

5th World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership, WCLTA 2014

From School Leadership to Community Leadership

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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.

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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

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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 (Gibton, 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-Racchah, 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

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