



Deputy-principals in Arab schools in Israel: an era of reform

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate Arab deputy-principals' perceptions of their role in Arab schools in Israel, relating to their expectations regarding principal-deputy relations and their aspirations for promotion.

Design/methodology/approach – A two-stage qualitative study included an open-ended questionnaire completed by 27 Arab deputy-principals, studying in a deputy-principals' training program for the "New Horizons" reform. The questionnaire related to their perceptions of their professional role. Data from the open questionnaires were supplemented by data from in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with eight of the deputy-principals.

Findings – The deputy-principals perceived their role as arduous and complex, indicating that this was the result of vague role definitions. They mostly dealt with administration though they longed to devote themselves to pedagogy, shaping education policy and the school vision. Most did not aspire to attain principalship.

Practical implications – A clearer role definition is required for the deputy-principal. Principal-deputy cooperation should be enhanced. Deputy-principals need better role-related training and supervision that considers the requirements of the school settings and culture.

Originality/value – This is the first study to examine the role of deputy-principals in Arab society in Israel.

Keywords Israel, Leadership in education, Career, Arab education system, Deputy-principal, School principal

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Research has indicated that education reform increases the responsibility of school role holders (Gok *et al.*, 2006; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). Thus too, studies tracing school principals' careers indicate that principalship is a formative leadership role, central to the school's success (Hartzell *et al.*, 1995; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). They also indicate that shared decision making is a fundamental feature of formative leadership, especially during educational reform (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). The enlargement of the principal's role necessitates professional assistance from a skilled colleague with whom they can share decision making. This role is ideally fulfilled by a deputy-principal.

Research in many countries has almost ignored deputy-principal, principal-deputy relations, perceptions of the deputy's role and its implementation in practice (Cranston *et al.*, 2004; Glanz, 2004, Oplatka, 2010), only relating sparsely to deputies' job satisfaction and deputies' intentions to advance to principalship (Marshall, 1992; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). Consideration of the deputy, if any, has related to a "senior assistant," participating in management or supervising and mentoring staff



(Griffith, 2004). Findings from the latest study by Kwan and Walker (2008) studying deputy-principals in Hong-Kong indicated that deputy-principals who enjoyed role satisfaction and clear functional division between themselves and the principals were more likely to aspire to principalship.

Glanz (2004) also noted that the deputy-principal's job definition and its implementation within the school space had not been substantially clarified; yet until today there has been little theoretical or applied consideration or research concerning these issues (Barnett, 2011; Young, 2011). Similarly there has been little academic discussion concerning the substance of the deputy-principal's role in the assimilation of reforms and leadership of the school to successful performance (Oplatka, 2010). The present study assumes that the deputy-principal constitutes the main reserve cadre for future school management and attempts to understand how deputy-principals perceive their role and whether they envisage undertaking the principal's role in the future. Understanding the deputies' perceptions of their role and areas of responsibility should assist policy-makers and teacher-educators to improve training for school leadership.

The Israeli Government recently added more school deputy-principals to the Arab education system as part of the government's "*New Horizons*" reform. Relying on previous research concerning the role of the deputy in school leadership (Lee *et al.*, 2009; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; Wong, 2009), I assumed that the attitudes and perceptions of the new Arab deputies concerning their role as mid-level leaders would significantly influence school processes and the assimilation of the reform. Given the absence of sufficiently clear conceptual perceptions of this role in the literature and in the wording of the reform, it was our hope that these perceptions would help us to construct a picture of the deputy's role in practice, providing insights into their work in a traditional society within a climate of respect for authority and a strict managerial hierarchy, and increasing understanding of the socio-cultural barriers encountered in the performance of their role when introducing educational reform, and the support that they needed. Given the lack of sufficient candidates for principalship it also seemed pertinent to investigate the aspirations of these deputy-principals and their level of role satisfaction.

The current study therefore sought to reveal deputy-principals' perceptions of their role, responsibilities and career development, based on their experiences in the Arab education system in Israel, relating especially to principal-deputy and deputy-staff relations and to deputies' aspirations for career promotion.

The research sample included 27 elementary school deputy-principals in the Arab education system in Israel, all of whom were involved in training for and implementing the government's "*New Horizons*" reform program. The research therefore collected data to respond to the following four research questions:

- (1) What is the deputy-principals' perception of their role in the "*New Horizons*" reform program?
- (2) What do the deputy-principals expect from the school principal in order to fulfill their new role?
- (3) In the deputy-principals' opinions, which personal characteristics enable a deputy-principal to establish his/her leadership in a school?
- (4) To what extent is the role of deputy-principal perceived as a preparatory stage in the advancement path to a managerial career?

