

The Schools Principal's Leadership Style Influence on Teamwork Skills of Teachers in Arab Schools in Israel

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine the influence of a principal's leadership style on the teachers' teamwork and to recommend principal's management strategies to increase teachers' teamwork. The research population is from The Triangle, a concentration of Israeli Arab towns and 352 teachers participated in the study, of which 275 were women (78.1%) and 77 were men (21.9%), most of them in the age range of 35-55. The teachers teach in middle schools and high schools. The study findings showed that there are positive relationships of moderate and significant correlations between all the school principals' leadership style and the teamwork skills of teachers. While high levels of leadership (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) the teachers reported about their school principal, were associated with high levels of teamwork skills of the teaching staff. In addition, it was found that the correlation between transformational leadership and teamwork skills is slightly lower than the correlation between transactional or laissez-faire leadership and teamwork skills, due to the Arab traditional culture.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, teamwork skills, Arab schools.

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1. Introduction

Leadership in an organisational context is about an individual (leader) influencing the work behavior of other people working in that organization (followers) to execute their work tasks and achieve the desired goals. The leader's behavior while interacting with the followers is defined as the leadership style. The study of Levy (2008) found that managers who use the adequate leadership style are stimulating employees to learn and develop their professional skill, enhances the teamwork of employees and contributes to the successful achievement of the organizational goals.

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Most researchers agree that leadership is a social relationship which develops between human beings interacting during the execution of a task and consists of one individual taking the leading role and convincing others to follow his/ her directions, orders about what needs to be done. Consequently, leadership takes place when employees adopt organizational objectives as their personal goals (Friedman, 1992). The leadership style in the organization and the way the manager is perceived by his employees, has a decisive influence on the goals achievement, on the commitment, work motivation, job satisfaction of employees, on their approach to team work and on the overall performance of the organization.

This article explores the connection between the leadership style of school principals and the teacher's teamwork in Arab schools in Israel because the authority of school principals' and their leadership style is highly important especially during the current period when the Ministry of Education of Israel is implementing several policies aiming to enhance the quality of education to respond to the needs of the Israeli society and economy. The ministry of education appoints new schools principals, better trained and with management and leadership skills, which among others aims to create and develop a strong teamwork spirit among teachers at the school.

The Arab sector in Israel has a traditionalist culture, more conservative, in which the school principal has a highly prestigious social role in the community (Addi-Raccah (2006). Nevertheless, the Arab society in Israel and its education system has changed substantially. The most notable change, among others, is the increased importance of the principal's educational leadership style for the school's success, through impacting the implementation of new teaching methods, tools and the development of teachers skills, focusing more on creating and developing a school culture based on team work, oriented towards academic performance and focused on improving the academic results of Arab students (Arar & Haj Yahya, 2007).

Therefore, the principal's leadership style is closely related to the students functioning and success, and especially the teachers' teamwork. The connection between the principal's leadership style and the teachers' teamwork are the main factor in teachers' perception regarding their commitment to the students and to the school success.

2. Literature review

Many researches point to the close connection between school principal's leadership style and teachers' teamwork (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2014; Kutsyuruba, 2011; Matsuo, 2016). To explore this connection the researcher has employed first, the leadership model of (Bass, 1985), leadership style (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003), and second, theories reflecting the teachers teamwork. The model of Bass distinguished three leadership styles: first, the transformational style, second, the transactional leadership style and the third, the laissez-faire leadership style. The

model is widely used by researchers due to its validation in various settings, including the schools context.

The transformational leadership style represents the highest leadership level. The transformational leader influences the employees by inspiring them, stimulating their thinking, showing personal attention to their needs and work, developing agile approaches (Munteanu, et al., 2020) and gets them to make an additional extra effort beyond what they would do in a different setting (Bass, 1985). This leadership style consists of four components: first, Idealized Influence, second, Inspiration. Third, intellectual Stimulation – and fourth, Individual Consideration. In the transactional leadership style the relationship and influence of the leader toward his employees is done by "exchange", the leader sets the required performance goals and rewards the employee if these goals are achieved. Bass (1985) points out that a leader characterized by the laissez-faire leadership style refrain from making decisions and avoid interfering with the work of his / her employees. The laissez-faire leader provides minimal direction, do not use their managerial authority, and delegates tasks to followers. This style is considered to be an ineffective style.

