MOTIVATION, SATISFACTION, SUCCESS ATTRIBUTIONS AND CHEATING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MOROCCO

NAIMA BENMANSOUR

Abstract – *A self-report questionnaire was administered to 287 high school students to explore their perceived goal orientations, satisfaction with school, success attributions, and cheating behaviours and beliefs. Factor analysis procedures were used to establish the reliability of the scales. Students rated mastery goals higher than performance goals, and were more internal than external in success attributions; yet, they reported low levels of satisfaction with school. In addition, engagement in cheating and the belief that cheating is acceptable received high ratings. Correlational and regression analyses revealed that satisfaction with school was a negative predictor, and the attribution of success to luck a positive predictor, of the cheating variables. Finally, mastery orientation showed a negative relation with the cheating measures.*

Introduction

A number of studies in the United States and Britain have already revealed that the practice of cheating in schools is widespread and is on the increase. Steinberg (1996) reported that two thirds of the students in his sample indicated that they had cheated on a test during the previous year, and that nearly nine out of ten participants admitted that they had copied someone else's homework. Schabs (1991) examined changes in cheating over time. His findings suggested that beliefs about the prevalence of cheating as well as admissions of cheating increased over the past thirty years. To date, there are no data on the prevalence of cheating among Moroccan students. However, cheating is held to be widespread among adolescents in high schools. Over the three-year period of high school, these students study for the baccalaureate exams which involve two types of assessment: (1) formal examinations set twice a year by the academy and (2) continuous assessment set by the teacher. As a result, students are constantly under the pressure to compete for high grades, which may perhaps make some of them more vulnerable to cheating.

One of the primary concerns of research on cheating is to explain why it is that some students engage in cheating whereas others do not. Newstead *et al.* (1996) suggested that cheating was more common in men than women, more common

with less able students than more able ones, more common in younger students than mature ones, and more common in science and technology students than those in other disciplines.

Motivation and cheating

A number of studies have investigated the relation between cheating and students' motivation, in particular their goal orientations. Two main types of goal orientation have been identified in the literature (e.g. Ames and Archer, 1988). Mastery goals refer to the preoccupation with the mastery of new skills and knowledge, and performance goals to the preoccupation with good grades and outperforming peers.

Newstead *et al.* (1996) suggested that students' motivation, in particular whether they are studying to learn rather than simply to obtain good grades, is a major factor in explaining differences in cheating. Similarly, Anderman *et al.* (1998) examined the relations of motivational variables to self-reported cheating behaviours and beliefs in adolescents. The results indicated that cheating behaviours and beliefs were correlated positively to personal extrinsic goals and school performance goals, and were negatively related to personal and school mastery goals.

Beliefs about the causes of success and cheating

One area that has been given little attention is the possible link between cheating and beliefs about the causes of success. Attribution theory holds that individuals, in achievement situations, often attribute their successes and failures to factors such as ability, effort or luck. Weiner (1979) distinguishes different dimensions in the perceived causes of success and failure and recognises that causes can be seen as internal (within ourselves) or external, and can be considered as controllable or uncontrollable. Differences in the degree of internability or controllability of the reasons of an outcome are held to affect the expectations for the future. For example, students who attribute success largely to internal factors (e.g. high effort) are apt to hold higher expectations for success than those who emphasise external or less controllable factors (e.g. good luck). A number of studies have shown that internal ability appears to be associated with high academic achievement, intrinsic motivation, and strong achievement behaviour such as preference for challenge, persistence, time on task, and effective decision-making (Mcghee and Crandall, 1968; Rotter, 1966).

Although previous research has not emphasised the relation between success attributions and cheating, there is reason to believe that students who have an internal attributional style would be less likely to indulge in cheating than those who believe that success is caused by external factors such as luck. It is reasonable to expect that if students believe that success is caused by factors beyond their control – such as luck – they might withdraw efforts and view cheating as a viable means of survival.

