Abstract

The aim of this literature case-study review is to present the unique solutions taken by principals of schools with socially marginalized student populations to overcome these problems. This is a review of three qualitative case studies of principals: (1) a principal of a Jewish school with children of migrant workers who were ignored by the State; (2) principals in a Jewish-Arab city who organized to act against city-hall corruption; (3) the struggle of Arab high school principals against favoritism in the appointment of teachers. The principals initiated pedagogical innovations to promote their students' achievements. When encountering resistance from school environment, they cooperated with local organizations for financial support. Then they struggled to change local and state laws and regulations by mobilizing the media, the legal and political systems and Third Sector organizations. Most principals acquiesce to authorities' demands. These principals defied the system thus redefining their role from organizational (school) leaders to community leaders. Principals should view their work as political in nature and form their own association to support each other.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center

Keywords: marginalized population; transformative leadership; struggle; cooperation.

1. Introduction

The aim of this review article is to present cases of principals who struggled to change their school through changing laws and regulations of State or local authority. Educational systems serve to inculcate social values that reflect the interests of the dominant groups in society (Ball, 1998). These hegemonic values are presented as neutral (Riehl, 2000), 'taken-for-granted', universal, free of class interests and of conflict (Borg & Mayo, 2002). This results in a contradiction between formal policy statements that carry a promise for equal scholastic opportunities that principals are held accountable for (Ross & Berger, 2009) on the one hand, and a real-life situation of increasing
socio-economic gaps, and cultural diversity of students on the other. Principals are recruited to implement policies derived from these hegemonic interests and values (Aronowitz, 2002; Fischman & McLaren, 2005). Principals, therefore, are usually conservative and oppressive (Foster 1986; Evers & Lakomsky, 1991). But faced with this contradiction, some principals take it upon themselves to lead their school to serve the interests of their socially marginalized students; The questions that arise are: how do principal mobilize the cooperation of factors outside the school? how do principals cope with the authorities (local and government) to achieve their goals?

2. The Israeli context

Israeli society is culturally diverse and has ideological conflicts (Peres and Ben-Rafael, 2006). In addition, it is a society of widening economic gaps (Kashti, 2012). It includes various Jewish ethnic groups, various Arab groups and, recently, migrant workers and refugees. Schisms exist mainly between Jewish secular and religious, and between Jews and Arabs. Arabs constitute approximately 20% of the population of Israel. They live mainly in Arab localities in the geographic periphery, and in some Arab or mixed Jewish-Arab cities, and are poor (Arlozorov, June 2013).

This diversity is reflected in the sectorial separation in the educational system of Jewish --- secular, orthodox and ultra-orthodox --- with most state-funded schools having varying degrees of compliance to the national core curriculum (Gibthon, 2011); and the Arabs, (and Druze and the Bedouin having separate Arabic-speaking public schools); the Arab elite attend Christian private schools (Buchman and Park, 2009),

In spite of the cultural sectorial separation, the educational system was centralized, with elementary schools controlled by the Ministry of Education, and state high schools being administered by the local authority. Since 1987 there has been decentralization; this occurred, inter alia, as a response to the demographic diversity. This policy was detrimental to marginalized populations because it shifted responsibility and power from the State to the local arena, and left principals alone, without support, to confront the conflicts that now emerged on the local scene, thus disempowering the principals (Gavish & Addi-Raccah, 2010).

3. The three cases of leadership reviewed

The three cases of leadership in Israel described below were studied in different times. (a) A multicultural school with undocumented children (children of migrant workers and refugees staying illegally in the country) (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002). The school is located in a poor neighborhood in the largest city in the country. Undocumented workers settled in that neighborhood in the early 1990s and formed communities, and their children began to attend the local elementary school in the late 1990s. At first, these children were ignored by the Ministry of Education because they were undocumented; and they were not accorded any civil rights because they were neither Jews nor Arab citizens. In 2002 the school was merged with a local high school and a local kindergarten into a K-12 campus. The undocumented students were then recognized, but recently refugees from Africa appeared in school facing the same problems of being rejected by society and ignored by the State. (b) The city-wide project (Eden & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2002): was initiated in the late 1990s by the Ministry of Education as part of a decentralization policy and aimed at improving the entire local educational system in low-to-middle SES localities, with each locality identifying its own needs. It was implemented in one Jewish-Arab city in the north, in full partnership with local parents and other stakeholders. It included the establishment of a city-wide Principals' Forum, consisting of the principals of all sectors and levels, to lead the city educationally together with the Parents' Association (c) Arab high school principals from different localities in the north (Eden & Shibli, 2008), in which the principals struggled against the intervention of local officials, although they are employed by the local authority. Local politics are important in the Arab community. This leads to favoritism and nepotism, and is manifest in rewarding political supporters and clan members by granting them employment in schools ("jama'at-el ra'iss" - meaning "friends of the boss" in Arabic). This is more visible in small, rural, high-unemployment Arab localities in which the mayors have widespread rights due to historical political reasons (Al Haj, 1996), and because of the clan social system.