The main role of school principals is to manage the school activities from the educational process, with the clear and well stated goal improve the teaching activities of the teachers and the learning of the school's students. Four areas of management that support this role are: designing the future image of the school - vision and management for change; leadership, management and professional development of the teaching team; focusing on the individual; and managing the relationship between the school and the community. The principal must establish close ties between the school system and its various stakeholders for the success of students and school (Oplatka & Levi, 2008; Sergiovani, 2002).

The role of the educational leader is a new concept created in the 1980s. The research literature found that effective schools are characterized by principals who are educational leaders (Lashway, 2008). In addition, empirical studies investigated whether the roles and activities of educational leadership are correlated with school improvement (Murphy, 2007). According to Murphy (2007), educational leadership is seen as a composition of supervision, team development, and curriculum development that enables school improvement and interactions between leaders and followers. The main goal of the school is the students' learning, which depends on the functioning of the teachers, influenced by factors such as, teamwork, professional growth, school climate, dominant culture and teachers' innovation.

Fullan (2005) notes that an educational leader makes the quality of teaching a top priority of the school. Sergiovani (2002) found that successful principals work to achieve long-term goals as well as perform day-to-day tasks. Educational leader is characterized by positive self-image, ability to deal with failures, willingness to cope with ambiguity and ability to function in situations of uncertainty. Successful principals are aware of their limitations and strengths, the schools power relations, and utilize them to form partnerships for the sake of the school (Sergiovani, 2002).

Teamwork is defined as the ability to work with others through collaboration and communication to achieve common goals (Ballantrud et al., 2017). For

teamwork to be effective, team members need to understand the team's goals, work to achieve them cooperatively (Baker et al., 2006; Ploega et al., 2019). Teamwork and strengthening the integrative approach to teaching improvement and organizational efficiency and decision-making decentralization, which are linked to the leadership style (Hallinger, & Heck, 2010; Herold et al., 2008; Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2005). In addition, teachers' teamwork is an important part in bringing changes to school (Runhaar, Kanerman, & Sanders, 2013; Bouwmans et al., 2017).

A team whose learning consists of building common knowledge through sharing information and ideas, is able to increase its performance (Vangrieken, Duchy & Raes, 2016; Wijnia et al., 2016; Runhaar et al., 2014). Researches has shown that team learning occurs in teams who show commitment and responsibility for the school and the students and see themselves as a cohesive entity. Other researches showed that a transformational leader is able to strengthen innovation, individual learning and teamwork skills (Oude Groot, Beverborg et al., 2015; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Teacher teams play a significant role in introducing educational innovations and changes (Runbaar et al., 2013). This assumes that, in part, the success of school improvement depends on the performance of the staff (Bouwmans et al., 2017). Team learning consist of building collaborative knowledge through mutual sharing of information and ideas (Decuyper et al., 2010; Runbaar et al., 2014; Wijnia et al., 2016).

The literature shows that staff learning occurs in 'real' teaching teams (Vangrieken et al., 2016; Oude et al., 2015). Studies show that leadership style, an integrative approach of school principals and leaders reinforces the school's innovative climate, and teacher involvement in individual and collective learning activities (Moolenaar et al., 2010; Thoonen et al., 2011). Team learning makes it possible to respond to changing environments and collaborate effectively. Various learning activities performed by the staff include learning from mistakes, providing feedback, reflection and integrating knowledge (Kostopoulos et al., 2013; Edmondson, et al., 2007). Decuyper et al., (2010) divided these activities into three processes of team learning: information sharing, collaborative construction, which involves the team combining insights and information to create shared interpretations through reflective dialogue and communication, and constructive conflict resolution (Wijnia et al., 2016).