Satisfaction with school learning and cheating

Another area that has been given little attention is the possible link between satisfaction with school learning and cheating. Calabrese and Cochran (1990) have looked at the relationship of alienation to cheating among a sample of American adolescents. They used three items to measure contextual alienation such as students' perceptions that their school or teachers are unfair, and four items to measure social alienation (e.g. living in a broken home, not attending church regularly). They found that contextual alienation was correlated with higher self-reported potential involvement in cheating but that social alienation was unrelated to students' unethical stance. One question that has not been addressed in this area of research concerns the relation between students' satisfaction with school learning and their reported engagement in cheating and their beliefs about cheating. There is reason to hypothesise that students who find their school work interesting and enjoyable are less likely to cheat or endorse cheating than those who experience boredom at school.

The purpose of the present study was twofold: First, to explore students' perceived satisfaction with school, goal orientations, beliefs about the causes of success, and cheating behaviours and beliefs. Second, to investigate the relations between self-reported cheating behaviours and beliefs and the other variables. It is hypothesised that students who report higher levels of satisfaction with school will be less likely to engage in cheating and to believe that cheating is acceptable. It is also predicted that those who attribute success to luck will tend to report greater engagement in cheating and higher endorsement of cheating.

Method

Subjects

A total of 287 students (150 boys and 137 girls) attending high schools in a large city in the western part of Morocco participated in this investigation. Participants were aged 16 to 18, were all studying for the baccalaureate degree and

were specialising in different areas like mathematics, sciences, economics or literature. They were drawn from three different schools: School A (a girls' school in the city centre), school B (a predominantly boys' school in the city centre), and school C (a mixed school in the suburbs).

Procedure

The questionnaires were written in Arabic, which is the medium of instruction in schools. They were administered during scheduled classes by the students' regular teachers. A note, attached to the questionnaire, explained the educational purpose of the study, stated that participation was voluntary, encouraged students to answer as honestly as possible, and assured them that their responses would remain anonymous. It was hoped to make the administration of the questionnaire as non-threatening as possible. The inventory took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

Measures

The questionnaire contained 38 items, and comprised scales for satisfaction with school, perceived causes of success, goal orientations, and cheating measures. The items were inspired by the literature and by the students' educational context. Principal component-analysis with varimax rotations were used to examine the structural validity of the instruments. The full set of measures, along with Cronbach's alpha coefficients, is presented in the Appendix.

Satisfaction with school. The students responded to eight items assessing their degree of enjoyment, interest or boredom experienced in school (e.g. *'I enjoy learning at school'*). These items were inspired by those developed by Duda *et al.* (1992).

Beliefs about the causes of success. Students were asked to respond to 15 potential causes of success in school. This measure incorporated four subscales assessing students' beliefs that achievement in school stems from (a) effort (e.g. *students are most successful if they do their very best)*, (b) ability (e.g. *students are most successful if they are capable)*, (c) luck (e.g. *students succeed if they are lucky)*, and (d) the teacher (e.g. *students are most successful if the teacher likes them)*.

Goal orientations. Two subscales were created for measuring goal orientations. The mastery orientation scale (four items) assessed students' interest in, and enjoyment of, learning in school (e.g. *'I feel most successful when I learn something I did not know before'*). The performance orientation (four items)

tapped students' concern with grades and demonstrating their ability (e.g. *'The main reason I do my school work is because we get grades'*).

Cheating measures. The students responded to two subscales. A 4-item subscale aimed at assessing their cheating behaviours in school (e.g. *'I use cheat sheets when I take exams'*), and a 3-item scale aimed at measuring their beliefs about the extent to which cheating is acceptable or serious (e.g. *'I believe that cheating is very serious'*). It is to be noted that the items selected for measuring cheating behaviours covered the facets of cheating which are widely recognised as the most typical acts of cheating in the context investigated.

