National challenges, educational reforms, and their influence on school management: The Israeli case

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Abstract

Considering Cohen, March and Olsen's (1972) "garbage can model," this paper seeks to examine how educational reforms, adopted by Israel from pre-statehood to contemporarily times, have impacted the role of principals and whether these reforms have prepared them to address challenges of the system.

Using second-order historical sources, the paper employs a socio-historical based data analysis to examine the complex relationship between policies, structures, and values and their impact on the role of the principal. For each historical period in the Israeli education system the paper discusses the immediate societal challenges, the origins of the adopted reforms, and the influence of these reforms on the role of the school principal and his/her ability to respond to the challenges placed before him/her.

This analysis demonstrates how imported policies and international trends, that are loosely connected to local social, cultural, political and educational contexts and the first fundamental layer of centralized reform adopted in Israel, have impact policy-making and limited the principal's response to contemporary socio-educational challenges. It is consequently argued that because the system is consistently delayed in adopting educational reform, principals have been forced to respond to the challenges of yesterday instead of focusing on future, and even current challenges.

Few studies have employed both the "garbage can model" and a socio-historical perspective for studying policy-making in education and its influence on the evolution of the role of the principal. The present novel study has the potential to fill this gap in our knowledge by analyzing long-term processes and turning points that have simultaneously shaped the principals' ability to face societal challenges.

1. Introduction

Israel has seen tremendous change over the last sixty-two years. Evolving from a newly born state seeking recognition to a well-established, world-recognized nation, its original collectivistic social ethos has been replaced by an individualistic one, and its society, formerly an untied one, has been broken down into functional fragments. Consequently, these changes have challenged the Israeli educational system. To meet these challenges, schools were reconstructed via system-wide reforms, a powerful method practiced by other nation-states. But when societal turning points are not identified early enough, school reforms can be outdated and incompatible with the actual challenges schools in their dynamic environments face. Under this context, the present paper seeks to examine how school reforms in Israel have impacted the role of principals and whether these reforms have prepared them to address challenges of the system. (It is important to note that this article will focus only on state-led reforms regarding the Jewish educational system and on the job of the principal as a by-product of these reforms. It will not focus on the Arab educational system in Israel, which serves Muslim, Christian, Bedouin, Druze, and Circassian students, because it contains different pedagogical characteristics. Moreover, for political reasons, the educational policies in the Arab education system in Israel differ from those in the Jewish system (Nir & Inbar, 2003).

2. Theoretical framework

Throughout the decades the role of the school principal has changed and evolved (Kerchner, 1988; Murphy, 1998). It seems it began an ideologically defined role, which evolved into a managerial, bureaucratic role. Following this transition, it adopted a political orientation balancing the interests of many stakeholders. At present principals are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical school leadership, while simultaneously offering effective, business-oriented management (Brundrett, 2001; Kerchner, 1988; Murphy, 1998). These complicated new expectations present challenging multi-dimensional responsibilities for the principal. In general, contemporary principals face a more complex and nonlinear world (Fullan, 1997; Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle; 2005; Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1991), and as such their responsibilities, duties, and work load have increased (Cranston, Ehrich, & Billot, 2003).

Investigating the root causes of this role transformation, scholars have first distinguished between deterministic and intentional processes. Deterministic processes relate to social forces that may impact the formation of a principal's role (Kerchner, 1988). For instance, scholars claim that social changes in family structure, in the individualization of society, and society's diversification have made the role of the principal much more complex. Consequently, principals have become responsible for diverse needs that may or may not have been previously fulfilled by prevailing social institutions. (Beck & Muprhy, 1993; Cranston et al., 2003; Goodwin et al. 2005; Gregg, 1969). Still, other scholars consider national and international economic crises, as well as technological innovations and novel managerial thinking as catalysts to this changing role. (Goodwin et al., 2005). These scholars point to the Great Depression, World War II (Callahan & Button, 1964; Campbell, Fleming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987), the "bankruptcy" of the welfare state, and globalization as turning points impacting this role (Goodwin et al., 2005; Murphy, 1998). Also considered as deterministically impacting this role are changes in "management thinking," for instance the introduction of the "scientific management movement" or "total quality management" into the business field (Murphy, 1998). While each of these deterministic processes are quite distinct, they are considered to force themselves on public education with a limited ability of the latter to resist it (Goodwin et al., 2005). Thus, it seems that, historically, neither the governments nor the principals had a choice but to adapt to each new reality as it arose. This might explain why most of the studies examining this deterministic evolution role do not address the interventionist role of national government in reforming the job.

Beyond the deterministic processes influencing school management, treated almost as force majeure, scholars also have identified a few impactful, intentional policy-making processes (Cranston et al., 2003; Goodwin, et al., 2005; Jones, 1999; Southworth, 1988). Education policies and reforms, like the Compulsory Education Acts, the inclusion policy in Special Education, standardization and accountability policies, School Based Management reforms, and school choice (e.g., Kerchner, 1988; Whitaker, 2003), have been claimed to force principals to renegotiate their relationship with the school community, rebalance their leadership and management functions, and change the degree to which principals are held accountable for schools'

academic performance (e.g., Catano & Stronge, 2006; Glasman & Heck, 1992; Whitaker, 2003).

At first glance, the impact of these policies on the role of the principal seems to be direct. The policies adopted in order to foster the new role of the principal may be considered an outcome of linear and rational policy-making processes. These processes take root in identifying the need to solve a well-defined problem, then aim towards achieving a specific goal, and all-the-while considering, learning, and evaluating alternative options in accordance to their feasibility and ability to provide a resolution (Meseguer, 2005; Page, 2006).

The opposing position claims the role of the principal transformed not as a result of a rational policy-making process (Goodwin et al., 2005), but in the reflection of layers of policies (Darling-Hammond, 1993) and conflicting political and bureaucratic interests (Cranston et al., 2003). This is not surprising as it is maintained that reforms are never geared towards the principals themselves, but rather towards making the principals better mechanisms for distributing the policies (Cowie & Crawford, 2007). Consequently, even when reforms directly address the role of school principals, some unexpected, undesired, and averse outcomes emerge out of the planned policy. For example, in the case of School Based Management reform, principals claimed that instead of becoming more autonomous and strategic as instructional leaders, the systems' control mechanisms embedded within the reform forced them to accept a managerial, or administrative, role (Brundrett, 2001; Cowie & Crawford, 2007). Moreover, to receive government recognition, it was argued that principals might have ignored local needs (Hulpia & Valcke, 2004) and not addressed critical, contemporary social issues, like the desegregation in the nineteen fifties or the multi-culturally society of the last few decades (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Goodwin et al., 2005). In fact, it seems that policies shaping the principal's role were seldom a result of a process by which problems were identified, goals were set, and the principal role was structured in order to tackle concrete and future societal challenges. Instead, the evolution of the principal's role may more closely follow the Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice.