Teamwork can lead to fewer mistakes in the workplace, high rates of employee satisfaction and opportunities for continuous improvement and mutual consent. It can be noted that teamwork is created mainly in a cohesive climate. While introducing school changes, conflict can be a catalyst for challenging the status quo and implementing an education reform (Achinstein, 2002). Teamwork performs professional development, allocating time and money for planning, and setting clear expectations (Kutsyuruba, 2011; Matsuo, 2016).

Developing teamwork among teachers is one of the principals' prominent tasks (Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2014; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). By defining a uniform goal and vision, principals provide teachers with a sense of unity (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014) and develops a community of learners driven by shared

responsibility (Moolenaar, et al., 2011). Principal support teacher teams by providing feedback for goal achievement (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008) and by supporting teachers' community of learners. Principals need to promote a climate of trust, that will allow teachers to be confident in expressing their feelings and enjoy recognition for their accomplishments (Duyar et al., 2013; Amorim Neto et al., 2008; Zaveria & Thinguri, 2017).

Schools need to meet the challenges of addressing the needs of all learners, by building a school staff that will lead processes designed to improve teaching and learning. For example, Friend & Cook (2007) argued that team building is the most important factor in implementing school initiatives and improvement.

Using a team collaborative approach enable to perform leadership tasks effectively. These tasks include teaching, implementing change, and evaluating teaching and learning methods. Thus, many school principals have found that setting up and training a leadership team will enable to perform diverse tasks (Marzano et al., 2005) and activities such as problem solving, communication with colleagues, raising motivation, professional development and training.

It is advisable that the school leadership team represents the staff, the students and the community diversity (Chenoweth & Everhart, 2002).

This research aims to indicate the most suitable leadership style of a principal for improving teacher's teamwork in the Arab schools from the Triangle Area of Israel and allow to select school principals who are suitable for school management and leading the teachers to better results. The research will examine the correlation between the principal's leadership style and the teachers' teamwork in school.

3. The research methodology

The main research questions are the following: Which type of leadership style of school principal is the highest correlated with the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel?

The researcher formulated the following five hypotheses.

Hypothesis H1. There is a positive correlation between the transformational leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel.

Hypothesis H2. There is a positive correlation between the transactional leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel.

Hypothesis H3. There is a positive correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel.

Hypothesis H4. The correlation between the transformational leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel will be higher compared to the correlation in the case of transactional leadership style.

Hypothesis H5. The correlation between the transactional leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel will be higher compared to the correlation in the case of laissez-faire leadership style.

The sample of respondents were teachers from an area in Israel called "The little Triangle". This area has a population of about 250,000 Arab citizens of Israel, which is about 24%% of the Arab population living in Israel. The majority of the population is Muslim. The level of economic and social development of "The little Triangle" is quite low. In the eleven towns there are primary and elementary schools.

The sample was made of 352 teachers who participated in the study, of which 275 teachers were women (78.1%) and 77 teachers were men (21.9%). This reflects that fact that in the Arab community from Israel women are working in the education system as teachers. The most of them were in the age range of 35-55 (63.6%), so mature individuals. An absolute majority of the teachers are Muslims (99.1%) and academics (88.6%). The teachers are employees of middle level schools and high schools. In addition, the study included also 57 principals, of which 36 were women (63.2%) and 21 were men (36.8%), most of them aged 35-55 (71.9%). All principals are Muslims (100.0%) and academics (100.0%).

First, the researcher used the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire – MLQ (Bass and Avolio (1994). It has 36 statements measuring indices related to the relevant dimensions of the three leadership style researched. The second research instrument which was used is the O'Neil (1998) work group skills questionnaire. The second questionnaire, teamwork skills, consisted of 38 items on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) that examine the degree of teamwork skills of the teachers. The questionnaire was distributed to teachers and school principals of Arab schools, after getting the approval of the school principals and consent of teachers.