Given that cheating is a sensitive area, it was pointed out by a number of researchers (e.g. Newstead *et al.*) that it is difficult to determine whether subjects give honest reports of their cheating behaviour. However, Calabrese and Cochran (1990) reported that a wide array of research on this issue consistently suggests that the self-report format produces reliable and valid measures of cheating. This is particularly true when confidentiality and anonymity are strictly guaranteed.

All items on the scales were presented in a five-point Likert format ranging from *'not at all true of me'* (1) to *'very true of me'* (5).

Additional measure. An open-ended question was added to the questionnaire, asking the students to write down their personal observations or comments. The aim was to give the students the opportunity to express themselves on any issue related to their own agenda, and also to gain naturalistic evidence that could potentially shed light on the quantitative results.

Results

In order to demonstrate the factorial validity of the scales used in this study, factor analysis procedures were applied to the items contained in each scale. The results revealed clearly the predicted dimensions. Scale-items items and reliabilities for all the measures are presented in the Appendix. Items of each scale were used to create composite scores. Means, standard deviations and reliabilities (Cronbach's a coefficients) are reported in Table 1. The percentage of respondents who rated items as 'always/mostly true of me' are also presented in Table 1.

Results indicate that mastery and performance goal orientations were given high ratings (always/mostly true) by 79 % and 58% of the students, respectively. These results suggest that whereas more than half the students exhibited a high performance orientation, the majority of them strongly endorsed the mastery goals. By contrast, students' levels of satisfaction with school were comparatively low. Only 22 % of the students seemed to be highly satisfied with school.

TABLE 1: Means, SD and percentage level of response of those who responded 'always true of me' and 'mostly true of me'.

Variable	% level of response	Means	SD	α
Cheating				
beliefs	21%	2.72	1.24	.75
behaviour	25%	2.83	1.22	.88
Satisfaction with school work	22%	3.14	.88	.87
Causes of success				
Effort	60%	3.94	.72	.64
Ability	53%	3.73	.87	.62
Luck	14%	2.47	1.09	.89
Teacher	33%	3.48	.87	.67
Goal orientations				
Mastery	79%	4.29	.58	.52
Performance	58%	3.79	.98	.79

Additionally, results show that the internal causes of success (effort and ability) were given high ratings (always/mostly true) by 60% and 53% of students, respectively. By contrast, the external causes of success (luck and teacher) received lower ratings (14% and 34%, respectively). On average students appeared to be more internal than external in their success attributions.

Interestingly, as shown in Table 1, a quarter of the students reported indulging in cheating 'always or mostly'. A slightly lower portion (21%) of students gave high ratings to the beliefs that cheating is acceptable. Such figures appear significant if we take into account that only 8% the students rated cheating behaviours as 'not at all true', and 13% reported that they did not believe at all in the acceptability of cheating. This implies that about 90% of the subjects reported more or less engagement in, and endorsement of, cheating. These figures appear much higher than those found in the study reported by Anderman *et al.* (1998) who reported that 39% of students from a middle school in the USA admitted that they cheated.

Gender differences

Differences between the genders reached significance only in respect of cheating behaviours, where males scored significantly higher than females ($t = 2.78$, $p < 0.006$). This finding is consistent with previous research (e.g. Calabrese

and Cochran, 1990; Newstead *et al.*, 1996) which showed that academic dishonesty is self-reported as occurring more often among males. It is worth noting that no significant difference between the sexes was observed on beliefs about the acceptability of cheating. goal orientations, satisfaction with school and success attributions. This suggests that whereas boys and girls exhibited similar beliefs about cheating and similar motivational and satisfaction levels, boys reported greater engagement in cheating. There seems to be no obvious reason for this difference. Newstead *et al.* (1996) suggested that males and females may indulge in similar amounts of cheating but that the males overreport their own cheating because 'it would be seen as the masculine thing to do to beat the system through dishonest means' (p.239). Another explanation for this difference is that females may be more reluctant to take risks than males.