The principals were confronted with resistance from their environment (including stakeholders, educational and State policies or laws), which they perceived as an obstacle to the implementation of their goals to secure rights and equal opportunities for education. As a result, the principals had to organize for support and collaboration, and
struggled against the resistance of other constituencies. Thus they redefined their role and extended it from being organizational leaders who aspire to transform their school, to social leaders aspiring to transform their society (Beabout, 2014; Khalifa, 2012; Cortes, 2010).

4. Methodology

Three methods were used in the qualitative case studies that are reviewed here: (1) interviews, (2) observations, and (3) documents.

The first study on the multicultural school is based on (a) interviews with ten staff members, including two with the principal, and with teacher-students who do their practice in school, (b) observations of teachers in their classrooms, of teachers in the teachers' lounge and observations of teacher-parent meetings, (c) newspapers. The second study on the city-wide project is based on (a) personal knowledge of the two authors who were involved in the implementation of the project, (b) in-depth interviews with fifteen principals involved in the project and two principals not involved in the project, with the consultant hired by the Ministry of Education to work with the principals, (c) correspondence of the consultant and of the principals with government officials and with the mayor. The third study on the Arab high school principals is based on in-depth interviews with sixteen principals, living in fifteen different localities. The work yielded a process of awareness of the principals, actions taken and a counter hegemonic role redefinition.

5. Findings

The actions of the principals reviewed here show a process of actions that the principals took. The pedagogical innovations that were studied will not be brought here as they are beyond the scope of this review.

5.1. The circumstance: Contradiction between educational policy and school practice

The three cases emerged as a result of a contradiction between official policy statements and of everyday reality in their school that conflicted and was detrimental to their socially marginalized students.

5.1.1. Multicultural school

The contradiction is between two values: the particularistic Zionist ideology that grants citizenship only to Jews (as well as to Israel's Arab residents) on the one hand; and, on the other, the democratic universal values manifested in the Law of Compulsory Education (1949) that requires all children to attend school. The law therefore applied to undocumented children but they were ignored by the Ministry of Education in other aspects, such as finance and pedagogy. Only in 2002 these children, aged six who attended school, were granted full citizenship and their parents were granted Permanent Resident status, due to a political change and to the actions taken by the principal.

5.1.2. City-wide project

The contradiction here is between the statements of decentralization policy and the practical reality of the principals. The decentralization policy of 1988 aimed at empowering local schools by granting them pedagogical autonomy, but with budgeting coming partly from the Ministry of Education and partly from local taxes. In reality it had two negative effects on schools: (a) the difficulty of the low-SES localities to collect sufficient taxes to maintain the schools (Volansky, 2003); and (b) decentralization disempowered school principals vis-à-vis their local authority (Addi-Raccah & Gavish, 2010). Local authorities withheld the money which they received from the Ministry of Education for school use, and used it instead to pay debts due to poor management or corruption in the locality. As a result, the schools were not renovated and physical maintenance was halted. At a later stage a law was passed that rectified the situation.
5.1.3. Arab principals

The contradictions are between universalistic rules of the State on the one hand, and the particularistic practices of favoritism and nepotism used by the local authorities, practices that are sometimes accepted passively by the State for larger political reasons which grant local authorities even more power (Eden and Shibli, 2008). The principals develop their own professional agenda, which sometimes collides with that of the local authority. The result is that some principals resort to drastic measures. This is an ongoing situation.

5.2. Role perception of the principals: Moment of realization

At a certain moment in the early stages of their work the principals realized that the official policy of equity did not work for the benefit of their students. This moment led them to understand that they could not continue as they had planned. This led to the ensuing actions they took.

5.2.1 Multicultural school

The moment of realization occurred when the children of migrant workers were ignored by the educational system, and their names were ejected from the Education Ministry's computer lists. Thus the school was not allocated funds for them. The principal had to accept these children because of the law of Compulsory Education, but was given no financial resources for them, and the national medical insurance that is provided to all students in the country did not cover them. This resulted in what the principal viewed as a discriminatory policy of the State.

