

# Epistemological trends in educational leadership studies in Israel: 2000-2012

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to identify the epistemological trends in the Israeli Educational Leadership (EL) scholarship between the years 2000 and 2012.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The 51 studies included in this review were detected through a systematic search in online academic databases. Abstracts of studies identified as being relevant for this review were read, however, only empirical studies which addressed EL constructs, practices, and processes were ultimately included. As part of data analysis, studies were classified using categorization techniques. To ensure trustworthiness, two independent researchers systematically analyzed all studies. Themes were then compared with thematic trends found in other EL reviews.

**Findings** – Three themes, which reflect conceptual and methodological distinctions, emerged in this review: first, the impact of leadership on school effectiveness; second, the politics of leadership; third, alternative lenses of leadership. Findings revealed a prevalence of studies adopting alternative lenses in the Israeli scholarship, though they represent a blind spot internationally. In addition, findings revealed a blank spot in the Israeli research attributed to few studies which embed leadership into the realm of instruction, though they are prevalent around the world.

**Originality/value** – Theoretically, the findings of this review are valuable for providing a foundation from which to address the blank and blind spots in the field of EL. Practically, its contributions offer insights regarding the cultural complexities of EL-related constructs which may be valuable for local and international EL academics, policymakers, and practitioners, researching or implementing EL scholarship worldwide.

**Keywords** Principals, Israel, Leadership, Educational leadership, Epistemology, School leadership

**Paper type** General review

Cross-national comparisons of Educational Leadership (EL) studies in the Asia-based scholarship revealed that Israel constitutes a regional outlier in terms of its exceptional knowledge production and research capacity. In fact, despite many research-related obstacles inherent to a country of relative marginality in terms of its miniature size, Mideast location, and Hebrew language, Israel contributes to EL scholarship in impressive numbers with regards to scientific publications relative to its Asian counterparts, to be surpassed only by Hong Kong on a number of dimensions. More specifically, Israeli scholars produced 96 scientific publications between the years 2000 and 2011 across widely diverse research topics, accounting for 25.6 percent of the publications from the Asian scholarship (77 percent of the West Asian scholarship), and 20.3 percent of the Asia-based publication citations. These achievements are attributed to the researchers themselves but also to the characteristics of the EL research field in Israel (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013, in press).



In Israel, EL is a highly productive field comprised of 16 tenured faculty from six major universities and several academic colleges, serving diverse student populations, both Jewish and Arab (Nuphar, 2012; Oplatka, 2008). As a field of study, EL is researched by scholars in the Israeli higher education system with academic backgrounds in educational policy and administration or non-educational disciplines such as sociology or organizational psychology (Nuphar, 2012; Oplatka, 2011). Publications by these scholars are often the result of domestic rather than cross-national collaborations, fairly evenly spread across these institutions (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013, in press). Historically, Israeli researchers asked large-scale research questions regarding equal opportunities in a centrally oriented educational system (Oplatka, 2008); however, neo-liberal trends (e.g. marketization, competition, accountability) have largely shifted Israeli policies toward a focus on the school principal, a transition which has pushed researchers from across disciplines to adopt a more leadership-oriented agenda (Nuphar, 2012).

Following assertions that EL reviews should be conducted within individual societies in order to understand the “trend of topics studied as well as findings across studies” (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013, p. 18), the current review explores trends in knowledge productivity in the Israeli EL scholarship. Specifically, it offers a synchronic account of the field’s shifting theoretical and methodological tensions during the years 2000-2012 in order to uncover research trends which have hindered or advanced the international scholarship (see Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). Here it is argued that an investigation of research trends may shed light on the dialectic and often spiral nature of knowledge production which, as this review demonstrates, can lead to a regression in theoretical or methodological approaches for the purpose of epistemological progression. Indeed, as research questions evolve, they synthesize designs and findings to explain how leadership impacts and is impacted by macro- and micro-level processes and outcomes.

The synchronic perspective taken in this review contrasts from other epistemological approaches common for analyzing trends related to knowledge production. This includes a diachronic perspective which offers a chronological analysis of the field’s historical developments, i.e., its focal areas and legacies, to highlight the shifting discourses paving the way for contemporary EL scholars, today (see Bogotch, 2005; Cuban, 1988; Oplatka, 2010, 2012); or a structural approach which describes the field’s disciplinary boundaries and constituents (its “insiders” and “outsiders”) to ask broader questions about professional meanings and identities (see Oplatka, 2009, 2014). In specifically taking a synchronic approach for investigating the empirical trends shaping the Israeli research base, this review is limited in its capacity to tackle the wide spectrum of knowledge production issues inherent to EL research. Nevertheless, this review is not without value as it asks vital questions intended to uncover Israel’s epistemological contributions to the wider international scholarship.

These questions are framed as follows. First, what were the major epistemological trends in the Israeli EL scholarship during the years 2000-2012 in terms of philosophical frameworks, conceptual models, methodologies, and research findings? Second, did research patterns in the Israeli scholarship converge with or diverge from research developments taking place in the world at this time? With these questions in mind, the broader purpose of this review is to determine whether Israeli research produces more of the same trends reflected in the international scholarship or diverges from normative, i.e., western, accounts of EL, offering alternative or non-conventional views and/or interpretations of leadership constructs and phenomena. By presenting Israel’s contributions to the EL literature, this review

offers the Israeli angle to EL research to supplement the narrative of the international research base, including where it stands today from an epistemological and, hence, multicultural point of view.