Correlational analysis

The Pearson product-moment correlations between the cheating measures and the measures of students' goal orientations, success attributions, and satisfaction with school are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Correlations among the variables

Measure	Behav.	Beliefs	Satisfac.	Effort	Ability	Luck	Teacher	Mast.	Perfor.
Cheating									
Behaviours	–								
Beliefs	.61	–							
Satisfaction	-.39	-.43	–						
Causes of success									
Effort	-.09	-.18	.15	–					
Ability	-.6	-.19	.20	.35	–				
Luck	.30	.40	-.24	-.31	-.20	–			
Teacher	-.04	-.02	.04	.15	.12	.22	–		
Goal orientations									
Mastery	-.14	-.24	.28	.06	.16	.02	.05	–	
Performance	.01	.04	-.00	.05	.14	.02	.11	.06	–

Note. N=287. For $rs < .13$, $p > .05$. For $rs > .14$, $p < .01$. For $rs < 18$, $p < .001$.

As expected, these results indicate that higher scores of satisfaction with school were negatively related to self-reported engagement in cheating behaviours ($r = -.39$) and beliefs that cheating is acceptable ($r = -.43$). In other words, students who reported lower levels of satisfaction with school also reported greater engagement in, and stronger endorsement of, cheating.

Additionally, results in Table 2 indicate that the cheating measures showed distinctive patterns of relations with perceived causes of academic success. As predicted, perceiving that *luck* is the cause of success was positively related to higher reports of cheating ($r = .30$) and to beliefs that cheating behaviours are acceptable ($r = .40$). This suggests that those students who tended to attribute success externally to luck also tended to report greater engagement in, and endorsement of, cheating. In contrast, attributing success to the external causes of success *effort* and *ability* correlated negatively with beliefs that cheating is acceptable ($rs = -.18$ and $-.19$, respectively). Students who tended to attribute success internally to effort or ability were less likely to believe that cheating was acceptable. Effort and ability attributions for success were unrelated to cheating behaviours.

Finally, perceived mastery goal orientation was inversely related to self-reported involvement in cheating behaviours ($r = -.14$) and cheating beliefs ($r = -.24$). This suggests that mastery-oriented students tended to report less engagement in, and less endorsement of, cheating. This is consistent with Anderman *et al.'s* (1998) study which suggested that cheating behaviours and beliefs were negatively related to personal and school mastery. However, unlike Anderman *et al.'s* results which indicated a positive relation between personal extrinsic goals and cheating, the present study showed that the performance goal orientation and the cheating measures were unrelated.

Regression analysis

Hierarchically ordered regression analyses were conducted for cheating behaviours and cheating beliefs with the measures of satisfaction with school, success attributions and goal orientation as independent variables. The results of the regression are displayed in Table 3.

In accordance with predictions, it was found that satisfaction with school was a significant negative predictor of cheating behaviours and beliefs (betas $= -.34$ and $-.18$, respectively). In contrast, the external cause of success 'luck' was a significant positive predictor of cheating behaviours and beliefs (betas $= .24$ and $.35$, respectively). Further, mastery orientation predicted cheating beliefs negatively (beta $= -.27$). No predictive power was observed for any of the other independent variables.

TABLE 3: Regression Analyses (Beta Values)

| Independent | Dependent variable | |
Variable	Cheating behaviours	Cheating beliefs
Satisfaction	−.34*	−.18*
Luck	.24*	.35*
Mastery	−.06	−.27*
Ability	.02	−.05
Effort	.02	−.03
Teacher	−.01	−.07
Performance	−.00	.02
Multiple R	.46	.54

* $p < .001$

Results of the open-ended question

A total of 192 students (67% of the sample) responded quite substantially to the open-ended question. Generally, they were thankful that someone was interested in them. The responses were content analysed and two broad categories were identified: Students' unsatisfaction with various aspects of the school and the problem of cheating.

Four main sources of dissatisfaction with school were highlighted by the students: the curriculum, the teacher, the teaching procedures, and the evaluation system.