1.1 School leadership in an era of reform

Various school reforms implemented in western countries since the 1970s, have demonstrated that enhanced managerial quality improves educational quality (Briggs and Wohlstetter, 2003). Most school reforms transfer responsibility and authority from government agencies to the school, constructing a system of supervision, evaluation and accountability (Spillane and Coldren, 2011), so that school management autonomously determines school policy and goals together with other stake-holders (Oplatka, 2010). Managers are responsible for planning teaching, supervision and performance follow-up, staff evaluation and development (Arar and Mustafa, 2011).

According to Harris and Spillane (2008) demands on management to implement changing educational policy, necessitate continuous innovation and increased responsibility, making the “head role too large for one person.” Glanz (2004) also highlighted the importance of a deputy, asserting that “two are better than one” to achieve successful school reform. “Distributed leadership” helps the school to introduce change and comply with stated goals since it allows authorities and responsibility to be shouldered by two major role holders. Putting their heads together and dividing tasks between them facilitates goal planning, staff supervision and evaluation while continuing to develop and assimilate change (Harris, 2008; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). Distributed leadership may also be characterized by the division of tasks and activities among different staff-level leaders, working in coordination and in parallel to achieve common goals (Harris, 2008) and enlarging the joint achievements of school leadership (Harris and Spillane, 2008).

The principal’s job has undergone many changes (Oplatka, 2010) and become the subject of much research, yet the deputy’s role has been largely ignored, although the deputy is considered the secondary authority in most reforms (Weller and Weller, 2002) and it is obvious that principal-deputy relations significantly influence the success of reform implementation (Cranston *et al.*, 2004).

Recent education reform initiatives in various countries such as: open registration areas, marketing of schools, schools’ self-management and independent accountability, have increased pressure on deputies due to external demands to comply with new goals without additional provision of material and temporal resources (Harris *et al.*, 2003). Several reforms have also redefined the deputy’s role (Hausman *et al.*, 2002), so that instead of simply “filling jobs that the principal didn’t fancy doing” the role of the deputy became “a defined and valued job.” In England, Garrett and Mcgeachie (1999) concluded that deputies’ training and development should be conducted at the Institute for National Professional Qualification for Headship in order to broaden the deputies’ job description. Similarly deputies in the USA have received increased responsibilities (Hausman *et al.*, 2002). We now describe the development of this role as reflected in extant literature.

1.2 The deputy-principal’s role and aspirations

A few studies have investigated the deputy’s role, but they have only scratched the surface of this issue, relating to deputy-principals’ role satisfaction and their expectations to advance to principalship (Barnett, 2011; Glanz, 2004; Weller and Weller, 2002; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). Some scholars have indicated the importance and complexity of the deputy’s role (Kwan and Walker, 2008; Marshall, 1992; Wong, 2009) or described personal characteristics suitable for the role, but there has been no analysis of the role and its characteristics. Rather aptly, Cranston *et al.* (2004, p. 227) dubbed the deputy-principal: “forgotten leadership.”

Traditionally the deputy was considered as “the school care-taker” (Koru, 1993), who “manages daily operations” (Porter, 1996) yet definitions of the role are generally vague (Barnett, 2011; Bush, 2004; Marshall, 1992). Usually, the deputy-principal’s functions are determined by the principal and may fluctuate daily. Often deputies are responsible for discipline and student and teacher attendance but have little say in educational leadership (Bates, 2003). They may be asked to fulfill tasks that “they have no desire to perform” (Bates, 2003, p. 113) including: strategic leadership, education and curricula planning, administration and organization, student issues, relations with parents and the community and teaching staff issues (Cranston *et al.*, 2004; Kwan and Walker, 2008). Hausman *et al.* (2002) claimed that deputy-principals deal more with motivating staff and curricula administration, while Harris (2008) identified seven areas of responsibility imposed on deputy-principals: instructional leadership, personal/individual management, channeling communication between different hierarchical levels within the school, staff development, resources management, relations with the community and student management.

In an era of educational reform, “distributed leadership” patterns set a clear division between deputy and principal, whereby the deputy is expected to conduct more personal management, dealing with student issues and channeling communication across the school’s different cross-sections. Harris *et al.* (2003) explain how the role of deputy came into its own during the introduction of school reform, undergoing transformation from traditional maintenance management to a position of leadership of innovation, change and development; yet these tasks often bring deputy-principals into conflict with other staff members. They noted that veteran deputies often lack the experience, training and guidance to perform these new tasks. In such cases broadening the deputy-principal’s responsibilities can be a two-edged sword, significantly improving their leadership standing in the school but possibly increasing staff’s dissatisfaction and displeasure regarding their functioning.

Other studies found that the extent and quality of deputies’ involvement in school leadership correlates with the strength of their intention to continue on to leadership roles (Young, 2011). Deputies, who were actively involved in school leadership, experienced empowerment, increasing their motivation to manage the school (Lee *et al.*, 2009; Young, 2011). Providing appropriate training for deputy-principals can enable expectations to be met, empowerment, development of educational leadership skills and improvement of principal-deputy relations so that the period as a deputy can become a step toward principalship (Barnett, 2011; Daresh, 2002; Potter, 2001).