The garbage can model addresses decision-making in organizational anarchies--organizations characterized by unclear goals, technologies, and fluid participation. Cohen et al. (1972) suggest that choices are oftentimes seeking

problems, rather than the more effective reverse situation. They argue that more often than not, irrelevant choices that cannot resolve a specific problem are adopted just for their attractiveness. They also suggest that decision agendas are often organized by an accidental set of participants rather than by a team directly relating to the challenges facing the system.

The garbage can model can be used to explain how, in many cases, local socio-economic policies are emulations of international trends (Meseguer, 2005; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), not always intended or available to resolve a concrete problem. Accordingly, it seems that incidental combination of policy-makers and stakeholders may be responsible for importing the policy from one system to another – a lateral transfer- rather than resulting from a rational or linear policy-making process. Likewise, the garbage can model can also explain the unintended recombination of old and new policy alternatives and their evolution. Similarly, Kingdon (1984) depicts public policy as an evolutionary process rather than one that generates new alternatives. Thus, although social and educational policy may be conceptualized as a mediator between social challenges and organizational operations (Bottery, 2007), the evolution of the principal's role does not follow this rationale (Bottery, 2007; Cranston et al., 2003). Under this context, the present paper seeks to examine how school reform in Israel has impacted the role of principals through the identification of tools available to the principals in order to address the evolving societal challenges. Adopting the conceptual framework of policy-making in organizational anarchies, we intend to examine the relationship between national challenges, educational reforms, and school management.

3. Methodology

The present study employs a socio-historical based data analysis method (Schutt, 2006). Accordingly, second order historical sources are used to interpret the sequence of events to postulate causality. The employment of socio-historical perspective for studying policy-making in education is well-established method in research in the field of educational administration (see e.g., Ball, 1990; Gale, 2001; Lawton, 1992, 1994; Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2002; Philips & Furlong, 2001). Scholars suggest employing researchers with historical perspective to focus on the reforms and structures that impact policy-making and on the ideologies that can explain it (Philips

& Furlong, 2001). Further, it was claimed that the employment of historical methods for studying educational policy can promote a better understanding of the complex relationship between policies, structures and values (Ball, 1990; Gale, 2001; Lawton, 1992, 1994), and their impact on the principal role. To better understand these contextually-specific relationships while simultaneously addressing the international policy trends, we used comparative historical analysis, according to which similarities and differences among cases were identified (Schutt, 2006).

4. The Israeli case

The Jewish educational system in Israel was established prior to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. In its first years, this system was a decentralized one and only became centralized following the declaration of statehood and the massive waves of immigration, which accompanied it. Nir (2006) maintains that this centralized governance, adopted several years after Israel became an independent state, has since become an embedded paradigm leaving its mark on every educational reform implemented in Israel.

Some reforms in the Israeli educational system have directly addressed the role of the school principal. Others have sought to advance pedagogical structural changes, and while they did not directly address the role of the school principal, their successful implementation depended on the principal's ability to adapt to his/her role. The reforms attempting to deal with the challenges facing the Israeli educational system were substantially influenced by internationally imported education policies (Shmueli, 2003). Therefore, although school management is most often considered a local product, it is surely influenced, directly or indirectly, by reforms originating in other educational systems- so much so that it is possible to identify "geological layers" of various imported policies in the Israeli educational system (Shmueli, 2003). In effect, it seems that educational policy in Israel has not been rationally formulated but rather has evolved in a haphazard manner (Shmueli, 2003). For example, it was discovered that oftentimes a reform, which may have been popular among Israeli policy makers, was carried out despite the fact that it did not take into account the educational needs and immediate challenges of the system. School principals in Israel have therefore had to cope with the many discrepancies between the adopted policies and those unanswered needs and challenges.

As mentioned previously the present paper seeks to examine the influence of various reforms on the role of the school principal. It also aims to explore the level of compatibility between the demands of the job and the challenges faced by the system during each time period. In reference to the different periods in the history of the Israeli educational system, the paper will discuss 1) the immediate challenges, 2) the origins of the adopted reforms, and 3) the influence of these reforms on the role of the school principal and her/his ability to respond to the challenges placed before her/him.

4.1 The historical periods of school management in Israel

4.1.1 The period of national revival and the establishment of Zionist education (until 1949)

Examining the governance structure of the educational system prior to statehood necessitates an understanding of the context under which the State of Israel was formed. In the mid-nineteenth century the Zionist movement, whose goal it was to found a state for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, was established and gained momentum.

By the start of the twentieth century the Zionist enterprise in the Land of Israel had begun to take shape. The spirit of national and cultural revival guided nationalist education. Key components of this education included: Hebrew language instruction, an emphasis on the connection to the Land, and the importance of productivity and the collective. These components shaped an educational practice whose very essence was the advancement of national revival. In order to disseminate these ideas, community-based and informal activities were initiated (Elboim-Dror, 1999), while a formal educational system was simultaneously founded.

The first formal educational institutions in the country were sponsored by philanthropists who both funded and determined the character of each school. But for the first time, with the establishment of the Hebrew Teachers Union in 1903, a professional body took it upon itself to determine educational policy, produce curricula, supervise teachers, and lay the groundwork for nation-wide education (Elboim-Dror, 1999). Though the Hebrew Teachers Union developed an educational framework, the system was still loosely structured and schools remained under philanthropic sponsorship. At the outbreak of World War I schools were cut off from

their philanthropic sources, funding became scarce, and consequently, schools became increasingly financially dependent on the World Zionist Organization[1]. This dependence triggered the process of unifying the educational system under one central authority (Elboim-Dror, 1999).

But even united under one central authority, the existence of a centralized administrative policy-making body did not last long. Gradually, each of the political parties operating in the Jewish assembly in Palestine established a separate educational stream to disseminate its distinct ideology. Three educational streams emerged: the socialist, the liberal, and the religious. The bodies overseeing educational matters in each stream gained dominance in the Jewish educational system in the 1930's after the World Zionist Organization withdrew monetary support and transferred the responsibility of education to the National Assembly[2], an informal governing body directly funded by the political parties (Gaziel, 1999). As a result, the bodies supervising educational matters in each stream became responsible for formulating budgets, hiring teachers and principals, and preparing and overseeing the curriculum (Gaziel, 1999). This situation is described by Lamm (1973) as the "political decentralization" of the parties and the "administrative centralization" of their overseeing bodies.