The curriculum seemed to be at the core of students' concerns. A total of 81 students reported that the curriculum was overloaded and too long to cope with. It was pointed out that teachers rarely managed to finish the programmes, despite the extra hours they provided students with, and that many of them resorted to giving students photocopies of the lessons that they did not have time to cover in class. The majority of respondents appeared to be overwhelmed by the great amount of knowledge they were expected to learn. Their reactions to the school curriculum are illustrated in the following two quotes, by a female student from school A, and a male student from school B, respectively.

> 'The huge quantity of lessons and chapters that we have to learn makes us forget the value of what we learn and what we want to learn. It is as though the aim is to make us dull or stupid.'

'The number of lessons and chapters that we have to assimilate is so great that we have no time left for exploring or understanding the material. So, we have to learn the lessons by heart, without understanding them. This is the high school policy: rote learning with no time for investigation, no room for discussion or understanding.'

Respondents also expressed their concerns about the quality of the curriculum. A total of 41 respondents thought that the contents of the curriculum did not come up to their expectations in terms of usefulness, interest and modernity, as expressed by three male students from school B:

'The school curriculum is not up to the standards. It relies on cramming our heads with lots of information required for the exams, without taking into account whether this information is of any use to students' education. The curriculum needs to be changed or at least reconsidered.'

'Certain subjects such as social studies are heavy, lack modernity and renewal, and as such they inspire us with boredom and disgust. We need to understand in detail what is going on now. We want the curriculum to be more up to date and more modern.'

''The curriculum is out of touch with real life and the outside world, and not in line with modernity and technological development.'

A total of 21 respondents reported that they were exposed to too many academic subjects, and that there was a lack of cultural, artistic and leisure activities, including information technology. They argued that such activities would help them explore new talents, widen the scope of their education and make it more in line with modern life.

Another major source of dissatisfaction for students was the teacher. Around 64 respondents stressed that the teacher played a crucial role in determining students' success and satisfaction with school. More than 40 respondents reported that their teachers did not fulfil their educational roles properly, in that they cared more about the curriculum than about their students' needs and interests. This view is illustrated in the following quotes by two male students from school B:

'Most teachers do not pay attention to students' problems, they simply think of ending up the syllabus in time. I wish that education in schools will become more caring and more motivating for students which is not the case now.'

'I believe that one of the reasons for the falling standards in education is that the teacher relies principally on providing students only with what is on the curriculum without discussing things with them. As a result, the students feel marginalised, on the periphery, and they do not care about what the teacher is saying.'

A further source of dissatisfaction highlighted by 30 respondents was the nature of the lessons themselves. These were thought to be based more on cramming students than on developing their creativity, critical thinking and free expression. In this respect, two male students from school C wrote:

'Some teachers do not consider us as adults capable of discussing issues and expressing our opinions with all objectivity. Rather they give their lessons as though they were dealing with pre-programmed computers.'

''The lessons we get are routinised and not stimulating, which incites some students to skip classes. We aspire to something new, to lessons that stimulate our curiosity and enhance our motivation to work harder.'

A total of 22 respondents highlighted teacher-student relationship in their responses. They suggested that a poor rapport can have devastating effects on the students. Three male students from school B expressed their respective views as follows:

'Some teachers, with all the respect I have for them, do not know how to behave intelligently with students. Teachers are educators, and their primary role is to understand their students' needs and problems. Exerting pressure on students does not solve a conflict but makes it worse.'

'I wish that teachers put themselves in students' shoes in order to realise the extent of the damage they inflict on their morale and aspirations. When teachers always blame and criticise students, they destroy their personalities and make them feel despised by their peers.'

'Teachers should stop being acrimonious, rebuking students and then leaving the class with an easy conscience. A good teacher is not expected to be a sharp critic, but a subtle psychologist.'

