



# **PERCEPTION OF THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

**Report by the Professional Committee to  
Formulate Policy Recommendations for the  
Ministry of Education**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Description of the document's purpose and objective**

At the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Avney Rosha undertook a process to define a conceptual and practical framework for the role of school principal. The current perception of this role as presented through this framework will clarify the principal's key areas of responsibility as an educational leader and will help position the professional community of principals. Perception of the principal's role will provide the foundation for the work carried out by the Avney Rosha Institute regarding both the training and professional development of principals, and will form the basis for ongoing activity relating to this position.

### **Working Principles**

- **Overall perception** – This document constitutes a broad and coherent framework relating to the principal's role; as such, it does not go into detail regarding the knowledge, skills, and actions that this role may entail.
- **Priorities** – A key working assumption is that the emphasis should be on various administrative aspects that are the core of school leadership; additionally, it is important to define the substance of the principal's role, and thereby to influence how the perception of that role is formed.
- **Functionality** – On the basis of the previous two principles, the document should be translated into practical steps so as to achieve various objectives: Identify and recruit candidates for the position of principal; select principals and determine their suitability for the position; develop training programs for principals; formulate on-the-job development and learning processes; and provide evaluation and feedback for principals regarding their performance. These and other objectives will be articulated in a practical format, to be based on the "Perception of the Principal's Role" document.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PROCESS**

### **Steering Committee**

In order to address the needs described above, a professional steering committee was established that included academics (from universities and colleges), representatives of the school inspectorate, principals, representatives of the Yad Hanadiv Foundation, Ministry of Education officials and local government representatives (see the list of names at the beginning of the document). The committee met once a month, four times in all; each meeting lasted five hours. At the first meeting, the participants defined the committee's goals and working principles, and identified key aspects of the principal's role. At the second meeting committee members were divided into specific task forces, each charged with developing, expanding, and defending one area of responsibility included in the principal's role on the basis of relevant professional literature. The third meeting was devoted to a discussion of the content and importance of the different aspects of the principal's role on the basis of a preliminary and partial draft of the document. The discussions at the fourth meeting were based on a final draft.

The draft of the School Administration Standard for the State of Israel, the Director-General's Special Circular No. 6 and other documents on school management from around the world formed a key starting point for the committee's deliberations. Peleg Dor-Hayim from the Zofnat Institute for Organizational Consulting, Development and Research documented the committee meetings.

### **From the field: Principals identify possible directions for the committee's work**

Before and during the steering committee's work, approximately one hundred principals met at Avney Rosha to discuss the complex role of school principals in Israel. Furthermore, a group of about twenty principals studied the first draft of the document and held a comprehensive discussion regarding the principal's role in Israel today. These meetings were documented and provided important input for writing the present study (see the list of participating principals).

**Responses from experts and other sources**

During the course of the committee's work, discussions were held with experts involved in research and work in the field, who read the draft copy of the document and offered their comments. This serious professional discourse greatly enhanced and enriched the final result. Moreover, at various stages the draft document was sent to additional witnesses and experts who responded in writing (see list of witnesses).



## **PERCEPTION OF THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

This document reflects a clear priority: The main function of school principals is **to serve as an educational and pedagogic leader for the school in order to enhance the education and learning of all pupils**. Four additional management aspects facilitate and support this function: **Developing the school's future image – vision and managing change; leading the staff and fostering its professional development; focusing on the individual; and managing the relationship between the school and the community**. As leader of the school, the principal must be able to grasp all of the school system's dimensions and aspects and create close connections between these elements in order to ensure the success of all pupils.

**The following sections describe specific aspects of the principal's role:**

### **Leading processes of education, teaching, and learning**

Because the school is responsible for educating pupils, imbuing them with a passion for knowledge, promoting their scholastic autonomy through self-regulated learning and enabling them to attribute meaning to what they learn, the school's top priority must be to constantly improve the education, teaching, learning, and achievements of all pupils.