### Conceptual framework

EL has significantly evolved since its inception several decades ago when descriptive accounts of school principals permeated the school-based literature (Beck and Murphy, 1993; Callahan, 1964; Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood and Duke, 1999; Oplatka, 2010; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Since then, EL has transformed into a diverse academic discipline tackling multi-faceted research questions asking not only about the “what” of leadership, i.e., the direct impact of leadership, but also about the “when,” i.e., the circumstances shaping leadership, the “why” and the “how,” i.e., intervening or indirect factors explaining leadership outcomes (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Neumerski, 2013; York-Barr and Duke, 2004). In fact, a field traditionally concerned with the practicalities of the principalship progressed into a theoretically driven discipline, widely attributed to the theory movement of Educational Administration (EA) of the 1950s, in which “wisdom of practice” was replaced with “rigorous procedures” (Oplatka, 2010, p. 33). Over time, epistemological developments, spanning philosophical and methodological issues, have generated tensions between contrasting and conflicting leadership ideas. While this review acknowledges that multiple perspectives surfaced in parallel (e.g. normative vs critical discourses) and hence the limitations of a progressivist view of change (Blackmore, 1996, p. 1008), in reviewing these developments in linear fashion, these tensions are particularly noticeable (Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood and Duke, 1999).

EL has undergone substantive changes over the years with regards to its leadership models because of evolving research questions and methodologies guiding knowledge inquiry (Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood and Duke, 1999). In the 1960s and 1970s, structural-functional approaches to research, ones asking questions about how principals, the school’s “bureaucratic executives” enhanced school effectiveness, were addressed through contingency models (Beck and Murphy, 1993; Fiedler, 1967; Hersey, 1985). Using empirical approaches to examine the notion of fit between principal’s managerial styles (e.g. authoritative vs democratic-oriented leadership) and school effectiveness, contingency models shifted the field methodologically from descriptive accounts of principal traits toward empirical investigations of principal tasks and behaviors. The positivistic manner in which leadership was examined during this time was influenced by the rationalization of organizational processes in schools. However, growing criticism against such philosophies had begun to surface since the 1970s, as scholars expressed doubts about such linear conceptions of school organization (Oplatka, 2010).

Despite these doubts, quantitative studies dominated the following decade, the 1980s, particularly those focussing on instructional and transformational leadership. Instructional leadership studies examined how the school principal, the head of instructional authority and expertise, effectively managed the school’s pedagogic goals and practices (Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2003; Murphy, 1990). While instructional leadership extended the positivistic tradition of earlier contingency models, it conflicted conceptually with contingent leadership, which mostly disregarded matters of instruction (Leithwood and Duke, 1999). Transformational leadership also became prominent at the time, following studies on the charismatic influence of leaders (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). In contrast to earlier leadership styles which addressed the direct effects of leadership, transformational leadership focussed on principals’ proactivity

to indirectly shape organizational circumstances to change rather than to maintain the status quo (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005). In conjunction, Greenfield's (1986) "revolutions" against rational approaches for examining school administration paved the way for qualitative methodologies to challenge quantitative methodologies which guided leadership studies until this time.

During the 1990s, qualitative methods accompanied quantitative studies as researchers became increasingly cognizant of uncertainties facing the school organization and the changing roles of teachers (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Teacher models of leadership, including participative leadership, entered the discourse, focussing on the role of teachers in the school's decision-making processes. While the idea of participation by teachers was discussed in years prior, e.g., to contrast from authoritative leadership perspectives of the 1960s and 1970s, present-day teacher models emphasized teachers' pedagogic input to enhance school effectiveness or democratization (Leithwood and Duke, 1999). Although teacher leadership challenged earlier models that took a "leader-centric" approach for depicting leader-follower relationships, it extended the tradition of focussing on school outcomes rather than processes, one that was largely shattered with the debut of distributed leadership.

During the 2000s, distributed leadership emerged, focussing on organizational routines, ones initiated not only by the principal, but also by teachers and other staff across the school's organizational hierarchy. Distributed leadership diverged from positivistic views of leaders and followers toward constructivist-oriented perspectives about how leadership transforms teaching and learning processes behind the classroom door (Gronn, 2002; Spillane *et al.*, 1999; Spillane, 2006). Using a sense-making approach to inquiry, distributed leadership not only resolved many of the leadership tensions traditionally characterizing the field (the division between leaders vs followers, distinctions between transactional vs transformational approaches, and concern for leadership from the top-down vs from the bottom-up) but also addressed a particular blank spot in the field, i.e., leadership phenomena warranting further investigation, specifically, bottom-up oriented questions regarding the "how" of leadership, to carry the field forward (Heck and Hallinger, 1999).

Theoretical angles commonly left out of the normative discourse of leadership have also seeped into the scholarship over the years, attributed to EA and EL scholars who argued for multi-dimensional (i.e. non-linear) approaches to inquiry (Bates, 1984; Beck, 1994; Foster, 1986). Political perspectives focussed on the roles and relationships within schools to expose obscure power relationships or broader political issues in the context of large-scale reform (Gronn, 1986; Waite and Allen, 2003). Critically oriented approaches emphasized feminist, post-modern, and cultural angles to highlight social inequalities typically ignored through normative or modern leadership narratives (English, 2003; Lomotey, 1989; Ortiz and Marshall, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1989). Using a plethora of qualitative techniques including ethnographic tools, case studies, life stories, social critique methods, etc., these non-normative frameworks of inquiry, e.g., political and critical, have taken a more contextual approach to demonstrate that leadership is inherently shaped by the framework in which it operates. In doing so, they have addressed a blind spot in the field, i.e., knowledge that has been curtailed because of the traditional lenses guiding inquiry, preventing us from "seeing other facets of the phenomenon under investigation" (Heck and Hallinger, 1999, p. 141, 2005).

In retrospect, the field of EL has undergone substantive changes since the 1960s, some occurring in isolation while others were influenced or intertwined with EA and other organizational developments at the time. These changes have pushed the field forward

both conceptually and methodologically with regards to top-down or bottom-up processes, micro- and macro-organizational politics in broader social or policy settings, or alternative lenses to inquiry to offer unconventional accounts typically overlooked in the normative discourse. These research developments not only provide insight into EL trends over the years, but also serve as a valuable point of entry for engaging in broader discussion about whether the Israeli research converges with or diverges from the international scholarship on these particular epistemological issues.