A total of 49 respondents raised the issue of cheating and gave full accounts of its prevalence and reasons. Cheating was perceived by respondents as

'something real and widespread' that can hardly be resisted, as a female student from school A wrote:

> 'I had always thought of myself as someone incapable of cheating at exams until I realised that most of the students, whom I know very well, including the most brilliant and hardworking among them, do indulge in cheating. So, on the day of the exam, I took with me my notes on 'human rights' which was the last lesson we did in class. When I looked at the exam question it was on 'human rights'. So even though I am a very timid person, I copied from the notes I had taken with me, and in the end, I obtained a better mark than the one I got before.'

Not only was cheating thought to be widespread, but it was considered to be part of the school culture, as expressed by a female student from school B:

> 'As a student who has experienced cheating in secondary school, I believe that cheating is a phenomenon that has developed on a large scale to the point that it has become natural for students not only to admit to cheating, but to be proud of it.'

A similar view was expressed by a male student from the same school:

> 'Cheating, by its widespread incidence, has become something normal and natural, something considered to be unquestionable, something that is part of student behaviour and experience.'

As noted by Newstead *et al.*, students who cheat tend to neutralise or rationalise their behaviour, blaming it on the situation rather than on themselves. Perhaps in an attempt to protect themselves from blame and from moral disapproval, respondents provided a number of reasons that they claimed 'forced them to cheat'.

The majority of respondents argued that indulging in cheating was a major strategy for coping with subject matters which required them to assimilate or memorise a huge amount of knowledge. In this respect, two female students from school B observed:

> 'Students who cheat in social studies and religious education deserve some compassion because these disciplines require the student to do the impossible, i. e., to absorb all the information in detail as it appears on the texts.'
> 'Why are teachers surprised when they find a student cheating at exams? How can this student absorb eleven or twelve disciplines

and in every discipline a great number of chapters and in every chapter a huge number of paragraphs?'

Most respondents claimed that one of the main reasons for cheating was to maximise their chances for success. In this respect two female students from school A observed:

'Nowadays, hard work and effort are no longer the recipe for success. Some students do nothing and do not participate in class. Yet, they achieve successful results. The answer is easy: they are champions at cheating strategies.'

'As soon as we get into the classroom, we write and write until we get exhausted. At the end we get the minimum explanation. What can we do? we resort to coaching, we work day and night, and what we get in the end? Results which do not meet our expectations at all. Now I imagine that everybody will understand why some students rely on cheating. This remains the only strategy or way to success.'

Obtaining good marks was another reason put forward as a justification for cheating, as is suggested in the following quotes by two female students from school B and A, respectively.

'I like learning new and interesting things, but at school, marks become an obstacle to this type of knowledge. So the students start to look for grades by any means, such as cheating.'

'Social studies, philosophy, religious education and Arabic take up a great part of our time and prevent us from devoting ourselves to scientific subjects. If we neglect them we risk having poor marks on them and thereby lowering our overall grade. As a result, students resort to unlawful means to get high grades in these subjects.'

Consistent with Newstead's (1996) finding, the fact that 'everybody does it' as a reason for cheating also emerged in the respondents' data. This view was captured by a student from school B who reported:

'When you see that cheating has become common, and that it is possible for all to reach their objectives, even if this achievement is relative, why can't you too relieve your stress and strain in just an instant in which you copy from a sheet of paper and the problem is finished?'

Similarly, peer pressure was cited as a justification for cheating, suggesting that those who do not participate in cheating may sense a high degree of estrangement from their environment. In this respect, a female student from school A wrote:

'Those who choose not to cheat expose themselves to criticism from their peers. Consequently, everybody draws away from them and they stay isolated.'

As shown by the following extract from a male student from school B, cheating was used as a way of beating the system.

'I don't think that cheating is the serious thing. What is serious is that, at the end of the year, teachers find it natural to make photocopies of the lessons they did not have time to cover in class and to distribute them to the students without any explanations. This incites students to cheat by taking those very photocopies to copy from during the exams.'