Hughes and James (1999) found that some deputies choose not to further their managerial careers so that for 44.2 percent, the role of deputy becomes a permanent state; a similar percentage was found in Sheffield, UK by Garrett and Mcgeachie (1999). A pioneer study in Israel’s Jewish education system also found that deputies often lack aspiration to advance to principalship (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). In contrast, some studies found that approximately 80 percent of deputies aspire to lead the school (Glanz, 2004). Conversely Coleman (2002) found that most principals had previously been employed as deputies. In order to understand the position of deputy-principal in the Arab education system in Israel, we now delineate the particular context in which they work.

1.3 The context of Arab education in Israel

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, the Arab minority remaining within Israel’s borders numbered a mere 156,000, weakened and depleted by war and the loss

of its elite due to expulsion or flight (Stendal, 1992). Sixty years later this indigenous ethnic minority has multiplied 6.5 times and in 2009 numbered 1.7 million (excluding the population of the Golan Heights and Eastern Jerusalem; Khamaise, 2009), or 20.2 percent of Israel's population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The Arab population lives in communities separate from Jewish communities, apart from a few towns with mixed ethnic populations. Each of the groups that compose the Arab minority (82.1 percent Muslims, 9.4 percent Christians and 8.4 percent Druze) is influenced by internal processes of modernization, external processes linked with the Jewish majority society, Israel's relations with Arab states and by the social context of the particular ethnic group within the Arab community (Shapira *et al.*, 2010). Arabs constitute approximately 20 percent of the Israeli population yet only 12 percent of all persons participating in the Israeli employment market are Arabs. Unemployment among the Arabs is 8.5 percent higher than among the Jewish population. In all, 50 percent of Arab academics are concentrated in teaching in contrast to 20 percent in the Jewish academic population, and approximately 61 percent of all Arabs in the free and technical professions are teachers in contrast to 37 percent in the relevant Jewish population. The restrictions of the Israeli employment market offer little for the approximately 12,500 qualified Arab teachers who cannot find work in the Arab education system, especially when it is remembered that the Jewish and Arab education systems are separate and no Arab is employed in teaching in the Jewish education system, apart from rare exceptions when Arabs are employed to teach specific Arabic programs (Yashiv, 2012). It is also noted that most Arab teachers receive their teaching education in Jewish teacher education colleges and universities, which fail to consider the cultural and national context of the Arab education system (with the exception of two Arab academic colleges; Arar, 2012).

As noted, the Arab educational system is completely separate and distinct from the majority Jewish educational system, existing in different geographical areas, speaking a different language and conducting different lifestyles and cultures. The two systems are separate but not equal and resources allocated for Arab schools can be best described as a "concentration of disadvantage," leading to lower achievements, including the absence of specific and defined educational aims (Golan-Agnon, 2006). The most recent report by Sbirsky and Degan-Bouzaglo (2009) indicates that the Israeli educational system discriminates against Arab education, since it fails to equalize financial resources and management to those of the Jewish system. There is no Arab educational administration for the Arab educational system and, although Arab students constitute 28.2 percent of all the state's students, state investment per student is less (an Arab school receives 1.16 hours per student in comparison with 1.56 per Jewish student, and the local Arab Governments' educational investment often totals just \$40 per child in comparison to the \$1,000 investment of some more established Jewish Local Governments); 50.5 percent of students in the Jewish system are eligible for matriculation in comparison to a stagnant 32.4 percent among Arab students (2008-2009) and achievements of Arab students in international examinations are almost half those of their Jewish counterparts (Sbirsky and Degan-Bouzaglo, 2009). Thus, the Arab education system resembles other peripheral educational systems in developing countries (see Komatsu, 2009; Mohammed and Harlech-Jones, 2008).

Since there are limited career opportunities for educated Arabs in Israel, the role of school principal is considered one of the most desirable senior positions in Arab society (Arar and Mustafa, 2011) and tenders for this post often provoke intense power struggles (Arar and Mustafa, 2011). Additionally, Israel's Arab society is

still predominantly a traditional patriarchal society, so that while most deputies (and indeed principals) in the Jewish education system are women, in Israel's Arab education system men usually hold these positions, reflecting cultural norms that limit women's advancement in the public sphere. This fact influences the perception of the role and its performance in Arab schools. Male management styles and work methods dominate Arab schools and there is no tradition of distributed leadership. Some Arab principals refuse to delegate functions to their deputies, fearing that the community will see this as their weakness (Arar and Mustafa, 2011).

The status of Israel's education system and especially of the Arab education system necessitates reform. The following section provides an outline of the government's *New Horizons* reform and the way in which it defines the deputy-principal's role in its implementation in the school.