The administrative centralization of each sector was felt most strongly in the primary schools. Since almost every child in the population attended primary school[3] at the very least, these schools became the ideological springboards for each party and were responsible for disseminating ideology and recruiting members. The principal's role in such schools consisted of managing the allocated school budget, maintaining the facility, paying salaries, reporting student and teacher attendance to the respective stream's governing body and implementing its particular curriculum (Bergson & Melamed, 1963). However, the principal was considered primarily a head

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[1] The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was founded in 1897 as an umbrella organization, which unified all the Zionist organizations in the world operating to found a state for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. In its earlier phases the WZO represented the Jewish assembly to the foreign governments residing in the Land.

[2] The National assembly was the authority which implemented the decisions made by the elected representatives of the Jewish population during the British mandate in the Land of Israel.

[3] The majority of secondary schools in Israel were academic, with a few agricultural and vocational schools dispersed among them. Only the upper class, 5% of the population, attended these schools (See Aharonson, 2001). The schools were exclusive and selective, as their existence was based on tuition set and paid for by the parents of each student.

teacher, the first among equals[4], and was responsible for the teachers' pedagogical training. The role of head teacher was largely shaped by the influence of the British educational system and the Hebrew Teachers Union, which emphasized the pedagogical aspect of the principal's job (Bergson & Melamed, 1963; Nir & Inbar, 2003). However, since pedagogy was viewed merely as a means for disseminating political ideology, school principals became propagators of an ideologically-oriented vision.

The link between politics and pedagogy during the period of national revival was a notion derived from the Soviet régime, and was introduced by immigrants arriving from republics within the Soviet empire. Following the October Revolution in Russia, Soviet schools became arenas for disseminating party ideology (Zajda, 1980). However, while in the Soviet Union there was only one predominant ideology, in pre-statehood Israel there were several ideologies, each one competing for supremacy. Thus, narrow political interests prevented the institutionalization of a consolidated national educational system, the establishment of which would have been crucial ahead of the massive waves of immigration and great increase in the number of students[5]. School principals operating in the decentralized educational system run by the different streams continued to function as head teachers and pedagogical advisors with ideological orientations rather than as public servants working towards the institutionalization of the educational system. This situation may have also resulted from an anti-managerial culture that developed after years of foreign rule in exile and in Israel (Elboim-Dror, 1988). This anti-establishment culture suited the efforts of the political streams in their attempt to recruit students, with the aim of increasing their influence over the future character of the State (Gaziel, 1999).

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[4] At that time, the Israeli school system considered the school principal as first and foremost an excellent teacher (Chen, 1999). Examples of the high esteem in which the figure of the principal was held can be found in the words of former high school students from 1935-1943 who described their principal: "he was a teacher with superior virtue," "he knew how to enthrall everybody with his wonderful orating ability. I anticipated his classes with bated breath" (Aharonson, 2001:82). It was this expertise, which made the principal worthy of being a head teacher.

[5] Between the years 1929 and 1939, 280,000 people immigrated to the Land of Israel, doubling the Jewish population, and significantly increasing the number of students enrolled in the educational system of each stream. This wave of immigration, like others before it, was relatively homogenous (Adler, 1985) and therefore theoretically provided comfortable conditions for institutionalizing the education system. Moreover, even though the pre-state voluntary educational system was divided into three sectors, a centralized administrative framework already existed.

Politically decentralized governance was meticulously preserved during the time period immediately following the founding of the State. However, ultimately, fears of the possible dismantlement of the newly established State, along with increasing competition for political hegemony between the sectors, led to a reconsideration of the governance structure.

4.1.2 The period of the establishment of a national-public school system (1949-1962)
The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 as an independent political entity required the establishment of a single centralized government. Although the groundwork for establishing a national public school system was a system already developed and functioning, it was ideologically and organizationally divided (Elboim-Dror, 1999). This factious system struggled to deal with the challenges it was facing. The massive wave of immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, Middle Eastern and North African countries within the first few years of independence, forced the education system to confront not only the vast increase in number of students but also the accompanying cultural and ethnic disparities among them. Additionally, there was a need to quickly train a large number of teachers (Elboim-Dror, 1988). To illustrate the urgency, between the years 1948 and 1952 the number of students in the educational system tripled from 100,000 to 300,000; the number of educational institutions jumped from 800 to 2,800; and the number of teachers doubled from 5,000 to 10,000 (Tzameret, 2003). The challenges presented by this huge wave of immigration led to the attempt to unify the system.

The aspiration to achieve procedural equality and uniformity was manifested in the Compulsory Education Law, approved by the first parliament in 1949- a year following the declaration of the State. Though this law obligated the State to provide free education for each child in Israel between the ages of 5 and 15, it did not alter the political structure of the system, and the different educational streams persisted (Chen, 1999). The elimination of the streams and the centralization and unification of the system only occurred in 1953, following the adoption of the State Education Law[6]. It appointed the Ministry of Education as the main educational policy-making body in Israel (Gaziel, 1999).

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[6] Despite the fact that the State Education Law eliminated the political sectors, it did not entirely eliminate the separation between different types of education. Accordingly, a separate religious education

The State Education Law produced pedagogical and administrative centralization and severely diminished the authority of the local municipalities (Gaziel, 1999), all for the sake of the melting pot ideology and procedural equality. These measures were consistent with the nationalist and collectivist ideology, also supported by the socialist party in power, guiding the curriculum (Mathias & Sabar, 2004). Despite the small size of the State, the educational system was divided into districts. The districts had been used to give the heads of the system closer involvement in managing local problems and to increase their control (Inbar, 1986).

In those days, school principals were functionaries of the central authority and their position was considered an administrative one. The principals were raised within the system. They were appointed to their posts by the recommendation of a superintendent (Chen, Addi, & Goldring, 1994) without having to compete with other candidates or prove their professionalism (Chen, 1999). Personal agreement between the superintendent and the principal was the decisive factor. Thus, school management was perceived as a job one learned through experience and not through training (Chen, 1999). In effect, the principals were merely bureaucrats fulfilling the rules and regulations dictated by the central authority (Nir & Inbar, 2003). Hence, the principal was expected to deal with the management of teacher assignments, sorting students into classes, and overseeing the daily routine. The aim of the Ministry was to simplify the principals' role as much as possible by keeping them away from complex tasks such as recruiting, promoting, and training teachers, handling fiscal matters, and maintaining the facility (Bergson & Melamed, 1963). One might say that the principals consented to supervising teachers and school activities on behalf of the central authority (Chen, 1999). In this manner, the centralization of the system shaped the principal's role as a bureaucratic and ideological functionary of the central authority.