As a pedagogic leader, the principal plans, leads, and participates in the school's key educational tasks, in conjunction with the school community.

#### **Main activities:**

- Shape the school's educational approach, one that emphasizes high standards for pupil achievement in their studies, as well as in the social, personal, and behavioral spheres; develops a sense of individual and collective capability; promotes a strong motivation to learn; encourages pupil involvement in the learning process; promotes high-quality outcomes of learning that are relevant to the learner's growth.

- Develop a school culture and moral-ethical philosophy, along with civic-democratic behavior that emphasizes an individual and group commitment to act on the basis of accepting diversity and equal opportunity so that each individual can maximize his or her potential; advance a way of life that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of each individual and group in the community and greater society.
- Define educational and academic objectives on the basis of mapping the needs of the pupil and of the school community while monitoring the fulfillment of the objectives, and the processes and means for doing so, on an ongoing basis.
- Develop basic skills, including familiarity with cultural assets and knowledge of the world, and promote advanced processes of investigation and cognitive skills by adapting teaching and learning methods and creating a variety of appropriate learning environments to support meaningful learning by all pupils.
- Shape the school as an educating institution that nurtures a society of children and youngsters based on mutual respect, attentive and open discourse, cooperation, and actively encouraging initiative.
- Provide intake, professional supervision, and leadership of teaching staff to encourage processes of renewal and change that focus on education, teaching, and learning.
- Lead processes of evaluation, reflection, feedback, and measurement in the school in all areas of teaching, education, and learning in classes, in order to promote better teaching, learning, and scholastic achievements.

### **Shaping the school's future – Vision and managing change**

Schools operate in complex realities and environmental contexts, and are influenced by a variety of nonstop changes in their immediate and distant surroundings. The character of our schools, along with their perception, objectives, and way of life, are influenced by these changes in the present, but will also be subject to unforeseen conditions in the future.

If a principal can promote more strategic thinking based on gathering information, informed projections, systematic learning, planning long-term objectives and data-driven methodologies in cooperation with the school staff, local authorities and the community, the school will be better-equipped to address the needs of its stakeholders, adapt to future changes, and win recognition and appreciation for its efforts and accomplishments from those who work within and outside the school.

**Main activities:**

- Clarify the pedagogic, educational, and moral identities of the school, its leaders, and its partners in the community.
- Develop thought processes and mechanisms for gathering information, monitoring, studying changes, and developing forecasts relating to different areas of life and the relationships between humankind and the environment, humankind-knowledge-technology and mankind-society-community that could impact the school's character and functioning in the future.
- Articulate a school vision based on what already exists, and on expectations, needs, and values that are considered to be desirable and worthy by the principal, staff, and school community.
- Translate the vision into a pedagogic, organizational, and budgetary work plan based on an analysis of the school's internal and external data.
- Evaluate and re-examine the school's vision and educational policy on the basis of mounting information relating to changes, and varying projections that could impinge upon the pedagogic objectives and the work plan during the course of their implementation.

**Staff leadership, management, and professional development**

Teachers are the ones who actually lead the work of education, teaching, and learning. They are the human capital and the professional asset upon which the school relies. Nurturing and investing in this important and essential resource will go a long way towards ensuring that the school's objectives and achievements are realized in the pedagogic, organizational, and social spheres.

The school principal manages the teaching staff. His job is to plan and lead the processes of professional development and learning in accordance with school policy and the professional needs and aspirations of teachers, in keeping with the stages of their teaching careers.

