PISA as well as the test's aims and objectives. This data is connected to the fact that the teachers have not been real partners in processes associated to the essence and applicability of the PISA test.

Many teachers (n = 11), found the test of "Not relevant" to the Israeli education system. This misunderstanding of relevancy reflects the fact that most of the teachers do not feel part of the system's decision making concerning national and international tests.

The disadvantages cited by the teachers are far greater than the advantages of the PISA test and include both organizational as well as emotional disadvantages. This may be attributed to the burnout that teachers experience due to their piling responsibilities and tasks required from their educational role [9].

The encouraging data of the research stems from the fact that the vast majority of the teachers believe that the test is reliable. Trusting PISA'S reliability may strengthen the cooperation of teachers with the objectives and vision of the very test. Hence, it may also reduce their opposing responses towards it.

Currently, there are many successful educational systems around the world which significantly improved due to PISA's results & inferences.

Optimistically, the stakeholders of the Israeli education system would lead the system to an educational program according to PISA standards: Educating future graduate as a prepared individual in the 21st century, equipped with an

independent learning skills, able to investigate, study, implement and operate technological equipment in an efficient and quality manner.

REFERENCES

[1] McGraw, B (2008) 'The role of the OECD in international comparative studies of achievement' *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 15:3, 223-243.

[2] Dardanoni, V., Modica, S., and Pennisi, A. (2011). School grading and institutional contexts. *Education Economics* 19(5), 475–486.

[3] The European Commission (2018) *Education and Training PISA 2018 and the EU Striving for social fairness through education*

[4] Ammermueller, A. (2007). Poor Background or Low Returns? Why Immigrant Students in Germany Perform so Poorly in the Programme for International Student Assessment. *Education Economics* 15(2), 215–230.

[5] Ammermueller A. (2017). PISA: What makes the difference? Explaining the gap in test scores between Finland and Germany. *Empirical Economics*, 33, pp 263-287.

[6] Shkedi ,A. (2011) *The meaning behind the words :methodologies in qualitative research .Tel- Aviv :Ramot.* https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications_en (Last retrieved 15th June, 2020)

[7] Volansky, A. (2007). The price of standards. *Head of Education* (7), 28-31.

[8] Kliger, A (2013). International tests as standards for the education system. *Thoughts & deeds*, 15, 79-108.

[9] Rankin, J. (2017). *First aid for teacher burnout: How you can find peace and success.* New York: Routledge.