The transition to a centralized governance structure, which included a new definition for the role of the school principal, is evidence of the continuing Soviet influence on education in Israel. Following the October Revolution in 1917, the Soviet educational system was consolidated. The communist party had high control over education, and as a result a high degree of uniformity of the curriculum, teaching

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branch within the public system was approved. Similarly, for coalitional and political reasons, a recognized and funded but independent system of education was approved for Ultra Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe (Elboim-Dror, 1988).

methods, and assessment was evident. Education became a tool for "engineering" the student (Zajda, 1980). The use of education as an instrument of ideological control by the central government was also manifested in the many countries under Soviet influence. In such countries, principals were nominated by the local representatives of the Communist party and formally approved by the Ministry of Education. These appointments did not take professional matters into consideration. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the principal's role was minimal and limited, and that it was essentially confined to implementing the central authority's curriculum (Berzina, 2003). Though the young State of Israel was not a Soviet colony, the pro-Soviet orientation of its leadership was evident in overall decision- making and specifically in educational matters. While prior to statehood Soviet influence was only pedagogical and ideological, the official founding of Israel saw the emergence of a centralized organizational process similar to that which began in the Soviet Union several decades earlier. This process began as an attempt to increase the government's ideological control over the school system.

In effect, the centralized educational reform adopted in Israel failed to deal with the main educational challenge of that time period, i.e., handling the needs of a broad, heterogeneous, and diverse population of students (Adler, 1985). Although it was necessary to create an administrative central body for the newly established country, the "melting pot" policy restricted the ability of the principal to respond effectively to the emerging challenges. In order to adequately respond to the problems raised by the absorption of a massive population of diverse students, the system should have enabled the school principal to proactively be involved in adjusting the pedagogy according to his/her students needs. Instead, principals ended up serving merely as a bureaucrats.

4.1.3 The period of distributive justice in education (1963-1976)
The failure of the educational uniformity policy first became evident in 1955 when the Ministry of Education began administering an examination to all eighth grade students. The purposes of the examination were to measure academic achievement levels and to select candidates for secondary education. It turned out that the rigid

policy regarding entry into secondary schools led to the exclusion of many students[7].
The students who were accepted had to excel, and a large number dropped out or
completed high school without obtaining a matriculation certificate[8] (Tzameret,
2003). Not surprisingly, the results of the examination exposed achievement gaps
corresponding to social and ethnic backgrounds[9] (Mathias & Sabar, 2004). It was
discovered that students of Afro-Asian origin dropped out of primary schools at very
high rates, and that only a minority of this population passed the selection process
and enrolled in secondary school (Gaziel, 1999). Moreover, the number of students of
Afro-Asian origin who both attained high school matriculation certificates and
enrolled in university[10] was disproportionately lower than the students' representation
within the population (Tzameret, 2003). The failures of the educational system, both
in terms of narrowing the achievement gaps and expanding secondary schooling,
required a policy shift from procedural equality to distributive justice.

      The educational policy seeking to produce distributive justice implemented its
first phase between the years 1963 and 1968. This compensation plan, also referred to
as "national protectionism," aimed to address the achievement gap between the
various sectors by way of "differential investment," i.e., giving more to the
disadvantaged students who came from the weaker segments of society. The
compensation and enrichment of the disadvantaged population was manifested in
programs which extended the regular school day, sorted students into homogenous
learning groups and created enrichment centers and boarding schools for gifted
students (Gaziel, 1993). Additionally, the Ministry of Education established new
post-primary vocational schools.

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[7] In the first year after independence there were only about 10,000 students studying in various secondary institutions (academic, vocational, and agricultural), and about two thirds of these students studied at the academic schools. Therefore, the increase in number of students attending secondary schools posed a central problem in the first decades following statehood (Tzameret, 2003).

[8] Matriculation examinations were administered upon completion of academic high schools. Success on these examinations earned the student a matriculation certificate, which was a prerequisite and selection mechanism for attending higher education institutions or gaining access to certain jobs.

[9] In 1948, the Jewish population was mainly homogeneous, consisting of 80% European-American descendents and only 20% Afro-Asian descendants. Due to the massive wave of immigration following the founding of the State, this ratio underwent a drastic change, and by the end of the 1950's 58% of the population was of European-America origin and 42% of Afro-Asian origin (Tzameret, 2003).

[10] By the second half of the 1950's the percentage of Afro-Asian students enrolled in the university was 10%, while their percentage of the total population was nearly 58% (Tzameret, 2003).

The second phase of the policy for developing distributive justice transpired in 1968 when the minister of education promoted a comprehensive reform of the educational system. It was to replace the two-tiered structure (eight years of primary school followed by four years of secondary school) with a three-tiered structure (six years of primary school followed by six years of secondary school, the secondary school being divided into intermediary school and high school). The intermediary schools were designed to ease the transition to the next level of education because entrance to the intermediary schools was automatic (Gaziel, 1999). In this manner, policy-makers hoped to increase the rate of students receiving a secondary education.

Accompanying the structural reform was a proclamation announcing the decision to execute a deliberate, pedagogical, socio-educational integration in the intermediary schools (Resh, 2006). Because of this decision, intermediary schools became the main sources of deliberate integration, and marked the transition from a homogeneous selective educational system to a comprehensive, all-inclusive, and heterogeneous one[11].

Since the reform's main goal was pedagogical, it required flexibility in its implementation. However, the school principal's hands remained tied as the Ministry of Education continued to exert control over student registration, the hiring of teachers, school curriculum and its evaluation. Therefore, instead of being responsible for adjusting the new reform to fit his/her students' individual needs, the principal's main task revolved around managing the prescribed national policies at the school level. Principals were now required to make decisions regarding student tracking and teacher placements (Resh & Dar, 1990). Moreover, since integration increased the size of the secondary school, it also triggered specialization, further institutionalization, and bureaucratization (Resh, Adler & Inbar, 1980). As a result, principals mainly engaged in administrative tasks instead of pedagogical ones (Erez & Goldstein, 1981). In effect, the school principal became mainly a coordinator of school activities.