**Main activities:**

- Develop mechanisms for recruiting and hiring high-quality staff suited to the needs of the school and its pupils.
- Provide individual attention, support, and professional backing for every member of the school faculty.
- Develop and formalize frameworks and mechanisms that offer support, guidance, consultation, and professional supervision for new teachers.
- Encourage teachers' pedagogic and educational initiatives and offer professional support for planning, implementing, and refining such initiatives in the classroom, the school, and the community.
- Establish a professional school community characterized by expectations of high-quality teaching; share professional knowledge based on a body of mutual experience and learning from educational activity; develop a sense of belonging; individual and collective capability; respect; mutual trust; and ongoing intellectual challenge.
- Foster school-based leadership and decentralize administrative responsibilities according to the school's needs, objectives, and tasks, and based on the teachers' desires, skills and professional experience.
- Design and manage diverse frameworks in the school through which teachers are partners in the decision-making process and can become involved in their own learning and professional development, and those of their colleagues.
- Shape the principal's educational and professional identity through formalized professional development, by enriching his educational and pedagogic knowledge, and enhancing his / her personal and administrative skills.

## **Focusing on the individual**

The school is an organization engaged in educating and nurturing young people who are different from one another. The focus on the individual pupil reflects a sense of concern and caring that seeks to address the isolation felt by many youngsters in the modern era, and is rooted in a commitment to the success of every single pupil in the academic, social, and emotional spheres. A child who faces emotional distress cannot learn and cannot express himself among other children.

**The principal shapes a school that aims to provide a safe and pleasant human and personal environment and to encourage the growth of all pupils.**

### **Main activities:**

- Create a school ethos and atmosphere that emphasize the importance of respect, concern, caring, and empathy for the pupil, and which encourage all pupils to express their individuality in the classroom and the school.
- Provide scholastic, emotional, and social support for every pupil in order to enhance self-esteem, shape their identity, and foster personal development.
- Build and formalize a framework for individual and group encounters that enables teachers and pupils to express positive emotions and encourages personal and group discourse between teachers and pupils.
- Build formal and informal systems that are both consistent and ongoing in order to assess, treat, and address the needs of individual pupils in the school.
- Pool resources, and develop and implement a comprehensive work plan for treating the individual and optimizing the response to pupils' different abilities, needs and aspirations by efficiently allocating the resources of the school, staff, and official and community bodies.

## **Managing the relationship between the school and the community**

Schools influence the social and cultural contexts in which they operate, and are influenced by them in return. Various entities pose demands and challenges to the school, but may also be an important resource for improving the education, teaching,

and learning processes in the school. Positive reciprocal relations between the school and its community are a prerequisite for realizing the school's vision and goals and can contribute towards enhancing the community's social resilience.

**The principal promotes positive relations and encourages productive cooperation with institutions, bodies, and organizations within the school communities.**

**Main activities:**

- Initiate and nurture positive cooperation between parents, the school and its faculty.
- Create and formalize cooperation with cultural institutions and educational and social bodies in order to foster the academic, social, emotional, and cultural aspects of the learners.
- Identify, select, and respond to community needs through the active involvement of the school staff and pupils.
- Cope with pressures, demands, and conflicts that may sometimes conflict with the school's pedagogic values and principles.
- Create educational, learning, and teaching experiences that are related to and based on experiential and community contexts.
- Shape a school culture that perceives the cultural wealth and diversity of the school community as an advantage and as an opportunity for developing social capital among its members.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

“Those who work for the community should do so for the sake of Heaven; for then merit of their ancestors shall aid them, and their righteousness shall endure forever. And you, I shall credit you with great reward as if you have achieved it.” (*Ethics of the Fathers 2b*).

### **Foreword: The principal's role**

**The school principal represents a crucial function in a school's success** (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring & Porter, 2006). The success of schools involves formulating and implementing educational goals (Inbar, 2000). Since the mid-twentieth century, and particularly over the past three decades, the goal of the school has focused on the education, learning and achievements of all pupils who attend it (Elmore, 2004). Accordingly, the principal bears the ultimate responsibility for the success of all of the pupils and it is important to nurture his or her commitment to this goal. Research shows that principals play an important role in improving teaching and enhancing pupil achievement (for example, see ISLLC, 2008; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2007).