### Method

The present review is based on articles published by Israeli scholars between 2000 and 2012 on the topic of EL. In order to maximize the probability of conducting a search which most closely approximated all available research, articles were searched in online academic databases, namely, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and local Hebrew University search engines (see Cooper, 1982). Using automatic term recognition, a common text mining approach, the following keywords were searched: "Israel," "educational leadership," "school leadership," "principal/ship," and any combination thereof (see Thomas *et al.*, 2011). Additional studies referenced by articles initially detected were also considered if they appeared relevant for this review. Abstracts of all studies were considered, but only empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals which addressed issues specific to EL constructs, practices, and processes were ultimately included. It should be noted that the final corpus of studies includes ones addressing issues in educational policy and administration, but only if they were directly or indirectly related to EL.

### *Studies included in the review*

Given the review's objective of assessing the contribution of the Israeli scholarship to the international field rather than individual authors, the units of analysis in this review were the EL studies themselves. In all, 51 empirical studies comprised the final corpus of articles[1]. These articles included 25 quantitative, 25 qualitative, and one mixed-methods study which were published in 23 journals across three journal types in terms of the issues they publish on: EA and EL, general issues in education, and behavioral and social sciences. Table I presents the distribution of journals and studies included in this review based on journal types.

Although these journals publish studies that were conducted in many areas around the world, studies included in this review were conducted solely in Israel by scholars from major Israeli universities, colleges, and research institutions (e.g. Bar-Ilan University, Ben-Gurion University, Haifa University, The Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, Beit-Berl Academic College, and others).

When considering the affiliation of the principals and teachers who were researched by Israeli scholars, it appears that most studies examined leadership within the realm of primary rather than secondary education. However, this review also detected a considerable number of articles which studied leadership across grade-level. Table II presents the distribution of school type sampled or with which participants were affiliated.

**Table I.**

Distribution of journals and studies based on journal type

Journal type	Number of journals ( $n = 23$ )	Number of studies ( $n = 51$ )
Educational administration and leadership	7	33
General issues in education	9	11
Behavioral and social sciences	7	7

*Data analysis*

To complement Hallinger and Bryant's (2013) quantitative analyses of Israel's regional EL knowledge production, the analysis of studies in this review was designed to explore thematic trends and therefore was primarily qualitative in nature. As part of data analysis, studies were read and summarized using a structured format which detailed their purpose, methods, and key findings (Barnett-Page and Thomas, 2009). Two reviewers independently coded these summaries along thematic, methodological, and conceptual dimensions and identified categories in which studies compared and contrasted.

*Thematic analysis*

To distinguish between studies in terms of thematic trends, framework synthesis was employed to organize, and in some cases rearrange, summaries into a comprehensive chart which compared and contrasted studies to reveal their similarities and differences (Thomas and Harden, 2008). Codes were then created in an inductive fashion in order to capture the essence of each summary. To ensure trustworthiness, these themes were compared with the thematic trends found in other EL reviews (see Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood and Duke, 1999; Oplatka, 2008, 2010). Three thematic trends emerged following analysis: first, the impact of leadership on school effectiveness; second, the politics of leadership; and third, alternative lenses of leadership.

*Methodological analysis*

Within each theme, this review made methodological distinctions in order to differentiate between the research methods employed by these studies. These distinctions are based on those presented by Hallinger (2011) in his review of instructional leadership studies, including, descriptive (correlation), single factor without control (*t*-test, ANOVA, repeated measures), single factor with control (ANCOVA), multiple factor (MANOVA), and advanced modeling (HLM and SEM). In this review, methodological categories were expanded to reflect the research methods employed by Israeli EL studies. As such, multiple regression analyses (regression, multivariate regression, multinomial regression, and discriminant analysis) and non-parametric statistics ( $\chi^2$ ) were included.

This study also differentiated between qualitative studies in terms of the extent to which they addressed issues in trustworthiness through triangulation, a method for collecting and analyzing data from multiple perspectives to establish credibility (Shenton, 2004). Several types of triangulation are discussed in the literature (see Guion *et al.*, 2011), including: data triangulation, which involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study; investigator triangulation, which involves using several different investigators in the analysis process; methodological triangulation, which involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods to study the program; and environmental triangulation, which involves the use of different locations, settings, and other key factors related to the environment in which the study took place, such as the time, day, or season.

School type	Total ( <i>n</i> = 51)
Primary schools	22
Secondary schools	4
Both	18
Not specified	7