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[11] The reform was not implemented in a top-down fashion, and the choice to participate was left to the local municipalities. Moreover, it permitted various interest groups (teachers unions, wealthy parents, kibbutz schools, and religious schools) to avoid participating. In the absence of a reform law mandating implementation, it took years before the reform was fully adopted. In effect between the years 1968 and 1995 only 70% of the municipalities adopted the reform (Gaziel, 1999).

The question is asked: how did this reform originate? Furthermore, why did this reform fail to lead to a modification of the central governing body? Why didn't principals receive the responsibilities and the designated authority to manage the reform's needed changes at the school level?

The applied policy of distributive justice in Israel was strongly related to the growing closeness between Israel and Western countries in light of the Cold War and disappointment with the Soviet Union (Tzameret, 2003). The Israeli reform intending to create heterogeneous intermediary schools was influenced by the desegregation and affirmative action policies adopted by the United States in the 1960's. These policies attempted to integrate students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups into one single educational institution (Shmueli, 2003). Simultaneously, Israel was also influenced by the social-democratic educational practices sweeping across Europe at the time. European governments increased their efforts to deal with school dropouts by building comprehensive schools and initiating academic tracking and homogenous learning groups (Shmueli, 2003). The influence of the two contradicting policies led to the phenomena of implementing "segregation within integration" in intermediary schools. In other words, these schools ended up providing one educational framework for "strong" students, and another one for those who were considered "weak."(Resh & Dar, 1990).

Aside from the contradicting Western influences there was also evidence of strong and sustained Soviet influences on the Israeli educational system during this period. These influences were visible in the way school principals were limited in their abilities to impact the implementation of the reform. In other words, the Ministry of Education retained its power and did not delegate any responsibility to the principals regarding the pedagogical matters that were essential to the reform's success.

It seems that it was not absolutely necessary for the Ministry of Education to limit the principal's authority in order to implement the reform. During the same time period Sweden, in fact, adopted a policy to minimize central governance for the sake of social equality while simultaneously expanding the principal's role. It replaced a selective secondary school system with an all-inclusive, integrated community-based system (Shmueli, 2003). The Swedish reform was accompanied by the termination of selective placement of students and of the high school

matriculation examinations. These changes paved the way for flexible and adaptable responses to the problems present in the field (Heidenheimer, 1974). Although Sweden only had to deal with socio-economic and not with ethnic or cultural disparities, its efforts to grant principals control over pedagogical matters could have served as a possible alternative to the centralization policies implemented in Israel (Resh & Dar, 1990).

In order to deal with the vast social diversity while remaining attentive to the various crises that arose during the transition from the four-year to the comprehensive six-year secondary school program, principals needed to have pedagogical authority. Nevertheless, the absence of real structural change in the central governance body left the pedagogical authority in the hands of the Ministry of Education. Understandably, the principal's job became unfeasible. The principals were placed in an untenable situation. Whilst having to address particular changes brought about due to economic and social developments, they were not given the necessary authority to effect the changes in their own schools.

4.1.4 The period of educational pluralism (1977-1990)

The expected results from the reforms introduced in the 1960s and 70s were not forthcoming. Centralized practices did not help to mitigate, let alone address, the societal challenges being encountered. The idea that a centralized educational system could not manage a highly diversified population was imported from abroad; however, it aptly suited the circumstances in Israel. The need for decentralization surfaced in light of the failure of the educational system to narrow the scholastic gaps between student populations.

The first policy shift towards decentralization had already occurred in the early 1970's. At that point, the Ministry of Education delegated some of its authority to the district councils, but with the intention that the authority would then be further delegated until it reached the school level. In practice, however, the centralization of the Ministry was simply replaced by the centralization of the district councils, and the districts soon became the new mechanisms for control in the educational system (Gaziel, 1999). Throughout the decade, efforts were made by the Ministry of Education to encourage teacher initiatives, enable flexibility in teaching hours, and provide pedagogical autonomy to schools. Nevertheless, as these efforts were marked

by close supervision, inspection, and bureaucracy (Inbar, 1987), it is unsurprising that no significant changes occurred. As a result, the public's objections to governmental social policies increased, especially to its policy regarding educational equality. This dissatisfaction ultimately led to a political turnover in 1977, and the leftist party that had been in power since the founding of the State was replaced by a rightist one.

In theory, the ideology adopted by the rightist government – which originated in the West in the early 1970's and was imported to Israel shortly thereafter and introduced neo-conservative ideas (Ram, 2004) to the Israeli public – should have seen the realization of the decentralization policy in education. It should also have given its stamp of approval to the privatization of education. In practice, however, neither of these phenomena occurred.

In the 1980's, the tension between the central authorities' desire to encourage pedagogical autonomy and their simultaneous need to maintain close supervision continued to flare. This tension gave rise to what was known as the "institutionalized autonomy" policy (Inbar, 1987) under which, for instance, a program specifically designed to introduce curricular autonomy ended up being burdened by the very inspections it should have rendered obsolete. Moreover, the efforts of the Ministry of Education to advance curricular autonomy were accompanied by drastic budget cuts which led to a decrease in school hours and classrooms' overcrowding (Inbar, 1987). These cuts undermined any potential autonomy and rendered the newly granted authority useless.

Although official education policies regarding decentralization were laden with contradictions, privatization did not even become an official policy. Unofficial privatization, however, naturally emerged, both as a result of the system's inability to cope with the demand for scholastic achievement and in light of the budget cuts. The public's disappointment and frustration with its system was manifested in an increase of parental involvement (Inbar, 1987). For instance, parents' organizations were formed, followed by the emergence of "grey education" - supplemental educational services privately acquired by parents (Shmueli, 2003). Subsequently, these parents, who began to pay for educational services, became influential in determining curriculum components. The reality of a "backdoor process of privatization" (Inbar, 1989) was even further manifested by the introduction of school choice in the mid 1980's. Despite the lack of any official policy encouraging choice (Yona, 2000),

parents, local municipalities, and interest groups managed to establish de-zoned "autonomous", "community", and "magnet" schools (Gibton, Sabar & Goldring, 2000). Additionally, more schools were established independently of the educational system, such as an ultra-Orthodox "Shas" network of schools for students of Afro-Asia origin (Shamai, 2000), whose parents were in despair over the public educational system.