The principal's role is an intense and complex one and includes different types of tasks. A key reason for this is that schools and principals operate in a changing, uncertain, and unstable reality (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). By way of example, the functions of the principal may include: The school's organizational development, managing decision-making processes, systemic and systematic planning, designing a safe atmosphere and environment, managing the curricula, preparing the school schedule, professional development of the teaching staff, budgeting and financing school activities, formulating and implementing an educational vision, recruiting staff and managing human resources, managing relations with the school community, developing learning communities, evaluating teacher performance and, lastly, improving pupil achievements.

The principal's functions combine both administrative and leadership aspects. In conceptual terms these constitute two distinct dimensions (Inbar, 1987, 2000): The administrative dimension includes a prominent element of preservation, arrangement, and the day-to-day running of the school, whereas the leadership component emphasizes such aspects as values, morality, inspiration, shaping goals, renewal (*ibid.*), and – above all – motivating individuals towards a common and accepted purpose (Murphy et al., 2006).

In practical terms, it is not helpful to make such a sharp distinction between management and leadership (Friedman, 1992, 1993). The principal's role is a combination of management and leadership: According to Bennis & Nanus (1985), this role involves formulating a vision and introducing changes, alongside effective routine maintenance, while Friedman (1992, 1993) believes the role is based on “transformational leadership” and “routine leadership,” respectively – both of which are required by the organization. Thus, effective school management is a function of leadership characteristics that are based on an administrative foundation (Inbar, 1987).

In light of the above, the document to formulate recommendations for the principal's role adopts the approach that **administrative tasks are intertwined with the all of the tasks and spheres for which the school principal is responsible**. These important balancing and stabilizing aspects also include elements of educational leadership that highlight renewal and change. This approach reflects the belief that **administrative aspects are important for the school's successful functioning; however, they do not stand by themselves, but rather serve educational and pedagogic goals**. In practical terms, the document to formulate recommendations for the principal's role makes education and learning a top priority in the school's agenda. As the person responsible for all the school's activities the principal must lead, manage, and consider the various components of the school system in order to realize this agenda.

The tremendous responsibility imposed on principals reflects broad economic, social, and cultural processes. The evaluation of teacher performance, for example, is related to the demand for transparency and accountability, as part of an approach that



perceives education as a state service **for all citizens** requiring an effort to prevent gaps between schools. The need for productive contacts with the school community stems from processes of decentralization combined with parental involvement, which emphasize the central role of local government and the third sector in educational activities in the schools. These processes expand the circle of entities that make demands on the school and intensify competition between schools. The combination of greater transparency in educational processes and outcomes and competition between schools reinforces the need to articulate a unique vision, recruit pupils, and market the school. Such processes are liable to lead to an undue emphasis on standardized outcomes of learning as reflected in grades, which may sometimes be used as ammunition against schools, teachers, and principals. Keeping all this in mind, it is important to emphasize the importance of state education and to provide principals with **support and professional backing**. Concomitantly, in order to enable principals to execute their role in a comprehensive and professional manner, we must insist on a proper definition of their mandate. At this point in time the processes for recruiting and training principals and the authority and tools at their disposal are inadequate for meeting the demands placed upon the schools and the public's expectations from school principals. The professional literature (for example, Goldring, 2008; McKinsey & Company, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2007) has identified several conditions that enable principals to perform their role properly:

- Rigorous location and screening processes among teachers;
- Appropriate remuneration and incentives for principals;
- Implementing a consistent and coordinated model for training, learning, and development;
- Providing access to accurate, relevant, and applicable information and data;
- Making time to introduce teaching and learning processes by delegating organizational tasks to other staff members;
- Enhancing the principal's autonomy to manage the school's human capital and budget.

Once these conditions have been met it will be possible to engage in serious discussions regarding the accountability of principals.

## **Leading processes of education, teaching, and learning**

“The profound meaning of the principal’s task lies in the pedagogic aspect of his role. The key to the success of principals lies in changing the center of gravity of their role: from management to education” (Evans, 1991, p. 17).