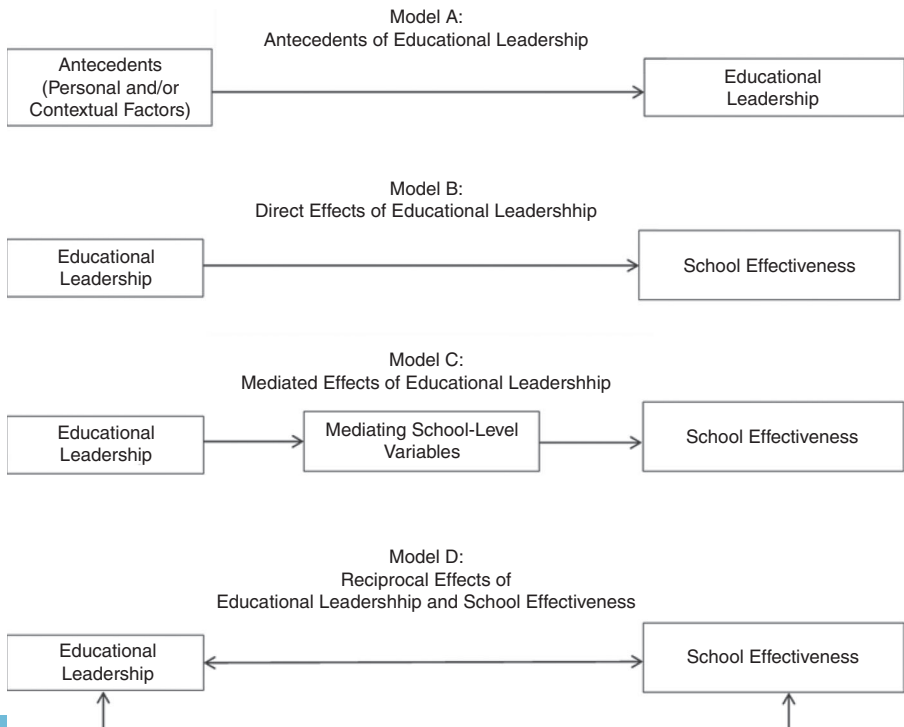
**Table II.**  
Distribution of  
school type

*Conceptual analysis*

This review further distinguished between studies in terms of the types of relationships they examined between EL and personal and/or contextual factors. To do so, it relied on the conceptual distinctions presented by Hallinger (2011), originally based on Pitner (1988). Hallinger differentiated between four types of instructional leadership effects: antecedent effects, direct effects, mediated effects, and reciprocal effects. This review adopted Hallinger’s distinctions to distinguish between the conceptual relationships examined by the Israeli EL scholarship, yet too made modifications to these models in order to better reflect the conceptual designs depicted by these studies. Figure 1 presents this review’s adaptation of Hallinger’s (2011) conceptual models for the Israeli EL scholarship.

Model A represents studies which examined the antecedents of EL. Studies accounting for personal antecedents relating directly to the teachers or school principals (e.g. teachers’ competence, principals’ sense of professional identity) were classified as A1. Those which accounted for contextual antecedents (e.g. school-based management abbreviated as SBM reform, principal training program, cultural setting) were classified as A2. Studies which examined both personal and contextual antecedents (e.g. principals’ self-esteem or gender vs district characteristics or cultural setting) were classified as A3.

Model B represents studies which examined the direct effects of EL on school effectiveness, i.e., teacher-related outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors) or school-related outcomes (e.g. student achievement, school entrepreneurship). If moderating variables were included in the research design (e.g. personality dimensions, LMX, and organizational culture), referred to in the literature



**Figure 1.**  
Adaptation of Hallinger’s (2011) conceptual models for the Israeli EL scholarship

as interaction effects (see Baron and Kenny, 1986), studies were classified as B1. If moderating variables were not included in the design, studies were classified as B2.

Model C includes studies which examined the mediating variables (e.g. school vision as well as teachers' occupational perception, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, motivation, and sense of empowerment) through which EL indirectly impacts school effectiveness (teacher- or school-related outcomes). If moderating variables were included in the research design, referred to in the literature as moderated-mediation effects, studies were classified as C1 (Baron and Kenny, 1986). If moderating variables were not included in the design, they were classified as C2.

Model D includes studies which examined the reciprocal relationship between EL and school effectiveness. Hallinger did not find any such studies, which he attributed to methodological challenges associated with this conceptual approach.

Non-applicable (N/A) includes studies which did not fall into the previous models because they were based on non-directional research designs, as was the case of qualitative studies. Qualitative studies could therefore not be classified based on these directional models given their conceptual and methodological constraints. Nevertheless, qualitative studies which explicitly or implicitly interpreted their findings in ways which echoed these particular models are presented in order to enrich the discussion of this review, despite their constraints within the framework of this analysis.

## Findings

### *Theme 1: the impact of leadership on school effectiveness*

Theme 1 consists of 20 studies which examined the impact of leadership on school effectiveness. Table III presents the leadership styles examined by Theme 1 studies.

Studies examining the impact of leadership on teacher-related outcomes centered on the tension between transactional vs transformational leadership (e.g. Nir and Kranot, 2006) and directive vs participative leadership (e.g. Bogler and Somech, 2005). Those focussing on school-related outcomes also examined how instructional, distributed or general leadership practices impacted the school (e.g. Eyal and Yosef-Hassidim, 2012; Gaziel, 2007).

Next, Table IV presents the research methods employed in Theme 1 studies.

Methodologically, these studies primarily relied on quantitative methods, most of which were based on advanced statistical models (e.g. Somech, 2005). The few studies which relied on qualitative methods conducted semi-structured interviews as part of data collection. To ensure trustworthiness, all Theme 1 qualitative studies employed environmental triangulation. Half of them also triangulated data (interviews) using multiple data sources or carried out data analysis processes using multiple investigators (e.g. Wasserstein-Warnet and Klein, 2000). The tendency of qualitative studies to address

Leadership style	Total ( $n = 21^a$ )
Transformational vs transactional	11
Participative vs directive	6
Distributed	2
Instructional	1
General leadership	1

**Note:** <sup>a</sup>The total number of studies presented in this table (21) exceeds the number of studies included in Theme 1 (20) because one study was listed twice, under both transformational vs transactional and participative vs directive leadership categories

**Table III.**  
Theme 1 leadership  
styles



triangulation through multiple avenues reflects the institutionalization of conventional research techniques for studying school effectiveness regardless of research methodology.

Finally, Table V presents the conceptual models identified in Theme 1 studies.

Direct and mediated effects studies (B2 and C2) examined the effects of leadership on teacher-related or school-related outcomes, demonstrating the relative advantage of transformational and participative leadership over transactional and directive leadership, respectively (e.g. Eyal and Roth, 2011). In contrast with B2 and C2 models, moderated effects studies (B1) focussed on the contingencies of leadership to present how moderating variables (e.g. organizational culture) facilitate the effectiveness of seemingly contradicting leadership styles (transformational vs transactional and participative vs directive leadership) (e.g. Nahum-Shani and Somech, 2011).