Two main factors can explain the educational system's failure to "deliver the product" and the subsequent flight of certain populations from the public school system: (1) The system's use of bureaucracy and supervision to restrain school principals' autonomy (Inbar, 1987), and (2) broad budget cuts. These factors minimized the range of action available to school principals, essentially limiting their role to one of preserving and maintaining core school activities.[12] Studies indicate that during the 1980's principals understood their jobs to be mainly associated with organizing teachers, as well as handling the continuous flow of administrative duties (Gally, 1988; Kremer, 1983). Therefore, it is not surprising that principals have found the new academic training programs for principals in Israel (Chen, 1999), which are similar to those that were developed in England and the U.S. (Brundrett, 2001), to be neither useful nor essential to their jobs. This reaction reflects the conflict between the system's desire to professionally train school principals - a prerequisite for any potential candidate - and the principals' awareness of their very limited autonomy.

Without suitable tools to deal with the increasing diversity in their student bodies and communities, public school principals have been left to fend for themselves, and have been unable to compete with "private schools" for students. These principals should have been granted the administrative authority to become "street level politicians," negotiating contradicting demands as they saw fit. Only then could they have responded effectively to parents and students and kept them in the public school system, while at the same time redefining a social common denominator.

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[12] Between 1981 and 1986 the number of teaching hours for primary schools was cut by 28.5%. After administrative adjustments, including an increasing class size and a decreasing number of classes, the effect of the budget cut has been reduced to 11.6% (Inbar, 1987).

4.1.5 The period of transition to a multicultural educational market (1991-2001)

The call for Israel to become a multicultural state grew louder (Margalit & Halbertal, 1998) during the 1990's. It came as a result of drastic demographic shifts following a massive wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union and the growth of the Arab and ultra-Orthodox populations. The shift of Israeli society from centralized, nationalist and public to capitalist, hierarchical and with an assortment of ethnic communities (Ram, 2004), forced the Ministry of Education to re-examine its policies so as to not be led by these new realities, but rather to help shape them.

The re-examination of education policy led to the adoption of reforms in two fields: (1) school choice and (2) school based management (SBM). The adoption of these reforms was influenced by the popularity of similar reforms in Western countries. Said reforms aimed at increasing all schools' efficiency and accountability by using competition mechanisms and delegating power from the centralized authority to the school itself (Dahan & Yonah, 1999).

The Ministry of Education's school choice policies were shaped by ministerial committees and administrative decisions. In 1991, a ministry-appointed committee examined and approved the already existing magnet schools, thus opening the door to school choice (Dror, 2006). In that same year, the ultra-Orthodox school network "Shas" received state recognition. Thanks to this recognition, the "Shas" network became a legitimate alternative to the regular public schools. Soon after, in 1994, a ministerial committee decided to support the idea of school choice as long as two conditions were met: 1) equivalence regarding the wide dissemination of information about each school had to be guaranteed, and 2) there had to be equal opportunity for each student to attend any school he/she desired (Ministry of Education, 1994a). In accordance with the committee's call to find a balance between choice and equality, and without implementing its actual recommendations, the large municipalities in Israel adopted a "controlled parental choice" model in the 1990's. This model enabled the municipality to partially monitor the selection process of students and the supposed results (Dror, 2006; Haymann & Shapira, 2003).

The advent of school choice arose just as the SBM movement began. In 1996, the Ministry of Education initiated an experimental project to test the implementation of SBM (Dror, 2006). Within the experimental framework, authority regarding the management of the school budget was passed to each school and municipal council,

but the authority to hire or fire teachers was withheld. By the end of the 1990's nearly

100 schools were participating in this project (Dror, 2006). To advance efficient and

successful implementation of SBM in the educational system, the government

switched from a per-class funding method to a per-pupil one (Ministry of Education,

2003). Additionally, the Ministry of Education reasserted its authority by making the

implementation of the national curriculum a stipulation for receiving funding. The

Ministry hoped this stipulation would create a new common base for a multicultural

educational system.

   In the 1990's, out of the entry of SBM and the advent of school choice, grew

the need for a new training program to prepare principals for their professional and

entrepreneurial roles arose. This demand went unmet, and principal training programs

continued to focus on administrative and bureaucratic matters (Nir & Inbar, 2003).

Not surprisingly, the lack of change in principal training programs corresponded with

the lack of actual change in the role of the school principal. This lack of change in

the principal's role is reflected in a Ministry of Education memorandum devoted to

rewriting the principal's job description (1994b). The memorandum emphasizes the

role of principals in managing daily school functions, their obligation in fulfilling

Ministry of Education directives, and their ultimate subordination to the

superintendent (Chen, 1995).

   The Ministry of Education's reluctance to give up its power and control gave

birth to the "centralization trap" (Nir, 2006). Under these circumstances, principals

had to navigate between contradictory demands. On the one hand they were

responsible for implementing Ministry of Education policies, which they had no part

in creating. Simultaneously, in light of increased community and parental

involvement, they also became obligated to respond to local demands (Nir, 1999).

According to Nir's argument, the current job definition of the school principal

involves an almost impossible navigation between these demands, as principals lack

both the requisite authority and flexibility to please both the government and their

constituents. Moreover, the need to negotiate between conflicting demands,

restrictions of the state, and competition over registration caused by school choice,

has led principals to function as marketing agents (Oplatka, 2002). Thus, instead of

principals functioning as expert school managers and professional and public leaders

(Gibton & Chen, 2003), they are forced to devote enormous amounts of time to

satisfying student and parent preferences (Oplatka, Foskette & Hemsley-Brown, 2002) and to negotiate like "street level politicians" between conflicting interests.

It seems that the lack of autonomy and the centralized control of the education system have made it difficult for principals to focus on developing a unique community vision. The absence of such a vision is especially noticeable in the current multicultural reality where a school is expected to assume a central role in forging the local identity.

4.1.6 The period of standardization and accountability (2002-present)
Some of the challenges facing the educational system at the start of the 21st century are quite similar to those of the previous decade. The educational system has to respond to the individual and group desire for self-expression and fulfillment. In addition, the system needs to deal with the fragmentation of the collective identity and assist in forming a consolidated ethos. Moreover, globalization has triggered a new challenge; the educational system must now prepare students to live in the time of the "knowledge revolution," requiring creative thinking and life-long learning.

