Original Article

International Journal of Educational Reform
00(0) 1–21

DOI: 10.1177/1056787920957029
journals.sagepub.com/home/ref
SAGE

Encouraging and Discouraging Factors in the Decision to Become an Israeli Leader in Religious Schools: Implications for Reforming Bureaucratic Mandates of the Ministry of Education

Shmuel Shenhav[1], Ayal Geffon[1], Laya Salomon[2], and Jeffrey Glanz[1]

Abstract

This mixed methodology study explored the reasons that teachers in Israel are motivated to become school leaders, and the relative importance of the different discouraging factors that worked against such interest. A cross-national Israeli survey included 39 individual interviews, 2 focus groups of 25 teachers each, and a questionnaire completed by 149 teachers working in Jewish schools. Findings indicate a sense of mission and personal challenge motivated our sample. The most significant discouraging factor was the perceived inability to circumvent bureaucratic constraints imposed by the Ministry of Education. Implications and reform efforts for reducing bureaucratic constraints upon school leaders are discussed.

Keywords

principalship as a career, school leadership, Israeli schools, school bureaucracy

[1]Michlalah Jerusalem College, Jerusalem, Israel
[2]Azrieli Graduate School, Yeshiva University, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:
Jeffrey Glanz, Michlalah Jerusalem College, Jerusalem, Israel.
Email: yosglanz@gmail.com

Introduction

While there is ample data on public school teachers' motivations to teach in Israel and elsewhere in the Jewish world (Husny Arar & Massry-Herzllah, 2016; Salomon, 2010), there is a dearth of research on Israeli teachers' reasons for entering school leadership. This study interested us because we teach and administer in a school leadership program in Israel that attracts religious school teachers aspiring to become school leaders. We realized the gap in the research literature in that there are no studies that focus on the motivations for becoming a religious school leader in Israel. We think some of our findings may be relevant to other leadership programs elsewhere. Moreover, our findings are relevant in terms of furthering discussion of school reform within the Israeli school system.

The success of educational change inevitably depends on the quality and performance of principals and other school leaders (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). The importance of recruiting high quality leaders and retaining them is widely acknowledged in the statements of policy makers (Doyle & Locke, 2014). However, the difficulties of attracting and retaining effective school leaders have also appeared to be a key concern worldwide (Educational Research Service, 2000).

School leaders play an important role in schools. While effective teachers contribute most to student learning, effective leaders have been identified as having the second greatest impact on student achievement (Blase & Blasé, 2004). The following selected assumptions, drawn from extant research on the principalship, as the most visible representation of a school leader, underscore the importance and vitality of a leader:

- The principal is a key player in the school building to promote student learning. A specially-trained instructional leader serving as building principal (or head of school) is vital in order to accomplish deep, sustained, and school-wide achievement for all students (Leithwood et al., 2004; Zepeda, 2012).
- High achievement for all students is a major priority of a school leader. A principal promotes programs that actively encourage good teaching that, in turn, facilitates student learning (Waters et al., 2003).
- The effective principal is knowledgeable and skillful in the art and science of instructional supervision and leadership (Hallinger & Lee, 2016).

But, effective school leaders are hard to find. Some are attracted to the principalship and other leadership positions for a variety of reasons (some lofty, others more practical), while other individuals are dissuaded due to various perceived challenges, which this article examines.

Literature Review

The importance of the school leader is acknowledged, yet the position demands much. This literature review will examine several motivating and inhibiting factors for becoming a principal or, for that matter, assuming any leadership position in Israeli schools. In a system such as in Israel where ascent to the principalship occurs primarily through upward mobility and selection versus a formal certification process, where salary differentials (including fringe benefits) between teacher and principals are not very significant, and where a religious calling and imperative often lead one to the education field, how might these factors impact the motivation to lead?

Motivating and Dissuading Factors in the General Literature

Research on the decision to become a teacher points to a number of motivating factors, most of which identify the intrinsic desires of working with children and making a difference in their lives, as key motivations in teachers' career decisions (Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Lortie, 1975; Salomon, 2010). Research on the intent to become a principal seems to point to intrinsic motivations as well, but with a desire to broaden the span of influence and reach (Hancock et al., 2006; Lortie, 2009).