1.4 The "New Horizons" reform

Given the gaps that exist between different population groups in the Israeli education system and successively disappointing academic achievements of the education system as a whole, the government's "New Horizons" reform is intended to oil the wheels of elementary and middle school education provision. "New Horizons" is a pedagogical and organizational reform program initiated in Israeli kindergartens, elementary schools and in some middle schools since 2007. Its defined goals are: strengthening teacher status and increasing teacher remuneration, bridging the divide between peripheral and central geographic locations and between various levels of society, providing equal opportunities to all students, improving student achievements, empowering moral education and strengthening civil awareness within schools, while improving school atmosphere and eradicating violence (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 14). The program aspires to reach these goals by allocating a generous amount of teaching hours to teachers which allows them to spend informal quality time with their students. This can be achieved by teaching smaller groups, dividing classrooms for elementary studies and reducing the number of students in each class (Ministry of Education, 2008).

At the school level, the reform offered by "New Horizons" reform appears to be merely organizational, though essentially it is pedagogical. The program is based on a number of fundamental principles that aim to improve work processes in schools and improve students' level of achievement, particularly for students with difficulties (Ministry of Education, 2008). The program is based on a change in both the essence of teaching and the amount of time teachers spend in front of their students and at work in general. Thus while a teacher expects to spend 36 hours a week in the school, 24 hours are devoted to class teaching, eight to individual teaching and the remaining four hours for meetings and planning. It expands the principal's authority to define school goals and to define criteria to promote teachers to the ranks of senior or skilled teachers within the reform budget, essentially transforming principals into agents of change.

As part of the "New Horizons" reform, the Israeli Ministry of Education (2009) issued a document detailing the "Perception of the deputy-principal's role in the reform." This document envisaged that the deputy-principal would work with the principal to shape the school's administrative foundation and stipulated that the deputy's role should be derived from the "Perception of the school principal's role in the State of Israel" published by the Avney Rosh (2009). This latter document indicates that the deputy's areas of responsibility should be chosen by the principal together with the deputy, assuming that the role should focus on leadership of teaching,

education and learning; the principal and deputy should jointly prepare the school's work program and lead the school to achieve its goals. Additionally, the deputy should participate in guiding pedagogy including responsibility for planning, performance and results and supervise individual lessons. A set wage was provided for the role (defined as 18-21 weekly hours), adapted to each school's complexity level.

Although it is clear that the transition from centralization to decentralization and the expansion of the school principal's domain of accountability, necessitates a division of functions with another professional, the *New Horizon* reform only provides a broad unspecific definition of the deputy's role and has not been given due recognition by entities either inside or outside the school.

2. Methodology

Qualitative methods were used for empirical data collection and analysis in an attempt to clarify issues that had not previously been awarded sufficient attention by professional literature. Erickson (1986) explained that no hypothesis is formed before qualitative research commences since the research itself is formed during the process of data analysis. However, relying on literature that describes the deputy-principal's role in an era of reform and as an integral part of educational leadership (e.g. Barnett, 2011; Glanz, 2004; Kwan and Walker, 2008) it can be assumed that in the Arab education system as elsewhere the deputy's role definition is rather vague, especially in the absence of any well-rooted patterns of distributed leadership. We also assumed that the role would be perceived as especially challenging in the context of a traditional patriarchal hierarchical culture.

2.1 The research sample and process

In the first phase of the study (February-March 2011), 27 Arab vice-principals (both Muslim, Christian and Druze from the Arab sector in Israel) studying at an Arab teacher education college in the deputy-principals' training course for the "*New Horizons*" reform, voluntarily filled in open questionnaires, relating to their perceptions of their professional role as deputy-principals. This college was chosen as it was the only Arab college that offered a deputy-principals' course at the time of the research.

Most of the respondents (66.6 percent) were men; most did not aspire to become principals (70.4 percent) and most were over the age of 45 (55.6 percent) testifying to infrequent mobility to managerial positions in Arab schools. Most held university degrees (BA and MA) and were at the mid-career or later stage of their professional development (77.7 percent) with more than 15 years' teaching experience.

The analysis presented here relates to seven out of ten questions in the open-ended questionnaire used in this study[1], drawing on concepts from the review of relevant literature summarized above and relating to four different issues: the deputies' perception of their role, the principal's role in establishing the deputy's authority; the deputies' perceptions of the characteristics needed to be a deputy; and the deputies' aspirations to progress to principalship. Specific questionnaire items included: "as a novice deputy-principal what consideration do you expect from your principal?"; "how would you define your present role and areas of responsibility?" and "what difficulties do you encounter in your work and how do you cope with them?" The respondents were urged to write down anything they thought was important and were told that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers, since the researchers were interested in their subjective point of view. This approach made it possible to trace the respondents' subjective interpretations of the vice-principal's role.