Qualitative studies echoed relationships presented in these conceptual models. For example, one study metaphorically reflected ideas resonated by B2 studies regarding the superiority of transformational and participative leadership in explaining teacher-related outcomes (OCB) (Oplatka, 2006). Another study, metaphorically, a reciprocal effects model (Model D), depicted the interaction between leadership and school-related outcomes (e.g. school success) (Tubin, 2011). Along with B1 (moderating effects) studies, this last study, demonstrates that the way in which leadership functions in schools is a complex phenomenon when examining it through multiple angles and directions.

*Theme 2: the politics of leadership*

Theme 2 consists of 14 studies which asked politically oriented questions about leadership conflicts or dilemmas. Table VI presents the political issues examined by Theme 2 studies.

**Table IV.**  
Theme 1 research  
methods

Type of research method	Total (n = 20)
<i>Quantitative</i>	16
Advanced modeling	9
Multiple regression analysis	6
Single factor with control	1
<i>Qualitative</i>	4

**Table V.**  
Theme 1 conceptual  
models

Model	Description of conceptual model	Total (n = 20)
A1	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal	0
A2	Antecedents of educational leadership – contextual	0
A3	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal and contextual	0
B1	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	5
B2	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	5
C1	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	0
C2	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	6
D	Reciprocal effects of educational leadership and school effectiveness	0
N/A	Not applicable	4

Of these studies, most addressed macro-political issues including changing leadership roles, power struggles, or ethical dilemmas as principals came in contact with system-wide policies (e.g. decentralization including SBM) or social trends (e.g. mass-media, marketization, or accountability) (e.g. Addi-Raccah and Gavish, 2010). The remainder of Theme 2 studies centered on micro-political issues which impacted leadership in school, decontextualized from a broader policy or social setting (e.g. Nir, 2008).

Table VII presents the research methods employed by Theme 2 studies.

Half of Theme 2 qualitative studies did not report triangulation, while the others relied on one of the following triangulation techniques: multiple data sources, multiple investigators, or mixed research methods (e.g. Eden and Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2002). Although one mixed-methods study was based on a longitudinal (advanced) design (Nir, 2003), quantitative studies utilized non-modeling statistical procedures, demonstrating the inclination of Theme 2 studies to rely on common research methods to examine complex research questions.

Regarding conceptual models, Theme 2 studies were classified as either antecedent effects models (A models) or N/A. Table VIII presents the conceptual models of Theme 2 studies.

Conceptually, quantitative studies point to professional conflicts faced by school leaders at the core of which rests the tension between professional integrity vs the need for legitimacy by stakeholders (e.g. Friedman, 2002). In doing so, these studies underscored principals' role-conflicts, as principals struggled with multiple demands.

While the remainder of studies were not applicable to these conceptual models, metaphorically they reflected similar tensions. For example, one study echoed A1 studies by examining how teachers' poor performance led to non-professional evaluation practices (Yariv, 2004). Another study (metaphorically, A2) focussed on the way in which media and marketization trends shifted principals' considerations toward ones that were

**Table VI.**  
Theme 2 political  
issues

Political issues	Total ( $n = 14$ )
<i>Macro-politics</i>	9
Decentralization (including SBM)	4
Teacher evaluation	2
Media and marketization	2
Accountability	1
<i>Micro-politics</i>	5
Challenging teachers	3
Principals' help-seeking	1
Principals' burn-out	1

**Table VII.**  
Theme 2 research  
methods

Type of research method	Total ( $n = 14$ )
<i>Quantitative</i>	5
Multiple regression analysis	2
Multiple factor	1
Descriptive	1
Non-parametric	1
<i>Qualitative</i>	8
<i>Mixed methods</i>	1

**Table VIII.**  
Theme 2 conceptual  
models

Model	Description of conceptual model	Total (n = 14)
A1	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal	1
A2	Antecedents of educational leadership – contextual	3
A3	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal and contextual	1
B1	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	0
B2	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	0
C1	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	0
C2	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	0
D	Reciprocal effects of educational leadership and school effectiveness	0
N/A	Not applicable	9

more image-oriented, arguably at the expense of professionalism (Gavish and Oplatka, 2012). Along with quantitative studies, qualitative studies point to tensions that manifest when school leaders struggle with normative (e.g. bureaucratic, market-based, regulatory) pressures.

### *Theme 3: alternative lenses of leadership*

Theme 3 consists of 17 studies which examined leadership using alternative lenses to inquiry. Table IX presents the alternative issues examined by Theme 3 studies.

Within the context of western culture, several studies adopted feminist lenses to examine leadership constructions (e.g. Oplatka and Tamir, 2009), while others centered on how professional issues over the course of teachers' and principals' career shape leadership conceptions (e.g. Oplatka and Tako, 2009). Studies adopting a more critical lens to leadership examined leadership in the context of non-western (i.e. Arab) culture, namely, the obstacles and successes of female principals in a male-dominated society (e.g. Shapira *et al.*, 2011). Complementing western and non-western studies were few cross-cultural studies which compared leadership attitudes and behaviors across different cultural settings (e.g. Jewish, Arab, Druze) (e.g. Popper and Sleman, 2001).

Table X presents the research methods employed by Theme 3 studies.