In order to deal with the challenges presented by globalization, in 2002 the president of the United States presented the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) educational reform. The NCLB is based on standards and assessment examinations (Fusarelli, 2004). This reform exemplifies the growing strength of the standardization movement amidst worldwide educational reforms. The movement advocates the setting of performance goals to increase accountability. This increased accountability is to be accomplished by applying incentives and sanctions to self-governed schools based on their achievements or failures at meeting standardized criteria (Watson & Supovitz, 2001). The uses of international achievement examinations, such as TIMMS and PISA, have already been employed in order to compare the educational systems of different countries (Riley & Torrance, 2003). No real evidence exists, however, that matches success on standardized tests to economic growth (Cuban, 2006).

Although buds of assessment and a focus on achievement were already identifiable in Israel due to the 1980's worldwide school effectiveness movement (Shmueli, 2003), it seems that the standardization approach has accumulated mass support over time. In 1998 the Ministry of Education approved a standards-based

English language curriculum, and by 2003 it became an overall general policy. That same year the Ministry of Education compiled a core curriculum consisting of uniform standards for all primary schools. In 2005, a committee was appointed whose purpose was to suggest structural changes to the educational system in light of public dissatisfaction with its accomplishments. The Committee for Restructuring the Education System sided with the decision to apply a national core curriculum and set standards. Based on the committee's report, principals would be assessed according to the performance of their schools in national and international standardized examinations. In an effort to increase accountability among school principals, the committee recommended that their role be strengthened in a number of ways: by granting them the authority to hire and promote teachers, by giving them decision-making power regarding pedagogical and administrative matters, by increasing their salaries, and by developing a new principal training course equivalent to a masters degree (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Despite the postponement in implementing the committee's report – due to objections raised by the teachers' union and also due to the change in Ministers of Education – it seems that some significant parts of it were pushed ahead, and their implementation appears to be imminent. For example, a national authority for educational measurement and assessment has been established to oversee the implementation of standards and to aid the educational system in developing greater accountability. Additionally, an experimental training program for school principals which places emphasis on instilling general management skills has been introduced (Yorgan, 2006). Finally, the committee's report became a reference point for future public debates that discussed educational policy. For instance, following the task force's recommendation to change teachers' work conditions, these recommendations were used during negotiations with the Ministry of Finance. According to the new agreement that was finally established and termed "new horizon," teachers will spend more hours at school, teach more lessons, meet pupils individually, and attend staff meetings. In addition, this reform is supposed to augment principals' authority to hire and fire teachers (Zemer, 2008). Although this reform, implemented in 2008, raised students' achievements in mathematics and was reported to improved schools' climate, it was claimed that it increased principals' administrative work load (Kashti, 2010) which, in turn, might decrease the time they have to instruct teachers. In

addition, principals have reported dissatisfaction with the authorities and the autonomy they have granted (National Authority for Educational Measurement and Assessment report, 2010).

The implementation of some, though not all, of the recommendations in the report produced by the Committee for Restructuring the Education System and the following reform indicates that performance tests and regulations have become an alternative version of centralized control (Brown, 2000). Moreover, it seems that stressing student performance on tests as key indicators of the principal's success and emphasizing efficiency in principal training programs perpetuate a business, managerial approach for schools. This managerial approach stresses the role of the school in preparing students for employment in a dynamic marketplace, but it does not shape citizens who will actively participate in the democratic process (Cuban, 2004). Under such circumstances principals are likely to be considered "business managers." This short-sighted perspective to schooling and roles expected of both teachers and principals can be a dangerous way of viewing and assessing the principal's role. How this might affect potential and/or prospective principals is left undetermined. These principals as "business managers" are expected to amend the "failing" so-to-speak educational system. But the large regulation in Israel's decentralized system encourages conformity and discourages diversification between schools. The principal is left to balance accountability under heavy regulation and an active leadership role; this impossible balance is anticipated to fail.

Instead of this anticipatory failure, school principals are faced with a more practical challenge: to function as expert school managers and professional and public leaders (Gibton & Chen, 2003). This balance is fundamental. It is not sufficient for principals to act as business managers focusing on the business aspect of running a school to the exclusion of social and pedagogical considerations (Gibton & Chen, 2003), but rather focusing on social considerations, they ought to become what may be termed social-educational entrepreneurs. Principals who assume the role of social-educational entrepreneurs not only identify and address the existing needs of the community, but also realizing new needs in an attempt to create a common public domain. Such an attempt, which would bring together many groups and individuals, requires that leaders with complex social and educational worldviews will resist efforts to impose conditional uniformity on their institutions

(Yonah, 2005). Although these social-educational entrepreneurs should strive to better their societies, however, their main concern should always be the students and the school community. Moreover, pedagogy should remain their main tool, and they should demonstrate their professional skills as educators. Serving as instructional leaders they should "think big but act local;" they should reflect the community spirit but also act as agents of change. They must represent the students' interests while standing firm in the face of financial, bureaucratic, and societal limitations placed upon them by governments, markets, and communities. Generating new educational practices to serve their students and their societies, as well as to fulfill their own vision, these principals may pave the way towards significant educational leadership.

Although principals serving as social-educational entrepreneurs at times behave as if the system's restrictions do not apply to them, the system nevertheless needs to be further reformed in order to facilitate their emergence. For instance, deregulation of the system and its reconstruction into a professional body under which professionals supervise schooling and development might provide principals with the qualifications as well as the freedom and support needed to concretize their social-educational dreams. Furthermore, in order to let principals realize their social-educational vision, the system should also free them from a dependence on the market. When a school's survival depends almost entirely on its ability to satisfy consumer preferences, the principal will tend to adopt well-established and popular educational practices rather than giving precedence to professional or ideological considerations. In order to prevent the occurrence of this phenomenon, the system should fully fund schools so that they will not have to rely on adopting competitive mechanisms instead. And of course, individual needs and a school's community preferences must be incorporated into the principal's professional considerations.

To insure that principals will reflect in their professional decisions the spirit of their communities, funding should be given directly to these communities and the system should advocate a generation of community-based self-governed schools. It should also facilitate and promote the formation of informal networks that would connect diverse community-based self-governed schools, in order to prevent the withdrawal of communities from the public sphere. Such networks are needed to enhance continuous public debate regarding education, to expose schools and principals to alternative educational models, and to maintain a common ground

among the nation's schools. This common ground is crucial if the system wishes to promote individual freedom, including the potential for a future move from one community to another or a decision to leave the community and its unique way of life for the larger society.