In the second phase of the study (April-May, 2011), several questionnaire respondents were asked on a random basis to voluntarily participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview to elaborate the points mentioned in the questionnaire. Eight questionnaire respondents (four men – two Muslims, one Christian and one Druze; and four women – two Druze, one Christian and one Muslim) were interviewed. We make no claim that these teachers represent all deputy-principals and acknowledge the limitations regarding generalizability of the findings to other settings and geographical regions. Notably, the fact that the majority of students in the sample were men has some effect on the study, as we will consider in our discussion of our findings. The main aim of the interview was to gain a richer picture of factors that shaped respondents' perceptions of the deputy's role as expressed in the questionnaire and to understand what might be the "ideal" context for their success.

2.2 Data analysis

Analysis of data from the open questionnaires and the transcribed interviews followed the four stages suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1995): "organizing the data," "generating categories, themes and patterns," "testing the emergent hypotheses" and "searching for alternative explanations." Coding was guided by the principles of "comparative analysis" (Bird *et al.*, 1999). It included the comparison of all coded elements within and between emergent categories and sub-categories. Finally all the data were compared, to identify central patterns (as in Oplatka, 2004).

In order to strengthen reliability, the analysis was conducted by the first author, while the second author acted as critic, reinforcing the analytical structure at the different stages of analysis (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). However, consistent with the views of most qualitative researchers, who assume that their respondents interpret reality from multiple perspectives for varying purposes (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993), the researchers were interested in revealing the respondents' subjective perceptions about their roles, rather than finding some objective reality. The systematic data collection procedure from two different research tools contributes, to the credibility and authenticity of the data.

3. Findings

3.1 Deputies' perceptions of their role

The findings show that all respondents voiced fairly uniform perceptions of the deputy-principal's role and the difficulties accompanying their initial experiences on the job. They also explained how their role had been affected by the "*New Horizons*" reform. The following main findings emerged from the data analysis. In the following numerical analysis (Q) relates to the questionnaire item and (Ns) refers to the number of respondents who gave this response.

Most of the deputy-principals (Ns21) emphasized that the "*New Horizons*" reform gave birth to the deputy's role, which had not previously been obligatory. "[The reform] defined the deputy's role for the first time" (Q4). "It was a role that almost every Arab principal had avoided, using the deputy's position as a bargaining incentive each year without any tender, rewards, permanency or conditions – it was a 'thankless' job" (Q17).

In the deputies' opinion, the reform "led to the role's recognition as an essential part of the management career promotion hierarchy" (Q6) and also "stipulated minimum candidacy standards for the position" (Q14).

Some of the deputies noted advantages of the reform: the reduction of deputies' teaching hours transformed their role to include "supervision of individual teaching hours: planning, implementation, follow-up and evaluation" (Q18), and "management of educational projects"(Q4). The deputy is now "an important focal point coordinating between staff and different administrative units" (Q1) and even: "a full participant in decision-making" (Q15). Consequently many deputies saw the reform as an empowering process, developing the deputy as the school's middle management (Ns17). Nevertheless, some deputies were dissatisfied, criticizing the vagueness and complexity of the role, and claimed that they were collapsing under the burden: "despite the declaration that we would be "working in parallel" I'm still the school scapegoat: looking after discipline, coping with teacher resistance is [also] me" (Q13), "[I'm] the workhorse that's supposed to solve all the school's problem" (Q23).

An ambivalent expression was:

The role was extended but was not [sufficiently] defined in the reform. Its fine to have an obligatory role, otherwise I would not be here, but today I'm a teacher, education coordinator, mentor, responsible for individual lessons. My job has become more complicated and there are many areas of responsibility (Samir).

In addition to the difficulty in coping with the role's complexity, the principals found it difficult to identify the tasks that a deputy should perform, as Adnan explained:

The principal has not recognized and internalized the new role, I fulfill his orders, a sort of "yes man", look after disciplinary problems, the weekly time-table, construct plans, coordinate trips, supervise the mentors, follow-up on individual lessons, coordinators [...] its simply liberated the principal from everything, I've become the leader of the internal system and he is the school's Minister of the Exterior; I'm actually a principal but that's not my title, just a punch-bag.

Even the Avney Rosha Institute's definition of the role leaves the substance of the deputy's role to the final decision of the principal: "the principal has overall authority and responsibility" (Avney Rosha, 2009).

The deputy's movements between principal's office and staff lounge and other school areas, and the extent of the principal's accessibility for the deputy constitute two important factors that determine the deputy's status and definition of their daily tasks. The need for principal-deputy cooperation is accompanied by the need for deputy autonomy and clear role definition as expressed by Firas:

As a result of the reform the principal is collapsing under a huge burden. Suddenly in addition to the regular teaching system we have individual lessons to plan and supervise and have to evaluate student progress, with all the paperwork and follow-up and teacher evaluation, it necessitates a clear division of functions between me and the principal, which doesn't exist.

Similar criticism was voiced by Rami:

I don't expect the principal just to give me orders, but to allow me to express my opinion about teachers and the programs, to give me authority and responsibility, and if anyone bypasses me, he should set them right and explain the substance of my role.