Theme 3 quantitative studies were based on non-modeling statistical procedures. Most Theme 3 studies, however, employed qualitative methods, more than half of which addressed trustworthiness using investigator triangulation (e.g. Arar and Oplatka, 2013). Few employed environment or data triangulation (e.g. Arar and Oplatka, 2011). The tendency of Theme 3 studies to address trustworthiness through investigator

**Table IX.**  
Theme 3 alternative  
issues

Alternative issues	Total (n = 17)
Non-western	7
Professional	5
Feminist	3
Cross-cultural	2

triangulation “to develop a broader and deeper understanding of how the different investigators view the issue” (Guion *et al.*, 2011, p. 2), demonstrates the constructivist nature of these studies.

Table XI presents the conceptual models of Theme 3 studies.

Conceptually, Theme 3 studies represented either antecedent effects models (A models) or were considered N/A. Quantitative studies reflected A models in that they examined how professional, gender, or cultural contingencies explain prevailing leadership conventions (e.g. Addi-Raccah, 2006). These studies suggested that social structures or cultural norms shape the way in which leadership constructions manifest differently across contexts.

Qualitative studies, while not applicable to these conceptual models, also pointed out cross-contextual differences in leadership constructions. Unlike quantitative studies, however, qualitative studies acknowledged these differences as a point of departure in their explorations. Hence, rather than focussing on explaining these differences, qualitative studies were engaged in constructing and reconstructing alternative leadership conceptualizations.

Such was the case of two studies (metaphorically A1 model) which adopted a feminist lens to reveal that job satisfaction was considered by female principals to be an undesirable condition (Oplatka and Mimon, 2008) or burn-out, while also undesirable, to be related with innovation-oriented management (Oplatka, 2002). This was also demonstrated by two studies (metaphorically A3) which revealed a preference for androgynous leadership (Oplatka, 2004) or an ethic of concern in non-western settings (Arar, 2010). By supplementing traditional leadership dichotomies (e.g. directive vs participative leadership) with more critical perspectives, many Theme 3 studies presented alternative narratives of leadership, and, as a result, a more diversified world view.

**Table X.**  
Theme 3 research  
methods

Type of research method	Total ( <i>n</i> = 17)
<i>Quantitative</i>	4
Descriptive	2
Multiple regression analysis	1
Single factor without control	1
<i>Qualitative</i>	13

**Table XI.**  
Theme 3 conceptual  
models

Model	Description of conceptual model	Total ( <i>n</i> = 17)
A1	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal	1
A2	Antecedents of educational leadership – contextual	2
A3	Antecedents of educational leadership – personal and contextual	1
B1	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	0
B2	Direct effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	0
C1	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness with moderating variables included in the model	0
C2	Mediated effects of educational leadership on school effectiveness without moderating variables included in the model	0
D	Reciprocal effects of educational leadership and school effectiveness	0
N/A	Not applicable	13

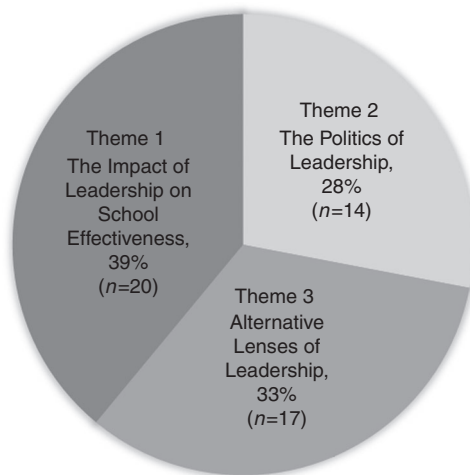
**Discussion**

The studies reviewed in this paper reflect epistemological trends guiding the Israeli EL scholarship during the years 2000-2012. These trends are based around three major themes: first, the impact of leadership on school effectiveness; second, the politics of leadership; and third, alternative lenses of leadership. These themes differ in terms of their research questions and leadership styles, but also in terms of the conceptual models they presented and research methods they utilized. Figure 2 presents the distribution of studies according to the themes which surfaced following data analysis[2].

Theme 1 studies, which examined the impact of leadership on school effectiveness, comprised 39 percent of the research corpus in this review. These studies focussed on teacher- and school-related outcomes to ask questions about direct effects (B2 model), moderated effects (B1 model), or mediated effects (C2 model) of leadership in order to explain the relationship between leadership and school effectiveness. In doing so, these studies asked questions about the “what,” “when,” and “how” of EL. Findings revealed that traditional leadership tensions (e.g. transactional vs transformational or directive vs participative) were shattered when complex research designs were employed.

Theme 2 studies, examining the politics of leadership, comprised 28 percent of the research. These studies focussed on role-related changes or power struggles faced by the school principal. Some studies (A1 model) explored micro-political issues which intervened with the professional considerations of the school principal. Most studies (A2 model), however, examined leadership dilemmas in the context of macro-political issues (e.g. decentralization, marketization) which have impacted the Israeli educational system in recent years. Theme 2 studies demonstrate that under complex political circumstances, leaders are conflicted between renegotiating leadership roles and succumbing to institutional pressures.

Theme 3 studies, examining alternative lenses of leadership, comprised 33 percent of the research. These studies asked large-scale research questions which were explored using alternative angles to inquiry, and which accentuated the inherent role that context plays in the construction of leadership. Specifically, they relied on professional, feminist, and/or cultural lenses to explain leadership across social and cultural boundaries