Until the 1980s the study of leadership was rooted in the social sciences and the principal’s role was based on scientific, commercial, and management images (Cuban, 1988). The essence of management was thought to be universal and independent of the educational context (Murphy, 1991). **The qualities approach, the situational approach, and the behavioral approach** are all examples of this general paradigm (for further detail see, for example, Gonen & Zakkai, 2000; Popper & Ronen, 1992).

Over the last twenty years, as we recognize the connection between the actions of the leader and the culture of the organization in which he/she operates, there has been increasing interest in the **formative or transformational leadership** model and the **full range leadership** model (Avolio & Bass, 1990). These approaches emphasize the principal’s role as a shaper of culture and focus on the leader’s influence on people’s tendencies, attitudes, and beliefs, and on shaping optimal relations among the organization’s members (Murphy, 1991). The formative leadership model includes such concepts as the realization of ideals, inspirational development, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Avolio, Waldman & Yammarino, 1991).

What makes formative leadership so critical is its emphasis on the need to foster a healthy school culture. According to Roland S. Barth, a Harvard University professor and the founding director of the Harvard Principals’ Center, “A school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the school than the president of the country, the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal, teachers, and parents can ever have” (Barth, 2002, p. 6). The school’s culture is based on the system of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the institution. A healthy culture serves as an ongoing source of inspiration for learning by both children and adults, and this explains its importance. The principal must

continuously examine the culture of his/her school and ensure that it invites and sustains learning. In such conditions, the achievements of the pupils and of the entire system will reflect the school's atmosphere and culture (*ibid.*).

Formative leadership is essential, but it cannot bring about ongoing improvement in the school in and of itself (Hopkins, 2001). The formative approach, like other general management approaches, may be too far removed from the “core technology” of schools – that is, from teaching and learning (*ibid.*). If the school's primary function is to enable young people to grow – to enhance their learning and achievements – then the principal should focus on this goal by serving as an instructional leader, and aim to ensure changes in teaching and learning. Recent studies note that instructional leadership is the principal's core task (for example, see Wallace Foundation, 2007, 2008), and a principal who is an instructional leader inspires better teaching and improved learner achievement (Gutterman, 2006; McKinsey & Company, 2007; Murphy, et al., 2006).

As will be discussed below in detail, instructional leadership is apparently not a structured or commonplace phenomenon in education systems. Many schools operate according to a division of responsibilities whereby teachers are responsible for what happens behind closed classroom doors, while the principal handles activities such as budget management, defining and maintaining the school's organizational structure, managing relations with the school community, resolving conflicts and crises, enriching human capital, shaping the school climate, and marketing and managing the school's daily routine (Elmore, 2004). Thus, the principal finds it difficult to connect these actions with the activity of teaching and learning, and therefore cannot forge his or her own central role as an instructional leader. Although this description may be a generalization, the argument we should consider is that **there is no structure within the system that consistently supports instructional leadership**. This document aims to focus on the educational leadership dimension of the administrative aspects that are designed to serve the school's educational and academic goals.

Since the 1980s we have seen efforts to change the central characterization of the principal's role and to relate this to **the organization's educational context and**

**academic goals.** If we accept the assumptions that the school's main function is to improve education and learning and that the principal plays a major role in achieving this goal, then the obvious conclusion is that the principal must devote his or her best efforts to teaching and learning. This conclusion has led many researchers to state that instructional leadership is one of the characteristics of the principal's role: Leadership that emphasizes teacher behaviors directly aimed at influencing the pupils' growth (Leithwood, Doris & Steinbach, 1998); leadership that defines the pedagogic purpose of the school, that directs teaching and learning, and creates a school climate that supports learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985); leadership that directs and guides improved teaching and learning (Elmore, 2004); leadership that shapes an educational-instructional vision and realizes this vision through cooperation with the school staff and community (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003); and leadership that is based on procedures that foster sustainable relationships with classroom activity (Coldren & Spillane, 2007) – in other words, leadership based on reciprocal relations between teacher, pupil, and study material (Cohen & Ball, 1998; Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003; see also: Evans, 1991; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hopkins, 2001).