Following their participation in the deputy-principals' course, the deputies know how to distinguish functions which are not part of their role and expect principals to accept this distinction, but in practice this is often not realized. Research shows that indistinct role definition hinders deputies' progress and increases their dissatisfaction

(Cranston *et al.*, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1992). This was obvious in the respondents' expressions:

The responsibility for the entire school is imposed on me: preparing learning programs, portfolios, swimming lessons, fostering the Kerev fund programs, supervising individual lessons, dealing with teacher absences, scheduling rotas, work programs, mapping, I do almost everything (Aiman).

And when Hamam was asked what the principal did, he answered:

That's exactly the problem, he looks after external relations with local government, parents, inspectors [...] We don't divide functions [inside], I do it all, the principal can't even use a computer; it exhausts me.

3.2 *The principal's role in establishing the deputy's authority*

The deputies indicated that the principal's support for their role and authority was very important. They expected this support and expected to be included in the principal's decision making, enabling them to improve management skills from the beginning of their leadership career.

Difficulties noted by deputies as hindering their work were the decisions made by the principal without involving or consulting them, also "difficulties stemming from the principal's failure to establish the deputy's authority among the staff; lack of role definition for the deputy *vis-a-vis* the staff creates conflicts, resistance to their decisions by teachers and undermines their authority" (Q4). The deputies noted that it was mostly "the teachers who had competed for their position" (Q13) and "veteran teachers" (Q21), who expressed resistance to their authority. The deputy's appointment shakes-up the school's power relations, including the principal-teachers hierarchy, so that the deputy becomes a middle leader linking the various organizational echelons (a relational leader).

Some of the principals, especially women principals, had apparently managed to imprint the deputy's role among the staff on every possible occasion. This is reflected in the words of Abir:

The principal [a woman] told the teaching staff that I had been chosen for the job and explained my responsibilities, explicitly noting that if I was absent then they should turn to her.

Some principals supported the deputy's direct work with the staff and then discussed issues that emerged from the field with the deputy:

She [the principal] often asks me to tell staff about exceptional events from the field, difficulties and problems, then in a sort of workshop we can find solutions together, share areas of responsibility, so that we can all help the school to advance (Sawsan).

Women principals tend to share decisions with and to empower the new deputy. This helps to establish the deputy's status in the school and increases their success. However, male deputies sometimes find it difficult to cope with female principals' overriding authority:

I try to update her regularly, to get close to her, to solve problems and to symbolize a strict controlling personality while she remains the pleasant and gentle one [...] when she gives me orders, I sometimes have to restrain myself, especially when this is done without prior consultation with me (Osama).

Additionally the deputies noted that if the principal is involved in internal school matters and committed to advancing teachers' teaching abilities and student learning,

and endorses the deputy's authority, then the principal will probably be perceived as a pedagogic-ethical entity that draws others in including the deputy so that they will feel that they have a meaningful role.

The deputies felt that the level of the principal's willingness to fulfill their expectations and the quality of their reciprocal relationship determined the quality of their own functioning. Most respondents (Ns20) expected their "ideal" principal to help them succeed in their job – they wanted the principal to be attentive and accessible and to share decision making with them. They expressed this as follows: "My principal should consult with me in decision-making and not just tell me what to do" (Q14); "to listen to my ideas, since I am also significant and valuable and the school is no less important for me" (Q11); "I should participate in drafting the school vision, outlining school policy, goals and targets" (Q3).

The deputies expected the principal to be available "ad hoc" to exchange views with them during work, and not just to wait for them to succeed alone. They also expected the principal to back their decisions before internal and external entities. In this context, the preferred principal is one who "discusses matters with them" (Q17), and listens to their concerns, allowing them to express their opinion and to take responsibility to lead pedagogic changes in the school.

3.3 Characteristics required to be a deputy

When asked which personality traits, training and behaviors were required to succeed as a deputy the respondents graded personal integrity, morality and good collegial relations as the most important traits for their successful functioning (Ns18). "Primarily [the deputy] should be honest"(Q4), "perceived as trustworthy and with a good reputation among staff" (Q13); "modest and accepted by others" (Q22). These traits are indicated in the literature as important elements of educational leadership (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Jean-Marie *et al.*, 2009) and were affirmed in our interviews:

He should come from the teachers' ranks and have formed a personality with integrity, high morals and trustworthiness, creating mutual respect and esteem with the staff, otherwise he'll find it difficult to lead and inspire others (Adnan).

Mona a female deputy indicated who could not succeed as a deputy:

If a worthless teacher without any success in the school, who has not acquired an honest, strong, leading and trustworthy personality, is imposed on the staff there's no hope that teachers will follow him.

The respondents noted that in addition to dependability and morality, "its important that the deputy should excel" (Q9); and be "a good organizer who knows how to lead staff and listen to their 'buzz'" (Q11), "communicate well with staff" (Q21), "be able to listen, contain and absorb" (Q4) and "be a strong, charismatic personality" (Q25) that "respects students and teachers" (Q3). Additionally they thought the deputy should understand pedagogic content, how to build programs and manage projects and know the relevant laws and regulations (Ns16).