5.2.2. City-wide project

The moment of crisis occurred in the project. When the principals met for the first time with their project consultants, they all realized that their problem was of a political nature and not personal. They asked the consultants to teach them how to act politically against their municipality. Thus the first gathering served as a consciousness-raising meeting that resulted in political actions.

5.2.3. Arab principals

After their appointment, the principals were asked by the mayor and local authority officials to comply with the instructions of the latter; these included appointing political supporters as teachers, firing qualified teachers because they opposed the mayor, or revoking decisions regarding students' behavior and grades, by request of parents who supported the mayors. The local authorities withheld the teachers' and principals' salaries and pension payments, and withheld money from the schools. The principals realizing that nobody would assist them, decided to defy the system that appointed them, namely the local authority.

5.3. Principals' actions

The analysis of principals' actions is taken from organization theory. The strategies that the principals used are analyzed according to Pfeffer & Salancik's Resource Dependence theory (1978) as it deals with actions that managers use in their interactions with the external environment for the survival of their organization. It suggests four strategies that organizations use vis-à-vis their environment: (a) buffering strategies (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003), (b) cooperation and coordination with stakeholders (Bogess, 2010) to create their community; (c) co-optation and coalition-building (Cortes, 2010; Khalifa, 2012; Beabout, 2014) and (d) defiance. When initiating change that constitutes "unequivocal rejection of institutional norms and expectations" (Oliver, 1991:157), schools may face resistance from some stakeholders. Then principals will seek the mediation of government agencies or larger social systems to overcome difficulties; via the law and social sanctions, they will defy, attack and threaten
the environment. The principals in this study used three strategies: (a) cooperation, (b) coalition building and (c) defiance of State and local authorities.

5.3.1. Building a community through cooperation

5.3.1.1. Multicultural school

The principal gathered the PA, and convinced them to accept the migrant workers who had settled in the neighborhood. Since then, the PA has met with her regularly on all matters relating to the school. Second, the principal made an agreement with the police that they would not arrest undocumented migrant workers who brought their children to school. She also came to an agreement with a nearby supermarket manager to give her bread, jam and tea for free, to feed the poor students. Another source of support was the municipality. Although not funded for it, the mayor allotted money for the school.

5.3.1.2. City-wide project

The principals worked cooperatively, overcoming existing structural sectorial divisions and hostilities such as those between secular and religious Jews, and between Jews and Arabs. The principals' Forum acted as a mediator in disputes that emerged between principals and parents, or between one principal and the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, when the principals received control of the money owed to them they established an alternative way of allocation, i.e., a city-wide pool instead of a per-school allocation, and allotted it according to the needs of the schools. Thus they allotted extra money to an Arab school as an affirmative action.

5.3.1.3. Arab principals

The new programs consisting of hi-tech selective and prestigious tracks were based on partnership with universities. These innovations required highly competent and educated teachers to be selected according to professional qualifications and not teachers whose qualifications are being "jama'at-el ra'iss". The principals also cooperated with the Parents' Association of their school on a regular basis on matters of school policy. Principals also approached local businesses to assist with the physical maintenance of the school. The principals further established an alumni association that donated money to the school. In one case, a graduate received a donation of $2 million for the school from a relative in Qatar.

In all three cases the principals cooperated with the parents' associations regularly. In addition, they approached other factors in the community with whom principals seldom cooperate. In addition, they established relations with local factors. However, this cooperation was insufficient to overcome resistance from officials, so that the principals resorted to building a coalition against them within and outside their community.

5.3.2. Coalition-building

The principals sought to establish coalitions with institutions outside the community, and to make demands on officials (local and State).

5.3.2.1. Multicultural school

Through working with the PA (Parents' Association), the principal reached, legislators, politicians and NGOs to lobby for the legal recognition of the undocumented children, as the principal was not allowed to do it directly being a State official.

5.3.2.2. City-wide project
The principals cooperated with the PAs in a struggle with their local authority's debts to the schools. They also made an alliance with the local Director of Education Department who is a city official.

5.3.2.3 Arab principals

The PAs helped the principals obtain resources from the local authority when the latter tried to block school funds and they confronted the mayor. Sometimes the principals approached the community dignitaries to make a Sulha (a formal meeting to broker peace between the rival parties, but the conflicts emerged again later on another issue (Eden & Shibli, 2008).