A number of studies have examined reasons for classroom teachers deciding to pursue principal positions as well as potential benefits for doing so. Bass's (2006) study of over 800 students in principal preparation programs across the USA revealed a desire to make a difference, an opportunity to have an impact on others, and the opportunity to initiate change, as top reasons for pursuing the principalship. Harris et al. (2000) studied 151 students enrolled in principal preparation programs at four universities and found that the desire to make a difference was the most cited motivating factor in the desire to become a principal.

Howley et al. (2005) studied the incentives and disincentives to becoming a principal amongst 435 teachers who held administrative licenses. Among those factors teachers anticipated would be satisfying were they to hold school administrative positions were: making a difference; affecting more children; implementing creative ideas; and having a greater impact.

Similarly, Pounder and Merrill (2001) found that "the desire to achieve and influence education" motivated aspiring principals more than all other factors and made the principalship most desirable. Other studies of teachers in principal preparation programs have shared similar findings: the desire to positively impact the school community and to initiate creative solutions to pressing problems (Cranston, 2007; Moore & Ditzhazy, 1999).

Other factors, perhaps less-altruistic, shared by aspiring principals included feeling personally challenged, a desire to broaden one's career options, status and prestige, and a desire to leave the classroom (Bass, 2006; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Increased salary and benefits were also shared by study participants but were not shown to be

primary motivators in teachers' leadership aspirations (Bass, 2006; Harris et al., 2000; Howley et al., 2005).

Numerous studies have explored several inhibiting factors for assuming a school leadership position. These studies have examined reasons teachers choose not to enroll in principal preparation programs or factors that might prevent or discourage those who are in school leadership programs, or with school administration licenses, from pursuing roles as principals. Common inhibiting factors are work-related stress, loss of contact with children, dealing with difficult parents and teachers, loss of personal time, increased accountability and expectations, and a salary that is not equal to job expectations.

Bass (2006) found that the most dissuading factor inhibiting the decision to enter school leadership was the perceived stress that accompanied the position. Stress was reported as a top concern by teachers and teacher leaders in numerous other studies as well (Herr, 2002). The second-most inhibiting factor reported by Bass (2006) was the time commitment that the job entails. Another barrier cited by educators is the pressure associated with assessment accountability and standardized testing (McCreight, 2001). McCreight identified the following discouraging factors: insufficient pay, time-consuming workload, stress regarding accountability for student and teacher performance, and little support from teachers and district administrators.

Howley et al. (2005) studied teachers with and without administrative licenses and found that teachers identified many similar disincentives to moving into school leadership positions. Most frequently mentioned were: less time at home with friends and family; the stress involved; increased responsibility for mandates imposed by local, state and federal governmental bodies; ongoing accountability for conditions beyond their personal or professional control; and decreased opportunities to work with children.

Extant literature indicates that not only are principals expected to be the educational leaders of their schools, but their role has emerged into something like a CEO in the private sector, as they are now responsible and accountable for almost everything that happens in the school. In an era of accountability and standards, principals have to adhere to mandates and policy shaped by an outside agency (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010). This may impose a level of responsibility that proves overwhelming and stressful.

In a large-scale study of principals in Massachusetts, nearly all principals, when asked to identify the most important aspects of their jobs, pointed to staff development, curriculum development and implementation, and addressing parent and student concerns. However, when asked how they actually spent their time, the most-oft cited task was implementing state mandated initiatives (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2019), to which they indicated less favorable views.

Motivating and Discouraging Factors in Jewish Education in the USA and Israel

Gutterman and Katzin (2013) examined the effects of a school leadership training program for teachers in an Israeli college on the teachers' sense of self-efficacy as potential school leaders. Their questionnaire, which was disseminated to 70 participants over three years, included questions on the motivations of participants to take part in a leadership training program and to aspire toward leadership positions. They found that the participants' primary motivation toward leadership positions was their desire to have an impact on the school system.