Around 18 respondents believed that cheating in school is unfair and should be eradicated in order to give students equal opportunities at exams. It was pointed out that those who cheated obtained results which they did not deserve and those who worked harder were not rewarded. In this respect, a male student from school C wrote:

'Some students think that cheating is one of their rights. This is wrong. No young generation, no nation can thrive through cheating. The eradication of this phenomenon calls for a radical change in the educational policy from its very roots.'

A total of 47 respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the evaluation system. They perceived the marking to be unfair, argued that examinations often aimed at testing students' memory rather their skills and real competence, and that very often results did not measure up to their expectations. They also pointed out that the examination standards differed from one academy to another, in such a way that students did not have equal opportunities for success, and for accessing higher institutions of their choice. They observed that even their future beyond the baccalaureate was affected by the system. On the whole, examinations seemed to be regarded with uncertainty and mistrust, as something beyond their control, subject to the vagaries of luck, and in which effort was not a guarantee for success.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of the present study was: (1) to explore students' perceived levels of goal orientations, satisfaction with school, success attribution, and cheating behaviours and beliefs; (2) to examine the relation between the cheating measures and the other variables.

Results indicated that more than half of the students investigated appeared to pursue performance goals, but the great majority of them tended to be highly oriented towards mastery goals. This suggests that despite their great concern with grades, students seemed to place a high value on learning for its own sake. With regard to success attribution, students exhibited an internal style by giving more credit to effort and ability than to teacher and luck. However, students' perceived levels of satisfaction with school did not seem to match their high motivational profile. Only about one in five students reported high levels of satisfaction with school. This finding was largely supported by evidence from students' responses to the open-ended question. All respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with various aspects of school learning. The most frequently mentioned sources of dissatisfaction had to do with the curriculum, the teacher, the teaching approach and the evaluation system.

Cheating was reported to be common among students, as one in four students reported high levels of cheating, and only 8% of students reported never engaging in cheating. Evidence from students' responses to the open-ended question lent support to the widespread incidence of cheating, and also revealed that students provided a number of reasons to justify their cheating behaviours. The most common reasons were coping with curriculum overload and memorisation, obtaining higher grades. and maximising the chances for success.

Satisfaction with school emerged as a negative predictor of cheating behaviours and beliefs. Students who reported higher levels of dissatisfaction also reported greater engagement in cheating and believed that cheating was somewhat acceptable. Presumably, if the students cannot cope with the pressures placed on them by the curriculum, the evaluation system and the increased standards to enter university, they may become disaffected with the system and alienated from school and from their studies. This may create an environment in which unethical behaviour is viewed as acceptable since it is perceived to be correlated with survival. This finding is consistent with Calabrese and Cochran's (1990) study which suggested that alienation from school, may be a major factor in explaining academic dishonesty among adolescents. This would imply that if students become disaffected with a school system, they may adopt an attitude that ignores community interests, and places a priority on personal concerns.

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Additionally, luck emerged as a positive predictor of cheating behaviours and the belief that cheating is acceptable. In situations where they become persuaded that effort does not pay, that examination results are subject to chance and uncertainty, students may withdraw their efforts and attribute success to luck in order to protect their self-esteem. In the face of threatening situations, they may resort to any means available including cheating. This view is reflected by a male student from school B who wrote:

> 'I believe that students should not rely on what they memorise for the exams, but also on what is referred to as cheating, and on luck as well. The fact is that there are some students who strain themselves through hard work in learning their lessons, but they do not achieve well, whereas those who do not even attend classes regularly outperform the others because they rely on luck and cheating.'

Results in the present study also revealed that mastery orientation was a negative predictor of beliefs that cheating is acceptable. Mastery orientation was also negatively associated with cheating behaviours and beliefs. Students who reported higher mastery orientation tended to report less engagement in cheating.