How do we translate these general statements into guidelines for action? It emerges that one of the problems that has characterized the literature dealing with instructional leadership is that it lacks detail, confining itself to generalized and values-based characteristics. But this trend has changed recently and a comprehensive review of the literature has enabled the presentation of more detailed and substantiated models of instructional leadership (for example, see Hallinger 2000, 2003). These models note the effectiveness of the following actions:

- Defining the school's pedagogic objective and formulating its goals;
- Managing a system of teaching and learning that includes the guidance and evaluation of teaching and the use of a broad range of teaching methods;
- Leading and participating in defining the curricula in order to ensure that these are meaningful for learners and develop their thinking;
- Identifying the academic progress of all learners and monitoring progress on the basis of data;

- Nurturing a positive learning climate that highlights a suitable allocation of teaching time, and developing an organizational structure that reflects instructional needs;
- Managing the professional development of the school staff in connection with the work of teaching and learning.

(See also: Cuban, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Krug, 1992; Shulman, 1986).

This being the case, the principal's central role according to recent professional literature is to improve teaching and learning on an ongoing basis. In this context, the literature does not distinguish between learning and education. Israel's educational reality focuses on education, values education, teaching of values and other such concepts. Although it is beyond the scope of this document to discuss the meaning of the term "education" in depth, it is important to emphasize this concept alongside the concepts of "teaching" and "learning," and thus to set it apart.

Similarly, the draft version of the School Administration Standard for the State of Israel states: "The principal in Israel is the educational leader who constitutes the professional authority that leads the school to fulfill its educational objectives;" "the principal's main role is to focus the school's activity on teaching and learning in order to advance the pupils' achievements in the academic, social, and ethical spheres" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). These statements are consistent with the provisions of Article 2 of the amendment to the State Education Law, which discusses the goals of education.

It is important to stress that the principal's focus on education, teaching, and learning is not exclusive and does not negate his other functions; rather, **all of the principal's functions are interrelated, they serve each other and support the principal's main role – instructional leadership**. Literature on effective educational leadership places special emphasis on **defining and realizing a school vision; staff leadership and professional training; and managing relations between the school and the community**. Each of these aspects will be discussed in depth below.

## **Aspect #1: Shaping the future of the school – Vision and managing change**

“There are plenty of people who describe things the way they are; now we need a few people who will describe things the way they could be.” (Robert Urban)

According to Hallinger (2003), the most important role of the instructional leader is to define and realize the school’s educational vision. The vision expresses the school’s world view and the central purpose behind its existence (*ibid.*); it is the “glue” that binds people to each other and to the organization, creates a sense of purpose and hope, and places its day-to-day activities on a moral foundation (Sergiovani, 2002). The point of departure in discussing the school vision is that the **school is an organization motivated by values, an organization that teaches values by its behavior** (*ibid.*).

Our review of the literature on the subject of school visions raised several important findings:

- A vision reflects the desired direction and objectives the school seeks to achieve.
- A vision should be grounded in the school's local circumstances.
- A successful vision is not merely a convincing declaration; rather, it should be translated into practical opportunities for action.

A dynamic vision open to change as work progresses is more effective than a static vision (Hillman & Stoll, 1994).

It is important to distinguish between a principal’s vision and a school vision. Although it is important that the principal have an educational “backbone,” this is not enough. One of the manifestations of the principal’s leadership is to guide the staff and other relevant members of the school community towards defining their vision together. Studies show that a school vision that is defined or formulated by the principal – however talented he or she may be – arouses opposition, encourages passivity and apathy among the staff in terms of its realization, and becomes

irrelevant when the principal leaves the position (*ibid.*). Moreover, a vision that is disconnected from reality can cause considerable damage to the organization, since it becomes an illusion attempting to adapt itself to an idyllic image that cannot be achieved (Bogler & Nir, 2001). Conversely, a vision that results from a cooperative process is richer, more firmly rooted in the local context, and has a better chance of being implemented. A vision that is dynamic and updated periodically is also essential if an organization is to function effectively, particularly those that generate frequent change (Bogler & Nir, 2001; Hillman & Stoll, 1994).