4. Results of the research

The results of the statistical analysis of the 352 questionnaires completed by teachers from the Arab schools in the Triangle Area of Israel concerning the four research variables are presented in Table 1, below.

Statistical data Teachers (N=352)

Table 1

	No. of Items	Min.	Max.	Average	s. d	α
Transformational leadership	20	1.20	4.00	3.29	.58	.952
Transactional leadership	12	1.00	4.00	2.49	.46	.720
Laissez-faire leadership	4	1.00	4.00	2.55	.60	.481
Teamwork skills of teachers	38	1.26	4.00	3.49	.51	.978

To examine hypotheses H1, H2 and H3, Pearson tests were calculated between the leadership indices and the teamwork skills index reported by the teachers. Table 2, below shows the results:

Pearson correlations between leadership style and teamwork skills - teachers (N=352)

Table 2

	Teamwork skills of teachers
Transformational leadership	+0.527**
Transactional leadership	+0.236**
Laissez-faire leadership	+0.205**

**p<0.01

About hypothesis H1, that there is a positive correlation between the transformational leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel, the Pearson coefficient was +.527. This indicates that there is a significant positive and strong correlation between the two variables. This means that the more the school principal uses the transformational leadership style, the more team work skills of teachers are used by them in their daily work. Consequently, hypothesis H1 was validated.

About hypothesis H2 that there is a positive correlation between the transactional leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel, the Pearson coefficient was +.236. This indicates that there is a significant positive and weak correlation between the two variables. This means that the more the school principal uses the transactional leadership style, the more team work skills of teachers are used by them in their daily work. Consequently, hypothesis H2 was validated.

About hypothesis H3 that there is a positive correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel, the Pearson coefficient was +.205. This indicates that there is a significant positive and weak correlation between the two variables. This means that the more the school principal uses the laissez-faire leadership style, the more team work skills of teachers are used by them in their daily work. Consequently, hypothesis H3 was validated.

H4. The correlation between the transformational leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel will be higher compared to the correlation in the case of transactional leadership style. The Pearson correlation in the case of transformational leadership style was +.527, much higher than the Pearson correlation +.236 in the case of transactional leadership style. Consequently, hypothesis H4 is validated.

H5. The correlation between the transactional leadership style of the school principal and the teamwork skills of teachers in Arab schools from Israel will be higher compared to the correlation in the case of laissez-faire leadership style. The Pearson correlation in the case of transactional leadership style was +.236, higher than the Pearson correlation +.205 in the case of the laissez-faire leadership style. Consequently, hypothesis H5 is validated.

5. Discussion

Hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 show that each of the three leadership styles, transformational, transactional and laissez-faire are positively and moderately influencing the use of teamwork related skills by the teachers in Arab school from the Triangle Area from Israel.

The results about hypothesis H4 and H5 indicate that the influence of the transformational and transactional leadership style on the use of team skills by teachers is higher than the influence of the transformational and the laissez faire leadership style.

The results of Biggerstaff, (2012) support the results of this study that the use by the school principals of the transformational leadership style has a positive significant relationship with job satisfaction, thus increasing team work. Furthermore, research by Nguyen et al., (2022) shows that active involvement in teamwork indicates that the principal's leadership style is relevant for increasing the team's efforts to achieve common goals (Schermuly et al., 2022).

Other articles have dealt with the relationship between leadership styles and teamwork (Kelly & MacDonald, 2019; Giao & Hung, 2018). They found that each leader has a different leadership style designed to recruit and evaluate the team's involvement at work. Some principals use financial or physical rewards, related to transactional leadership style. Others use person-centered actions, such as career advancement or work environment improvement, related to transformational leadership, intended to maintain active teamwork by focusing on human values (Popli & Rizvi, 2016).