In sum, the respondents indicated that personal characteristics such as honesty and social acceptability, combined with pedagogic and professional training and skills constitute essential conditions for the deputy's success, enabling them to establish their authority and trust relations with other teachers and to lead them to achieve school goals.

3.4 The deputy's career aspirations

When respondents were asked whether they wished to advance to principalship, the majority, surprisingly, did not want to undertake higher management positions, having “absolutely no aspiration for it” (Q6). “They want to leave the system” (Q23); they refuse principalship due to “stress at work, [since] the job is too demanding” (Q26); and even if they wanted the principalship” it was “blocked by local politics” (Q13) or “because my family is small [lacking influence] I have no chance” (Q19). Of the 27 deputies who completed the questionnaire, 19 were unwilling to become principals; this was also true for seven of the eight interviewees.

The respondents explained the price to be paid for a principalship:

I'm really not interested at all, my income increased due to the reform, today my job focuses on internal and not external matters, I'm not interested in confronting politics, or becoming the target for violence, risking my confidence and my family's safety, being a deputy is definitely sufficiently satisfying in order to do educational work (Adnan).

A woman deputy indicated that she preferred to change her career:

I don't aspire to be a principal; the price is too high, I want another meaningful career in marital relations training and management. I want to implant the issue of marital relations into children's consciousness. I hope that I can give them useful tools for a successful intimate relationship (Riham).

Additionally, in a traditional society that imposes a strict gender role distribution, despite their professional duties, women deputies are expected to continue to function as full-time homemakers. The demand for multi-functioning tends to restrict their future aspirations: Rauwa explained that she avoided promotion to principalship due to her commitment to family and marriage:

I don't forget that I am a mother and housewife and I owe my family a lot.

Despite modernization in the Arab education system a new nomination is always accompanied by political intervention, both by local mayors and representatives of the Ministry of Education (Arar and Abu-Asbe, 2013). Evidence of these processes was provided by Aiman who had competed for a principalship:

There was a tender for a managerial post and the teachers' union representative supported me. I won, but my competitor complained to the Ministry that he was discriminated against and won an appeal to a committee in Jerusalem. I appealed to the courts but they revoked my candidacy, now I don't intend to compete again for principalship and I don't have any backing.

Thus, there are not a few reasons for deputies' reticence to progress to principalship in traditional Arab society in Israel, including severe work pressure, and other personal, social, cultural and political considerations. Even so a few deputies expressed their desire to progress upwards and saw their time as deputy as a step up toward a school managerial career; expressing a “fierce desire to lead and direct my vision” (Q16), or “to undertake the challenge to lead a large school” (21) or “to become number one, despite the difficulties” (Q13).

These thoughts also appeared in some interviews:

As a deputy I can't realize my educational approach, but as a principal I can implement my personal vision to contribute to children and lead educational change in an era when values are being destroyed and learning is the lowest of our children's priorities (Adnan).

In conclusion, it seems that although a minority wanted to advance to achieve personal visions and aspirations, the majority rejected this option mainly due to the job's complexity and the political-cultural-personal difficulties involved.

4. Discussion

The research intended to contribute to an understanding of the deputy-principal's role in the Arab education system in Israel, deputies' expectations regarding principal-deputy relations and career aspirations in light of the recent "*New Horizons*" reform.

The research findings showed that one of the benefits of the reform was the grounding of the deputy's role in the schools' managerial career ladder. For the first time this has become an obligatory role, defined in writing, with delineated areas of responsibility. Thus, the reform empowered most deputies, developing their leadership (Lee *et al.*, 2009; Wildy and Clark, 2008).

Previous research has shown how important the principal's management style can be in determining the success of school reform, meaning that principals need to exhibit openness, attentiveness and willingness for innovation, enhancing mid-level management's empowerment and career development (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Harris, 2008; Kwan and Walker, 2008; Regan and Brooks, 1995). It has been demonstrated (Cranston *et al.*, 2004; Glanz, 2004; Marshall, 1992) that since new deputies expect relations of trust and cooperation from their principals, and want to acquire managerial skills and tools (Lee *et al.*, 2009; Hibert, 2000), they need strong support and in-role guidance and good working relations with the principal (Barnett, 2011; Bush, 2004; Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

However, despite the explicit inclusion of the deputy-principal role in the *New Horizons* reform, it seems that not all Arab principals in Israel have accepted this vision in practice, some fail to imprint the new role by clearly defining areas of responsibility and backing the deputy's authority. This situation increases fogginess concerning the role, engendering deputies' dissatisfaction and burnout (Kwan and Walker, 2008) and hinders the development of more appropriate distribution of schools leaders' authorities and tasks (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). The difficulties noted by some of the deputies as hindering their work, mainly related to decisions made by the principal without consulting them and "the principal's failure to establish the deputy's authority before staff" (Q22). Since the "quality of principal-deputy relations determines the quality of the deputy's functioning, the ideal principal for the deputy's success is an attentive figure" (Adnan), participative and supportive, who is accessible to the deputy and usually consults them on strategic issues and does not simply give out orders (Glanz, 2004; Weller and Weller, 2002). From the respondents' remarks it seems that The *New Horizon* reform falls short of a comprehensive definition of the principals' role and does not relate specifically to the distribution of functions and quality of deputy-principal relations.