Secondary considerations included the desire for self-fulfillment, professional advancement and greater occupational mobility. The participants entered the school leadership program with high levels of motivation to lead, which were based on their belief in their abilities and suitability for leadership positions. The participation in the program was found to strengthen the teachers' self-efficacy and motivation toward leadership positions.

Researchers are hard-pressed to find studies that address motivations of teachers in Jewish education for school leadership. However, we can glean much to inform our study from Salomon (2010), who surveyed over 150 Jewish educators in the USA in an effort to understand their motivations to teach. She identified a number of unique considerations in teachers' motivations due to distinct cultural contexts within the Orthodox Jewish religion and community.

While Orthodox Jewish day school teachers shared intrinsic motives that were similar to public school teachers—such as a desire to work with children, a love for teaching, and the will to make a difference—respondents in this study overwhelmingly identified factors related to their religious identity as primary motivations. This was described in their desire to be a Jewish role model, to transmit Jewish heritage to the next generation of Jews, and to impart Torah (Bible) and religious values. Our research is motivated by the need to explore to what extent these factors might also contribute to teachers' motivations to become a principal, and if and how they might further motivate or dissuade the move to a school leadership position.

Further a mixed method study by (Salomon, 2010) also inquired about satisfaction with salary and perceived prestige within the teaching profession. Most respondents shared concern and dissatisfaction with the prestige associated with the teaching profession. They felt the Orthodox Jewish community did not sufficiently value their roles as teacher or encourage their decision to pursue this field, and many expressed frustration in this regard. Our research, too in part, seeks to examine whether these feelings prompt a move to a school leadership position, and to what extent increased prestige and salary motivate aspiring principals.

The Research Context

The Israeli Jewish educational system (under the aegis of the Ministry of Education known in Hebrew as the Misrad HaChinuch) reflects the divisions of different population groups, including ethnically heterogeneous immigrants, and is divided into public schools, religious public schools and ultra-Orthodox independent schools (Oplatka, 2016).

Our study focused on the latter two groupings. In Israel, The Ministry of Education is responsible for school curricula, educational standards, and supervision of teaching. Local authorities are charged with school maintenance. In Israel, these schools receive funding from the Ministry of Education according to the size of the student population, for purposes of national cohesion (Wolff & Breit, 2012). Teachers in Israel cannot become principals, in most sectors, without at least three years of teaching experience along with certification awarded by the Ministry of Education. All principals must also possess a master's degree.

All participants in this study identify as "religious orthodox" Jews. What constitutes a "religious" Jew? First, understanding the context is in order. According to Pew Research Center (2013) Israel's Jewish population is roughly the same size as the U.S. Jewish population (in the U.S. 5.7 million and in Israel 5.6), accounting for about 41% of the world's Jewish population. Thus, more than 80% of the world's Jews live in Israel and the U.S. While Jews make up about 2% of the U.S. population, Israel is the only country in the world where a majority of the population is Jewish (75.6%).

The Pew Research Center (2013) illuminates many different ways in which Israelis self-identify as Jewish. One categorization is by religion. In traditional Judaism (i.e., Orthodox) any person whose mother was a Jew is considered Jewish. Thus, for this group matrilineal descent determines one's Jewish status. Another way of categorizing Jews is in a secular or cultural sense. This grouping includes any person who was raised as Jewish or had a Jewish parent. They consider themselves Jewish, regardless of religious affiliation.

Our sample represents religiously practicing or observant (orthodox) Jews who work in Israeli (Jewish) religious schools that cater to those who follow or at least identify with the Jewish orthodox way of life, as prescribed in Jewish religious law. The Jewish religious public (41% of the Israeli Jewish student body) is broadly divided into two sectors: The national-religious, or modern orthodox sector (18%), and the *haredi*, or ultra-orthodox sector (23%; see the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2016) page 5: http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications16/hinuh/educ_report_2017_21.pdf).