5. Discussion

This paper examines the influence of various administrative and pedagogical reforms on the role of the school principal in Israel. Furthermore, it questions the suitability of this role to address the socio-educational challenges facing the Israeli educational system throughout different historical periods. At first glance, it seems that the school principal's role has been directly associated with the enacted reforms, each of which was to have met central challenges facing the Israeli educational system. The initial decision to centralize the system during the period following the declaration of the State, for example, was meant to canonize a public educational system which would inevitably define the principal's job as bureaucratic. A bureaucratic definition was likely to have been considered the most reasonable one in the attempt to establish and institutionalize a national educational system. Similarly, the adoption of the 1990's school choice model and decentralization reforms were seen as essential in a growing multicultural society. Thus, the principal's role evolved into that of salesman and street level politician. Suddenly, he/she was in the position of having to negotiate among the varying demands of different communities.

Looking more closely, however, a much more complex picture emerges. While examining the connection between the challenges facing the system, the reform adopted, and the definition of the school principal's role during different time periods, three central features repeatedly arise. First, it is fairly evident that the imported reforms, or role definitions, were transformed upon their arrival in Israel and given local flavor. For example, the British definition of school principal as head teacher went from pedagogical leader to ideological one. This transformation occurred prior to statehood, when pedagogy was seen as a means for disseminating ideology. Another example would be the 1960's structural desegregation reform, which was imported from the U.S. This reform was implemented in Israel not only to promote academic achievement for disadvantaged children, as it was in America, but also to foster social integration. The problem, however, was that the principal's role

was not adapted to fit the needs that arose out of the reform. The emphasis on the administrative aspects of the job, and the restrictions placed on the principal regarding essential pedagogical decisions, did not leave much room for her/him to serve as a pedagogical leader. In other words, the original source of the reform was foreign, but the local Israeli context reigned supreme in determining, and limiting, the role of the school principal.

Second, it seems as though the initial decision to centralize the educational system, which was made during the crucial phase of its founding, left a significant mark on all subsequent reforms. The Ministry of Education was constantly seeking to preserve its control over the system. Consequently, reforms which were adopted over and over again were not accompanied by fundamental changes in the job description, and no additional authority was given to school principals. These principals were therefore forced to confront the educational challenges before them without having the appropriate tools. The pedagogical autonomy policy of the 1980's, for instance, which was by its very definition a decentralization measure, was of no help to the principals whose hands were in any event tied by the centralized bureaucracy. The principals, aware of the limitations placed on them, avoided deviating from the tasks their authority permitted. As a result, they could not adequately respond to the threat of irrelevancy as certain populations abandoned the public schools. The situation eventually led to unintentional and gradual privatization of the system. As a result, the system weakened and inequality increased.

Third, it seems that the bureaucratic and centralized nature of the system reduced its ability to respond in real time to the incompatibility between a chosen reform and the immediate challenges facing the system. Therefore, a good deal of time passed until the reform's failure became clear, one consequence of which was the delay in redefining the school principal's role. This time lag essentially resulted in binding the school principals to an irrelevant job description which had been developed in response to obsolete educational and social needs. This process marked each and every educational period, prior to the founding of the State until the present time.

During the phase of national revival, the model of the "ideological principal" developed in response to the challenge of building a new nation. This development occurred despite the opportunity to institutionalize a system with a homogeneous

population and a pre-existing foundation. If principals had in fact been assigned to a more bureaucratic role at that time, they could have served as a central force in institutionalizing the system. However, the bureaucratic aspects of the job were only adopted later, during the establishment of the public school system, and the timing couldn't have been more problematic. The "bureaucratic principal" was exactly the wrong model for a heterogeneous and growing population which was then entering an educational system of a newly established state. At that time, the educational system required pedagogical leaders, but pedagogical leadership only became a central component of the principal's job during the period of distributive justice, when they were needed to implement social integration. In reality, however, the job continued to be characterized primarily by administrative duties: a job, that is, which did not allow for flexibility or for the implementation of programs suited to each student. Ironically, the very type of pedagogical autonomy needed during the distributive justice phase was granted to principals only during the educational pluralism period, although even then this so-called autonomy was diluted by institutionalized supervision and budget cuts. An already impossible job was then made even more impossible due to the introduction of alternative options of schooling, at which point principals were forced to become "street level politicians," negotiating between the various demands of their diverse audiences in order to keep students from abandoning their schools. In essence, once the system adopted the multicultural educational marketplace model, the principals had no choice but to become salesmen, a reasonable description given the competition forming in the system. Despite the fragmentation of Israeli society, then, school principals were not encouraged to become community leaders and their job description did not include components for addressing the need to form new local identities.

The tendency to take away the pedagogical aspect of the principal's role has reached a climax during the current period of standardization and accountability. As a result, the school principal will likely become more and more preoccupied with the administrative/business side of running a school. And yet the current age of globalization calls for the school principal to become a social-educational entrepreneur who takes upon a broad social role and bursts through the financial, bureaucratic and societal limitations placed upon her/him by governments, markets and communities.

For years, Israel's principals have had to function according to the challenges of yesterday instead of the challenges of tomorrow. The delay in addressing pressing current social problems has damaged the ability of the school principal to help shape the social circumstances under which it operates. Although these phenomena can be depicted as local and unique to the Israeli system it also illuminate the way policy is made in organizational anarchies (Cohen et al., 1972). Accordingly, it seems that policy making processes may start with an inclination to adopt a preferable policy choice rather than an attempt to recognize a problem and then to search for a solution (Kingdon, 1984); previous policy layers may influence policy maker to prefer certain alternatives over others and/or interpreted a current policy in a biased way (Darling-Hammond, 1993); and, imported policies and international trends, occasionally loosely connected to local social, cultural, political and educational context, may set the principal role definition while not being relevant to the challenges principals face (Meseguer, 2005; Riley & Torrance, 2003; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

In this context, the current trend in Western nations to adopt standardization and accountability policies in an uncritical manner is worrisome, as it might very well lead to the development of school principals who ignore social considerations and focus solely on the bottom line. It is reasonable to speculate that a school's efficient business management style, as effective as it might be, will not be responsive to the burning needs of the society it serves. For this reason, it is important to define the role of the school principal according to the current challenges and needs of the society rather than dredging up solutions from the garbage can of history (Cohen et al., 1972).

It seems that the employment of socio-historical perspective for studying policy-making in education and its influence on the evolution of the role of the principal may not only help us illuminate the complex relationship between policies, structures and values (Ball, 1990; Gale, 2001; Lawton 1992, 1994), but also shed light on long-term processes and turning points that have simultaneously shaped principals' ability to face societal challenges.

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