Since the vision presents the school with a challenge, its realization entails a process of change. This is a complex process, particularly when directed toward the activity of teaching and learning (see, for example, Cohen & Ball, 1993). The process of change relates to diverse and interdependent spheres and components, such as educational approaches; curricula; teaching methods; evaluation methods; organizational mechanisms and procedures; work frameworks of professional staffs; defining, allocating, and performing tasks; organizing the school's time and space; identifying and pooling resources; coping with objections; addressing specific components from a holistic perspective; in short, changing the school culture.

The literature that discusses changes in school provides a number of important insights:

- Teachers must have an opportunity to learn about the change and to be key partners in planning and leading the change (Cohen & Hill, 2001).
- Multiple forums and opportunities must be created for professional discussion and sharing among teachers (Little, 1990).
- A distinction must be made between staff members and teams who maintain the existing system and those responsible for making the change (Hopkins, 2001).
- Organizational and budgetary changes are needed in keeping with the school's world view and guiding pedagogic goals (Sarason, 1996).
- It is important to create close connections between the vision, the work plan, professional staff development, the curriculum, and actual teaching and learning in the classrooms (Eisner, 1992).

## **Aspect #2: Staff leadership, management, and professional development**

“If a man makes his petition depend on his own merit, heaven makes it depend on the merit of others; and if he makes it depend on the merit of others, heaven makes it depend on his own merit” (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot*, 10b).

The main assumption is that pupil learning cannot be improved efficiently over time unless you improve how teachers teach (McKinsey & Company, 2007). From the perspective of the principal functioning as an instructional leader, this assumption is of crucial importance. Firstly, the principal must devote substantial time to training and advising teachers (*ibid.*); secondly, he must be present at key pedagogic junctions; lastly, the principal must also enter the classroom, observe lessons, and provide feedback to teachers (*ibid.*). However, the principal’s focus on teaching is not only direct; it is also indirect (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). In other words, principals can influence what happens in the classroom not only through their own actions, but by also organizing the school systems, resources, and tools at their disposal. In this manner a principal leads and manages the pedagogic tasks, but these are executed by other figures within the school and elsewhere (*ibid.*). Thus, there are two main explanations for adopting instructional leadership that encourages the decentralization of the principal’s management tasks (“distributed leadership”): Firstly, there are a great many management tasks and it is unreasonable for one person, however talented, to execute them alone. Secondly, and more important, if the school’s main task focuses on improving the teaching and learning processes, then the teachers – as the ones who actually execute this task – must be key partners in leading processes of improvement in the school (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Hopkins, 2007; Spillane, 2005; Southworth, 2000).

Furthermore, if teachers maintain formal and informal professional ties on a regular basis; if they plan lessons and teaching units together; if they hold professional discussions about what happens in the classrooms; if they share knowledge and successful teaching practices with each other; if they enjoy opportunities to initiate new activities – then the chance of improving learning and raising pupil achievements



will increase dramatically (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Southworth, 2002). In this context the principal faces two tasks: Firstly, to create a collegial and cohesive working environment that learns by doing (a “community of practice”) and secondly, to manage the teaching staff and organize professional development processes for the teachers.

### **Aspect #3: Focusing on the individual**

“He should be gracious and merciful to the small and the great, involving himself in their good and welfare; he should protect the honor of even the humblest of men” (Rambam, *Laws of Kings*, II:6).