**Figure 2.**  
Distribution of studies by themes

Note: n=51

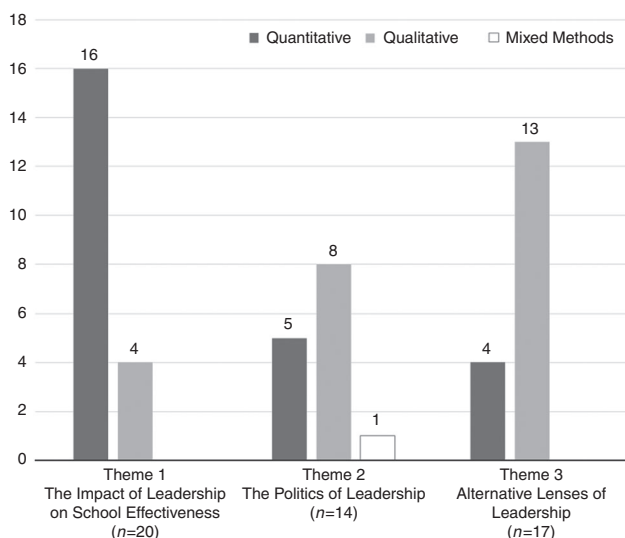
(metaphorically reflecting A models), raising questions which challenge a prototypical leadership conception. Rather than explicitly condemning social reproduction and the role of leadership in preserving social inequities (Heck and Hallinger, 1999), as is common in critical studies, Theme 3 studies offered a non-normative account of leadership to challenge the dominant (i.e. western) discourse and expose the ways in which leadership simultaneously shapes and is shaped by its respective setting.

Based on these comparisons, studies which were most prevalent in this review (Theme 1 studies) were also more normative relative to Themes 2 and 3. However, the counter-balance of political and alternative approaches for understanding the complexity of leadership demonstrates the multi-dimensionality with which EL is examined in Israel. It should be noted that Theme 2 studies, while more contentious in comparison to Theme 1, were seemingly less provocative in comparison to Theme 3, given their reliance on more conventional frameworks to point out organizational incongruities.

Accompanying thematic variations were methodological distinctions. Figure 3 presents the research methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) adopted by the studies in this review along thematic trends.

Theme 1 (school effectiveness) studies relied mostly on quantitative methods based on advanced statistical models to examine leadership attitudes and behaviors. Theme 2 (political) studies employed mostly qualitative methods, but to a considerable extent also utilized quantitative methods based on non-modeling statistical procedures to uncover role-related leadership tensions. Relying mostly on qualitative methods, Theme 3 (alternative) studies presented social constructs in ways which exposed non-normative leadership practices and ideas.

The tendency of Theme 1 studies to adopt quantitative methods vs the tendency of Theme 3 studies to adopt qualitative methods may be explained by differences in the extent to which their research questions are embedded in the EL research tradition. The former asks questions which are institutionalized in the field and therefore requires methods which are themselves well-established, while the latter,



Note: n=51

**Figure 3.**  
Research methods  
by theme

concerned with examining “other facets of the phenomenon under investigation” (Heck and Hallinger, 1999, p. 141), asks questions which are far less crystallized, and therefore depends on constructivist approaches to advance.

When comparing these epistemological trends to the international scholarship, similarities, and differences between the Israeli vs international scholarships are apparent. Like the international scholarship, Israeli studies presented traditional leadership tensions, including transactional vs transformational and directive vs participative approaches (see Leithwood and Duke, 1999; Neumerski, 2013; York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Methodologically, Israeli studies, like research conducted internationally, employed quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods designs.

In contrast to research worldwide, however, only two Israeli studies researched instructional leadership while two examined leadership using a distributed perspective. However, these studies were epistemological outliers in the grand scheme of this review. Hence, while the international scholarship tackles instructional issues using instructional, distributed, and/or teacher leadership approaches (see Neumerski, 2013; Spillane, 2006; York-Barr and Duke, 2004), in Israel, few studies embedded leadership into the realm of instruction, reflecting a blank spot, i.e., an epistemological area that has yet to develop, in the Israeli research base. On the other hand, studies adopting alternative lenses of leadership were significantly represented in Israel, though they reflect a blind spot in the international scholarship, i.e., knowledge curtailed because of traditional lenses guiding inquiry (Heck and Hallinger, 1999). This demonstrates the shift of the EL scholarship in Israel from its roots in EA toward diverse perspectives of leadership, particularly in relation to the field’s international developments.

These incongruities raise vital questions as they pertain to the Israeli scholarship. First, why is the Israeli EL research polarized between issues of school effectiveness vs large-scale sociological issues, while neglecting to embed leadership into the realm of instruction? Second, why were alternative approaches to leadership study prevalent in the Israeli scholarship, though they are fairly less common internationally?

In response to the first question, a brief historical account of the Israeli EL field is warranted. Historically, EL did not exist in Israel as an academic discipline until the 1990s (see Oplatka, 2008). Prior to the 1990s, the pioneers of educational policy and administration scholarship, having disciplinary training in administration, sociology, law, etc., mostly conducted “big-question” studies addressing equal opportunities in a centrally oriented educational system (Nuphar, 2012; Oplatka, 2008; Oplatka and Waite, 2010). During the 1990s, the introduction of school-based accountability pressures and other decentralized policies in the Israeli educational system placed the school principal in the center of the educational discourse (see Nuphar, 2012).

As a result, younger scholars educated by the pioneers of EA adjusted their research agendas to reflect these changing circumstances. Nevertheless, their academic socialization resounds even today across studies adopting political and alternative leadership perspectives. The shift in the field also led to a recruitment of scholars from non-educational disciplines (see Nuphar, 2012), e.g., organizational studies, which may explain why much of the EL research today is focussed on micro-issues of school effectiveness rather than matters of instruction. These historical developments, while capturing the landscape of Israeli EL research, do not account for the prevalence of studies adopting alternative lenses in the Israeli scholarship, considered a blind spot internationally.

The question of why alternative EL approaches are common in the Israeli scholarship may, instead, be explained using social network theory. From a social network perspective, the relative prevalence of publication and citations of Israeli studies in

international journals (see Hallinger and Bryant, 2013), suggests a direct link between Israeli scholars and international research hubs. Such a link is generally associated with restricted capacity to diverge from the research agendas of “stars” in the network, in terms of research questions, methodological tools, rules of evidence, and canonical trends (see Moody, 2004). However, the inclination of Israeli researchers to publish individually or with domestic scholars (see Hallinger and Bryant, 2013), suggests a looseness (or partial looseness) between Israeli scholars and the international hub, providing them opportunities to maintain a local and diverse research agenda.