Overall, the students investigated showed high levels of intrinsic interest in learning, and expected the curriculum to be more in line with modernity, with reality, and with the outside world. They also argued for a curriculum that enhanced their critical thinking and creativity, and helped them develop new talents and interests through extra curricular activities. However the educational environment did not seem to match their strong motivation for learning and for personal development. Results suggested that students were disaffected with school and the educational system as a whole. Respondents to the open-ended question observed that emphasising quantity over quality and memorisation over thinking skills and creativity was counterproductive and contributed little to the students' education and personal development.

In order to meet students' needs and help them develop positive attitudes towards school, there needs to be a move away from a knowledge transmission and reproducing approach to education, towards an approach which takes a wider view of what education is all about, and which places the learner at the centre of the educational process.

In the first place, the curriculum needs to be more appealing to the students, and more in line with their reality. The link between what is being taught and the outside world needs to be made more prominent for the learners. In addition, extracurricular activities need to be introduced in order to humanise schools and

offer learners alternative ways of achieving their potential without being concerned about grades and examinations.

·Teachers and examiners need to place less emphasis on memorisation processes and consider ways of stimulating learner thinking skills, creativity, and the ability to see reality from more than one perspective. Deeply engaging activities such as problem-solving are more likely than recall tasks to boost students' interest in their school work.

Educating the *whole person,* including the cognitive and affective side of the learner needs to be one of the primary goals of school education. This implies providing learners with a nurturing environment which promotes their self-actualisation and personal growth. A caring environment is likely to enhance learners' sense of belonging and reduce their feelings of alienation from school.

If the students perceive the educational environment to be more in harmony with their needs and interests, and more in line with their views about what education is all about, they will perhaps develop more positive attitudes towards school and become less vulnerable to cheating. These issues are of a central importance and need to be addressed in future research.

Naima Benmansour *is a lecturer in foreign language teaching and learning at the Faculty of Education, University Mohamed V Souissi, Rabat, Morocco. She has wide experience in teaching English as a foreign language and in training teachers of English. Address for correspondence: 47. Cité Ambassador, Rabat 10 000, Morocco. E-mail: nbenmans@yahoo.fr*

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APPENDIX

Scales and Reliabilities

School cheating

Cheating behaviours (4 items; $\alpha = .88$)

I copy answers from other students when I do my school work.
I copy answers from other students when I take exams.
I exchange information with other students when I take exams.
I use cheat sheets when I take exams.

Cheating beliefs (3 items; $\alpha = .75$)

Cheating is something very serious
Cheating in exams may be acceptable.
It is natural, in some circumstances to cheat at the exams.

Causes of success

Luck (4 items; $\alpha = .89$)

Students get good grades if they are lucky.
Students succeed if they are lucky.
The type of grades students get depends on how lucky they are.
Passing exams is a question of luck.

Teacher (4 items; $\alpha = .67$)

Students are most successful if the teacher encourages them.
Students are most successful if the teacher gives them the experience of success.
Students are most successful if the teacher likes them.
Students are most successful if the teacher is competent.

Effort (4 items; $\alpha = .64$)

Students are most successful if they study well.
Students are most successful if they try again and again.
Students are most successful if they do they very best.
Students are most successful if they rely on their efforts.

Ability (3 items; $\alpha = .62$)

Students are most successful if they are capable.
Being successful is a question of ability.
Students are most successful if they are intelligent.

Satisfaction with school *(8 items; α = .87)*

I usually find school enjoyable and interesting.
I enjoy learning at school.
I enjoy doing my schoolwork.
I usually get really involved when I do my schoolwork.
I feel bored at school.
At school I usually wish time would end quickly.
I usually come to school because I have to.
At school I often daydream instead of paying attention.

Goal orientations

Performance (4 items; α = .79)

I feel successful when I get better grades than my peers'.
The main reason I do my school work is because we get grades.
I feel good when I do better than my classmates.
The most important thing for me is to get good grades.

Mastery (4 items; α = .52)

I feel most successful when I learn something I did not know before.
I feel most successful when I understand things that interest me.
The main reason I do my school work is
Discovering new things is more important to me than the grades I get.