5.3.3. Defying the environment

In their struggle to change policies and practices, all the principals mobilized support from other environmental constituencies that had a coercive power over the local authority and the Ministry of Education.

5.3.3.1 Multicultural school

The principal contacted newspapers and invited national TV to her school to achieve saliency and awareness of the larger society to the problem. Concurrently, she appealed to the Minister of Education directly and indirectly through other people, to national politicians such as the Minister of Education and Knesset (Parliament) members, asking them to change State laws so that these children could be acknowledged and financed.

5.3.3.2 City-wide project

The principals demanded that the municipality give them control of the money owed to them. They threatened to bring about forfeiture of everything the city officials have - their cars, their money. They also wrote to politicians and burst into meetings of the mayor with State politicians in the City Hall, demanding that the mayor inform them of the money due to them from the Ministry, and that he forward it to them promptly.

5.3.3.3 Arab principals

Some defiant principals approached the Ministry of Education, but the latter ignored them as it had done in other cases (Khattab & Ibrahim, 2006; Lieberman, 2011). The principals approached politicians, wrote articles in newspapers, invited national Hebrew-speaking TV to their schools, thus spreading their cause over to the larger society; they also sued their local authority in court, in an attempt to change the local authorities' practice of favoritism (Labor Court, 54/252-3, 1995; Labor Court 55/30-14, 55/50-5, 1995). Some principals received assistance from the National Union of Teachers in cases of unjust firing of teachers by mayors.

5.3.4. Defining a counter-hegemonic role

The principals became aware of the contradictions impeding their efforts. In the process they developed a philosophy with various degrees of awareness and coherence, but with a clear instrumentality.

5.3.4.1 Multicultural school

The principal developed a philosophy which mainly asserts that all children are entitled to equal rights regardless of their parents' legal or economic status, which she defined as "a child is a child is a child"; and that teachers' technical proficiencies and their ability to be empathetic and caring (Noddings, 1984) are equally important. She challenged her role as it is defined by the Ministry of Education and extended the boundaries of the educator as anything that affects students' well-being and influences their performance in class. Thus she shifted her commitment from the system to the child.
5.3.4.2. City-wide project

The principals redefined their role as community-educational leaders who should decide how to run the local educational system by having control over the allocation of the Ministry's money and by fighting corruption, instead of the local authority. Their other achievement is overcoming hostilities and cooperation between Arabs and Jews.

5.3.4.3. Arab principals

The principals extended their vision beyond the school, and sought to modernize and democratize their society (locality) by objecting to the mayors' attempts to use schools for political expediency and by stating that they need to be a democratic society. To sum up, all the principals created a philosophy that extended beyond their prescribed role of school leaders and positioned them as leaders of their community.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this review article was to present cases of school leadership acted against the authorities for the benefit of their students. They redefined their role from organizational leaders to community leaders who attempted to change the hegemonic forces in society. By doing so, they assumed the role of transformative intellectuals who formed a counter hegemonic philosophy (Gramsci, c2009). Educators serve as intellectuals transmitting a hegemonic social order that presents education as a neutral, professional-technical matter (Greenfield, 1985) that ignores conflict and power struggles and the political nature of education (Borg & Mayo, 2002). However, sometimes when principals are faced with a contradiction in their work in schools of marginalized populations, the principals themselves undergo a change. In these situations educators experience 'liberating memories' (Giroux 1988), in which they discover that schools are aimed at perpetuating the existing social and political arrangements. Then they cease to be technical professionals and become 'transformative leaders'; that is, people "who can express emancipatory possibilities and work towards their realization (Giroux and McLaren, 1986, p. 215). At this moment they can paradoxically serve as 'organic' intellectuals who give a voice to marginalized groups and act to transform education and society, shape school policy, define educational philosophies, and work with their communities. They articulate a counter hegemony (Gramsci, c2009), that is, an alternative worldview that would transform society (Cipolle, 2004). The principals created a counter-hegemonic world view in two ways: First, starting with pedagogical innovations; Second, they redefined their work from being neutral-professional to political in nature, involving coalition building, and defiance of the institutions that employ them. Despite their awareness and sense of mission, in none of the cases did the principals manage to mobilize the entire community and put it together to strengthen its capacity and to empower it.

This review presents three cases that occurred in a specific context, that of the Israeli society, but they have implications to all principals, as all principals face the dilemma of perceiving their role as technical or to challenge their prescribed role and become social agents (Giroux 1988).