In broad terms, these sectors vary in degree by their attitudes towards modernity and towards integration with the secular society in Israel. Since our program caters to both sectors such distinctions do not find relevance in our program, nor in this study. Our sample was equally divided between both religious sectors.

Research Questions

1. Why do religious teachers in Israel want to become school leaders?

2. What factors might inhibit teachers from seeking an administrative position and how important are those factors in actualizing aspirations for school leadership?

Method

Participants

A database of Israeli teachers in religious schools was used to distribute a questionnaire in order to solicit information about motivations for becoming a school leader. We disseminated a researcher-developed questionnaire electronically and 149 religious teachers in Jewish schools in Israel responded. Interviews were later conducted with 39 Israeli religious teachers who were newly enrolled, as of fall 2018, in a master's degree program in educational administration at Michlalah Jerusalem College, in Israel. They were randomly selected for interview as part of their entry requirement into the program.

Two focus group interviews, each consisting of another 25 students, in the same program were convened several weeks after the first semester began. We applied a Chronbach validity test on the questionnaire and found that the motivating factors contained 16 items with a Chronbach alpha was 0.74, while the discouraging factors contained 13 items with a Chronbach alpha of 0.85. We also conducted a factor analysis, which will described later. The Interview Protocol achieved content and consensual validity.

The qualitative part of the study attempted to provide textual descriptions of the varied reasons for interest in and desire to becoming a school leader. Thus, interview methodology and content analysis explored the meanings that these individuals attached to becoming school leaders (Koelsch, 2013; Taylor et al., 2016). Their disclosures were used to infer about their motivations for school leadership, and were contrasted with the quantitative data.

Further, seeking to maximize the depth and richness of data, maximal differentiation sampling (Creswell, 2014), also known as heterogeneous sampling, was used. This purposive sampling technique captures a wide range of perspectives, gaining greater insights into a phenomenon by contemplating it from various angles (Merriam, 2009). Interview participants included 19 females and 20 males. Each of the two focus groups included 25 men and women, respectively. Given the religious nature of the program, classes at the College are segregated by gender. All participants had at least three years of teaching experience in religious schools.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, where the interviewer developed and used an "interview guide" (i.e., a list of questions and topics that need to be covered) but which also allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the "emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam,

2009, p. 90). Key questions were preplanned, but the interviews were also conversational, with questions flowing from previous responses when possible. The interview centered on the study's two research questions. They were assured of anonymity and confidentiality (pseudo-names were assigned).

Data Analysis

On the questionnaire, we ran a Chronbach validity and factor analysis on the motivation and discouraging factors scales. Then, we ran on each of the independent variables comparative t-tests and anova for each of the factor clusters, depending on the type of variable, with relevant Pearson correlation tests.

For qualitative data, data analysis was a four stage process—condensing, coding, categorizing, and theorizing. First, the necessary sorting and condensing were performed (Miles et al., 2014), seeking out the relevant participants' utterances related to the three research questions. At the second stage—coding—each segment of data (utterance) was coded according to the aspect it represented (Tracy, 2013). After having captured the essence of utterances in the second stage, the third stage—categorizing—consisted of similar utterances that were assembled into clusters in order to generalize their meanings and derive categories. Finally, the theorizing stage aimed to reach a conceptual construct of the categories derived in the previous stage, and to see how they were interconnected and influenced each other as parts of one abstract construct (Richards & Morse, 2013).

Findings

This study examined the reasons that religious teachers in Israel are motivated to become school leaders, and the relative importance of the different discouraging factors.

Motivating Factors

Factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed five motivating factor clusters, which were identified as follows:

- Cluster A: Sense of mission
- Cluster B: Personal career considerations
- Cluster C: Belief in one's suitability for the job
- Cluster D: Personal challenge
- Cluster E: External advantages of leadership positions

The primary motivations of Israeli religious teachers to aspire to leadership positions were found to be a sense of mission and personal challenge. Career considerations and

Table 1. Motivating Factors (N = 145).