The professional literature on the subject of the principal as an instructional leader emphasizes that the principal must be committed to the scholastic success of every pupil. It might seem that this emphasis on the scholastic aspect may come at the expense of the individual-educational aspect. However, the reference here is not to individualized, adapted, or differential teaching – however important all these approaches may be, they remain in the sphere of academic achievement. Rather the reference is to the principal’s commitment to the approach that the pupil is an entire individual whose welfare must be attended to and who must be nurtured and educated accordingly. Of course, this kind of individualized attention is also crucial to improving learning, but the desire for individualized attention is based not on an instrumentalist perspective, but rather on one that embraces substantive values. The same is true of the manner in which the individual is perceived as a learner. Such concepts as “passion for knowledge,” “curiosity,” “autonomous learner,” “learning styles,” “cognitive development,” “motivation to learn” and “life-long learning” are generally excluded from contemporary discourse on management and leadership. Other terminology is used instead, such as “a high achievement threshold,” “investment,” “standards,” “standardized tests,” and “raising grades.” This document does not discount the need for effective learning and the need for better scholastic achievements. However, if teaching is not based on personal attention to each pupil, many of them will be unable to achieve effective learning. This argument is substantiated by various trends in contemporary society (including Israeli society) where many children are left on their own for most of the day, or alternatively, are

placed with caregivers and babysitters of various kinds who do not provide sufficient emotional significance for the children. Thus, there are many children from all social strata who grow up in conditions that threaten their well-being and leave them without relations with significant adults.

In this context we believe that the school is an important arena for social change. The school and the education system cannot perform this task alone without broader support. Nonetheless, the school cannot ignore the complex reality that characterizes the lives of children and adolescents as a result, in part, of the school's inability to realize its goals when many pupils live and grow up in the conditions described above. For this reason, the principal's role is to ensure that the staff is present, attentive, and relevant to the life experiences of all pupils, including those in distress. The principal must create frameworks that can provide the best possible response to the pupils' legitimate needs, aspirations, and desires.

#### **Aspect #4: Managing relations between the school and the community**

Until the 1970s the school was an almost completely independent organization and was not notably dependent upon its surroundings (Oplatka, 2007). Over the past forty years the situation has changed: Education has been transformed into a universal service obligated to report to parents; schools are budgeted according to the number of pupils, leading to competition between schools; principals have begun to market their schools; decentralization has increased the impact of the local authority as a source of funding and influence on schools, which have thus become embroiled in local politics; self-managed and community schools have intensified the need for cooperation between the school and various agents in its surroundings; cutbacks in school budgets and the rise of privatization in society at large have paved the way for an influx of third sectors organizations and commercial bodies into the schools (*ibid.*).

The significance and value of these processes are the subject of fierce debate. In practical terms, however, principals find themselves facing a complex reality and must respond to the daily challenges confronting them. How can they do this?

Principals devote considerable time to developing relations with officials and organizations within and outside the school community, the purpose of which is to address a range of needs: To obtain advice from various sources, to locate information relating to policy, to identify sources of support and supervision for the school, to plan and prepare visits to the school, to identify new trends that are relevant to the school's activity (whether these trends present threats or create opportunities), and to identify funding sources (Leithwood, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006).

These activities do not usually relate directly to teaching, and certainly not to increasing the chances for improving the pupils' education, learning, and achievements. Moreover, this reality gives the impression that the main purpose of the school's external relations is to locate economic resources and compete for the realization of interests. However, a community is more than just an economic potential or a source of tension, as if it were merely an obstacle to overcome. This document desires to perceive the **community as the social-cultural context within which the school operates**. As such, the educational activity is of particular importance since it reflects the life experience of the learners.

Several researchers have recently noted the correlation between the management of a school's external relations and the school's improvement and its focus on education, teaching, and learning. Several important insights have been raised in this context. Firstly, the more the principal is able to articulate the school's purpose and the importance of the pedagogic emphasis to external entities, the better the prospects of cooperation relating directly to this aspect of the school (Leithwood et al., 2006). Similarly, the more the school's vision is rooted in community contexts, the better the chances that it will be accepted and realized. The second insight is that the school must use its vision to select from among those entities that seek to influence its management. The third insight is that the school community can provide a rich foundation for learning experiences and for authentic social and volunteering activities. The fourth insight is that pupil learning is enhanced if parents support the school and its goals, present their children with high expectations, and ensure that they have the benefit of proper learning conditions (*ibid.*).

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