References

Addi-Raccah, A., & Gavish, Y. (2010) The LEA's Role in a decentralized school system: The school principals' view. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 38(2), 184-201.
Al Haj, M. (1996). Education Among The Arabs in Israel: Control And Social Change. Jerusalem: Magness Press, Hebrew University, Jerusalem (Hebrew).
Arlozorov, M (2013). The Israeli Arabs live in geographic and economic ghettos. The Marker (a daily newspaper), June 14, 2013. (Hebrew).
Aronowitz, S. (2002) Gramsci's theory of education: Schooling and beyond. In: C. Borg., L. Buttigieg & P. Mayo (Eds.), Gramsci and Education. (pp. 108-120). (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc).
Ball, S.J. (1998) Big policies/Small world: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy. Comparative Education, 34(2), 119-130.
Boggess, L. B. (Mar 2010) Tailoring new urban teachers for character and activism. American Educational Research Journal, 47(1), 65-95.
Borg, C., Buttigieg, J.A. & Mayo, P. (2002). Introduction. In C. Borg, J. Buttigieg & P. Mayo (Eds.), Gramsci and Education. (pp. 1-25). Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
Cipolle, S. (Spring, 2004) Service-learning as a counter hegemonic practice evidence pro and con. Multicultural Education, 11(3), 12-23.
Cortes, Ernesto, Jr. (2010). Quality education as a civil right. In: T. Perry, R. P. Moses, J. T. Wynne, Cortés Jr., & L. Delpit (Eds.), Quality education as a constitutional right: Creating a grassroots movement to transform public schools (pp. 93–105). Boston: Beacon.

Eden, D., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (2002). The political power of school principals in Israel: A case study. Journal of Educational Administration, 40, 211-229.

Eden, D., & Kalekin-Fishman, D. (June 2002). The Teacher: government official or professional with a mission? Intercultural Education, 13(2), 117-127.

Eden, D., & Shibli, J. (2012). Managing School Environment: The Case of Arab High School Principals in Israel. Unpublished manuscript (Haifa: University of Haifa).

Evers, C.W., & Lakomski, G. (1991). Knowing Educational Administration. (Oxford: Pergamon Press).

Fischman, G.E., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking critical pedagogy and the Gramscian and Freirean legacies: From organic to committed intellectuals of critical pedagogy, commitment, and praxis. Cultural Studies < Critical Methodologies, 5(4), 425-447.

Foster, W. (1986). Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration (Buffalo: Prometheus Books).

Giroux, H. (1988). Teachers as intellectuals. (New York: Bergin & Garvey).

Giroux, H. & McLaren, P. (Fall 1986). Teacher educators and the politics of engagement: The case of Democratic schooling. Harvard Educational Review, 56(3), 213-239.

Gramsci, A. (2009). On Hegemony: Selection of Prison Notebooks. Tel Aviv: Resling (Hebrew).

Greenfield, D. (1985). Theories of educational organization: A critical perspective. In T. Husen & T.N. Postlethwaite, (Eds.), International Encyclopedia of Education, 9, 5240-5259.

Kashti, O. (2012). Not equal: A social gap-stricken country. Haaretz daily newspaper. December 13, 2012. http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1840682. Retrieved 20/3/2013. (in Hebrew).

Khattab, N., & Ibrahim, J. (2006). Why are there so few Palestinian Women in Principalship positions? In: I. Oplatka & R. Hertz-Lazarowitz (Eds.), Women Principals in a Multicultural Society. (pp. 71-88). Rotterdam: Sense Publications.

Labor Court No. 54/252-3, (1st January, 1995) (in Hebrew).

Labor Court No. 55/30-14 and No. 55/50-5 (2nd February, 1995) (in Hebrew).

Lieberman, G. (March 18, 2011). The 'Tel-Sheva' State. Haaretz daily newspaper, Weekend Supplement, pp. 26-30. (in Hebrew).

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education. (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press).

Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. Academy of Management Review, 16(1), 145-179.

Peres, Y. & Ben-Rafael, E. (Eds.). (2006). Cleavages in Israeli Society. (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers) (in Hebrew).

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. (2003). The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

Riehl, C.R. (Spring 2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A Review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. Review of Educational Research, 70(1), 55.

Ross, J.A., & Berger, M.J. (2009). Equity and leadership: Research-based strategies for school leaders. School Leadership and Management, 29(5).

Volansky, A. (2003). From Experiment to Educational Policy: The Transition to School-Based Management in Israeli Schools. In: Volansky, A. and Friedman, I. (Eds.) School-Based Management: An International Perspective. (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education). pp. 207-220. (in Hebrew).