Yet, in contrast to the principals who were seen as increasingly bogged down with purely managerial issues (Weller and Weller, 2002), deputies who participated in the research saw their role as more challenging, giving them greater satisfaction than the principals had (Barnett, 2011) since they dealt directly with students and teachers, relating to emotional aspects and believing that they could assist these communities. They expressed a desire to deal autonomously with pedagogic instruction, mentoring and consistent follow-up of teaching and learning and educational projects, a desire echoed in previous studies concerning deputies (Harris, 2008; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

Some of the deputies who worked cooperatively with principals, valued the principal's help in establishing a culture of participation, providing support, endorsement and personal encouragement for the new deputy, in line with women principals' participatory style (Lee *et al.*, 2009; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Contrastingly one male deputy found it difficult to accept a woman principal's authority. Nevertheless it is clear that women principals' ability to empower the new role holders helped to reinforce their status and success (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009).

Personality traits noted by respondents as required by a deputy included personal integrity, morality and good collegial relations. As in similar studies, trustworthiness, ethicality and high-quality pedagogic and didactic abilities were also seen as important for the novice deputy's success as a leader (Oplatka, 2010) and for veteran deputies (Coleman, 2002; Jean-Marie *et al.*, 2009). The novice deputies indicated that they needed the principal's support to learn how to manage the school and external guidance to acquire appropriate tools.

The deputies felt that the principal's work was characterized by stress, threatening factors, lack of sufficient support from the community, burnout, conflict, vagueness and tension (see: Glanz, 2004). Thus, not surprisingly, only a minority of the deputies aspired to become school principals. This finding corresponds with previous research findings that very few principals aspire to principalship (Barnett, 2011; Glanz, 2004; Cranston *et al.*, 2004; Kwan and Walker, 2008). They apparently see no sufficient reward for the difficulties involved in the role (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009).

Reticence to advance to become number one is also explained by the fact that Arab society sets many obstacles to achieving principalship, sometimes even involving fierce power struggles (Arar *et al.*, 2013). Even though these positions are considered highly desirable in Arab society, male domination of this position, a history of nominations based on power and hamulla (extended family) representation, and the practical difficulties of the role deter many deputies from this career path. For women deputies an additional obstacle, also found in other developing societies, is their commitment and society's expectation that they should to continue to shoulder domestic duties (Oplatka, 2006; Arar and Abu-Asbe, 2013). Worryingly, the findings appear to indicate a fall in the desire for promotion. The lack of preparatory training for these deputies, combined with traditional gender perceptions that limit women's participation in the public sphere and a low sense of self-efficacy may also contribute to their reticence to advance.

Despite the importance of the deputy to the school's functioning, and despite the recognition accorded to this role in reforms such as the *New Horizon* reform in Israel, there has been little consideration of the need for development of the deputy's career process in educational administration research (Harris *et al.*, 2003; Hausman *et al.*, 2002; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). The findings suggest that policy-makers should improve pre-practice training for deputies and encourage deputies' professional and career development. Deputies should receive in-role instruction and supervision, to help them to sharpen their role definition by identifying and distinguishing the issues that are within their frame of reference, from those which they aspire to perform, and those that they are supposed to do by statutory definition; and to facilitate appropriate function distribution between principal and deputy. These definitions should be tested by research concerning the optimal principal-deputy division of functions and conclusions from such research could assist academic institutions and policy-makers to develop training appropriate for the deputies' school setting and culture when implementing principles of the reform. A more profound understanding of the role

could also inform teacher-educators and principals ensuring greater efficiency in the implementation of the role. Well-trained deputies who acquire practical experience and tools are then able to lead others successfully through educational processes. Successful deputies could provide future skilled management cadres (Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Kwan and Walker, 2008; Wildy and Clark, 2008).

Although generalization of qualitative results is limited, the research findings show that the deputies clearly supported more comprehensive definition and the redesign of the deputy's role, so that in addition to managerial responsibility, the deputy would be responsible for staff instruction and guidance and their role in implementing reforms such as *New Horizons* would be clearer.

This partial picture of the deputy's role should be validated further with quantitative research to validate the requisite characteristics for the role, and map a suitable career path for deputies' advancement and areas that they could monitor. It would also be useful to conduct a converse study relating to principals' expectations from their deputies, possibly relating to gender differences in principals' attitudes and their consideration of both new and veteran deputies.

Note

1. Copies of the questionnaire in Hebrew can be obtained from the author.

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