Domestic cooperation may be interpreted as a cluster network structure, which typically unifies ideation space and restricts ideas from diverging into international venues (see Gondal, 2011). However, the absence of a prominent EL research center and an equal distribution of scholarship among Israeli universities (see Hallinger and Bryant, in press), facilitates alternative approaches to inquiry within the system. Taken together, the loose connection to the international research hub, as well as the weak ties within the Israeli cluster, allow Israeli scholars to diffuse alternative approaches beyond the local network. Further research examining the citation patterns of Israeli research as well as cooperation between Israeli vs international scholars, is warranted, however, to support these claims.

The historical and network explanations offered above point to autonomy in the Israeli EL scholarship, which seems to be magnified by the discretion inherent in the Israeli higher education system. Israeli scholars work in culture which embraces academic freedom, granting them considerable discretion with regards to the topics they research and the journals in which they publish. The degrees of freedom embedded in the Israeli higher education system can be particularly exploited in a discipline such as EA, an emerging field of study in Israel having vague scholarly boundaries (Nuphar, 2012). The confluence between the academic circumstances of EL scholars with the socio-educational composition of their “research laboratory,” i.e., the primary and secondary Israeli education system, one which is characterized by cultural diversity (e.g. Jewish, Arab, Druze populations) and political tensions, leads to a regeneration of research opportunities, so to speak, from which new synergy is created for academic creativity and enhanced ideation space.

The implications of this study may lead to collaboration between Israeli vs international scholars particularly in areas where blank and blind spots differ between the two scholarships; these cross-cultural partnerships could encourage multiple lenses instead of narrow perspectives for studying EL. Indeed, this review suggests the need to conduct research which crosses cultural boundaries and perspectives, yet maintains discretion for scholarly innovation. This is particularly relevant in new disciplines with unclear boundaries, in which strong and weak ties are significant for the diffusion of knowledge; strong ties to enhance legitimacy and weak ties to disperse diversity (see Gondal, 2011). Future research may benefit from studies which synthesize multiple lenses or streams of leadership as well as international collaboration to broaden the discourse of EL, spanning issues within and beyond the classroom toward a broader discussion about social justice. Practically, the review urges educational policymakers and practitioners to consider contextual issues when engaging in educational processes including issues of instruction, teacher evaluation, politics, organizational culture, career path, and others. In addition, it urges practitioners to recognize the limitations of EL studies when implementing them in the school or classroom, including the extent to which they are culturally relevant for their particular setting.

The limitations of this review stem from its reliance on a limited corpus of English-language papers published in international journals. Additional studies on EL, in fact, exist in the Hebrew scholarship, including in refereed journals, non-refereed journals,



and books. However, because Hebrew publications cannot reach an English-speaking audience to contribute to a multicultural discourse, they were deliberately excluded in this review. Additionally, in focussing on leadership rather than on broader issues of EA and educational policy, this review overlooked a significant portion of studies which were not specifically leadership-oriented, yet could have contributed to the discussion of EL beyond the scope of this study. However, given a prominent international focus on leadership nowadays, this review centered specifically on issues of leadership rather than broader educational issues in order to contribute to a leadership-specific discourse.

Methodologically, in only focussing on empirical studies, this review overlooked conceptual studies or reviews for inclusion. However, it did so given that empirical research reflects a central means for advancing leadership study, which is also the case in Israel (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013). Finally, in taking a qualitative rather than meta-analysis approach, this review does not provide a quantitative estimate of the magnitude of the relationship between EL and other organizational constructs. However, given the limited number of quantitative studies which adopted similar leadership perspectives and measurement tools, and the fact that the available studies are both quantitative and qualitative, a qualitative analysis was deemed more appropriate than a meta-analysis in order to span the full corpus of empirical studies which comprise the Israeli scholarship.

Despite these limitations, this review offers a rich foundation from which to guide EL scholarship and practice in the future. In particular, the findings offered by this review provide a point of departure from which to continue a local or international discussion regarding the direction in which the EL research is headed, one which recognizes culturally diverse lenses to research to provide a multicultural account of the field today. Ideally, this exchange would consist of a pluralistic agenda which considers the cultural issues shaping EL, spanning leadership antecedents, processes, and outcomes largely undermined in the conventional literature. In addition, this review can inform Israeli scholars about international trends and developments as they continue to progress research in the field, having local as well as wider reach and impact around the world. While this review is based on Israeli-centered leadership issues, it is valuable nonetheless in providing a non-western and hence unconventional perspective to leadership which might otherwise go untold. Taken together, although this review is merely a small piece of the global conversation to come, it offers a lens through which to explore meaningful issues facing the field of EL today, one which may resonate in the international scholarship as it advances country-specific or cross-cultural research in the years ahead.

### Notes

1. One study identified during the search (Somech, 2003) centered on issues related to participative leadership. However, because it did not reflect any of the themes that surfaced in this review, it was ultimately omitted.
2. This calculation does not account for the weighted contribution of individual authors, a computational approach which may have inflated the balance of themes, especially given few contributing authors in this corpus of studies. To address this potential methodological bias, we conservatively recalculated the number of studies, per theme, that were published by unique authors. The modified calculation considered a study only if its authors did not contribute to another publication (no matter order of authorship) in the same theme. Following the new calculation, the percentages of studies, per theme, did not change dramatically (42, 33, and 25 percent, respectively); specifically, Themes 2 and 3, when combined, were prominent nonetheless. This finding justifies the approach for identifying the epistemological trends in the Israeli scholarship, one which considers studies rather than the contributions of individual authors.

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