As in our study, other studies have found that relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and teamwork is positive, which is opposite to the relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and teamwork, that was found to be negative (Abasilim et al., 2018; Yohannes & Wasonga, 2021). These studies show that transformational and transactional leaders are more effective because they are able to increase teamwork and workers' commitment. These results point to effective interactions between the school principal and the team, which increases team satisfaction at work, causing them to make efforts and contribute beyond expectations for the school (Sudha et al., 2016). Other research findings on leadership show that transformational leadership style is able to increase teamwork, while transactional leadership and laissez-faire style have different results in different contexts, in accordance with our study (Thanh et al., 2022) .

In the complex situation of the educational system today, leadership style motivates employees to achieve organizational goals. Using an appropriate leadership style to the external and internal context of the school constitutes a crucial factor in dealing with problematic educational systems. Therefore, effective leadership strengthens the competitive advantage of the organization and the team. Leadership effectiveness is based on the employees will and cooperation in carrying out orders. The collaborative aspect of effective leaders and employees is to play an important role in the organization growth (Arshad et al., 2021). The study of Iqbal

et al., (2021) for example, investigates the effect of authoritative and laissez-faire leadership on successful teamwork, and clarify important aspects: first, that a leader can adopt a style to strengthen success, and second, that relevant personality characteristics of leaders can be identified and activated to increase success.

The main requirement is that the leadership style matches the needs, situation and characteristics of the employees (Arshad et al., 2021). Successful employees are more confident and energetic and demonstrate desirable behavior at work, such as innovation and commitment (Iqbal et al., 2021). Various researchers have tried to identify a leadership style that will have a better effect on the employee's behavior and attitudes. The most suitable leadership styles found are transformational, charismatic, authentic, servant and integrative leadership (Ilyas, et al., 2021).

This study confirms the findings of previous studies that dealt with leadership styles and their correlation with teamwork and activities and behavior of principals and teachers. As to these leadership styles, the emphasis is on collaborative relationships between the principals and the teaching staff, in the context of school improvement and student success (Neumerski, 2013). These reciprocal relationships focus on school processes, student learning, teacher commitment, collaboration, empowerment and teacher support by the principal (Louis et al., 2010). Most of the research on school leadership has focused on the principal's indirect role in relation to student learning, achievement and engagement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Several elements of transformational leadership style and similar styles have consistently appeared in most studies including defining a school vision and goals, building trust between the principal and the teaching staff, cooperation and support for quality teaching (Supovitz et al., 2010). For example, the literature has shown that integrative leaders who combine transformational leadership with instructional leadership, strengthen the ability of teachers to improve student achievement and schools, through teamwork and collaborative activities (Hallinger, 2003). An authentic leadership style sets high standards and educational alternatives, empowers teachers and students, through transparency, fairness, respect and close interpersonal relationships (Avolio et al., 2009). Servant leadership (Laub, 1999) was emphasized as leadership that demonstrates positive personal qualities and social sensitivity, such as empathy, awareness, persuasion, foresight, commitment to people's growth and community building.

6. Conclusions

The study findings showed that there are positive relationships of significant positive and moderate correlations between all the three leadership style indices and the team skills index of teachers from the Arab schools in the Triangle Area of Israel. While high levels of leadership (transformative, transactional and laissez-faire) the teacher reported about his principal, were associated with high levels of teamwork skills of the teaching staff, it was found that the intensity of the correlation between

the transformation leadership style of school principals and teachers' teamwork skills, is much stronger than the correlation between transactional or laissez-faire leadership and teamwork skills. This indicates that there are some changes happening in the management of Arab schools in the state of Israel, under the influence of reforms happening in the last years. However, the intensity of the correlation between the transactional leadership style of school principals and teachers' teamwork skills, is very little higher than the correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style and teamwork skills. This little expected result is explained by the researcher based on the traditional culture of the Arab society and the strong preservation of traditional Arab values, including the strong adherence to Muslim religious faith of the Arab communities even in the context of the modern and democratic Israeli state.

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