Factor	Mean	Std. deviation
A: Cluster: Sense of mission	3.3	0.6
B: Cluster career considerations	3.1	0.7
C: Belief in one's suitability	3.1	0.6
D: Personal challenge	3.3	0.7
E: External advantages	2.1	0.8

belief in one's suitability for leadership are secondary considerations, while the external advantages of the position are only of minor significance (Table 1).

With regard to the specific considerations comprising the five clusters, the most important considerations were the desire to have a greater impact on children's lives ($M = 3.6$, SD = .6), which is part of cluster A (sense of mission), and the belief that it would be a challenging and rewarding position ($M = 3.6$, SD = .7), which is part of cluster D (personal challenge). The external advantages of leadership positions were found to be of only minor significance.

Discouraging Factors

Factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed four discouraging factor clusters, which were identified as follows:

- Cluster A: Technical difficulties and pressures of the job
- Cluster B: Isolation
- Cluster C: The impact on relationships with others outside the school
- Cluster D: Financial considerations

Discouraging factors, excluding Cluster A, were rated as being of only minor significance. Among the different discouraging factors, the most significant factors are the difficulties and pressures of leadership positions, followed by financial considerations, while the concerns about isolation and personal relationships are of lesser importance (Table 2).

With regard to the specific considerations, the most important discouraging factor is the bureaucracy ($M = 2.5$, SD = .8), from Cluster A, followed by, also part of Cluster A, the change in the relationship between work and family ($M = 2.6$, SD = 1.1). The least important factors are discipline problems ($M = 1.9$, SD = .9), from Cluster B, and discouragement by others ($M = 1.8$, SD = .9), from Cluster C.

The qualitative interviewing confirmed and supported, in many respects, the quantitative results, above, culled from the questionnaire. The data that emerged from the interviews deepened our understanding of the concerns of many study participants. In the next section, we discuss our findings and study implications.

Table 2. Discouraging Factors (N = 147).

Factor	Mean	Std. deviation
A: Difficulties and pressures of leading	2.5	1.0
B: Isolation	2.2	0.8
C: Personal relationships	2.2	0.8
D: Financial considerations	2.3	0.9

Discussion and Implications

Findings of this study clearly indicate definitive reasons for Israeli teachers' interest in school leadership (research question #1). Their motivations clearly reflect previous research, and in that sense their responses are not surprising. As we will indicate, participants emphasized the extent to which their religious observances affected their motivations. Although we did not intend to explore religious observance per se as a motivation, its emergence during the interviews was evident. Of course, given the sample for our study, such emphasis is similarly not surprising. Still, since that this population has not been studied in the past, these results contribute to future efforts to research religiously observant teachers in Israel.

Findings of this study also clearly indicate at least one definitive factor that inhibits these teachers from seeking an administrative position and actualizing their aspirations for school leadership. Although previous research points to bureaucratic constraints as one possible inhibiting factor for becoming a school leader, our study revealed that this factor was a major inhibitor.

Bureaucracy in Israel, especially in education, is manifest, pervasive, and widely perceived as negative (Katz, 2017). Our respondents gave examples and discussed the extent to which they felt less inclined to assuming the principalship because, as one participant succinctly and graphically stated, "it's a bureaucratic mess." Participants were hesitant to becoming a principal as opposed to other administrative positions such as assistant principal or dean because as one respondent reported, "The principal takes the brunt of the burden, … is subservient, … and under pressure to fulfilling the mandates of the Misrad HaChinuch (Ministry of Education)."

We offer the following concise conclusions with possible explanations and implications, aligned to our two research questions. In doing so, we underscore the need for educational reform and point to several suggestions to mitigate the bureaucratic obstacles that may stand in the way of these aspiring school leaders.

(1) Regarding the first research question, Israeli religious school teachers' desire to become school leaders, based on questionnaire data, was largely due to a strong sense of mission to work with teachers to improve the education of children. Teachers clearly also indicated a sense of personal challenge to confront a responsibility that was perceived, in the words of one representative participant, as "critically important and very rewarding." "I feel I can make a difference in the lives of children." Participants also

stressed that their motivations to lead were influenced by a desire to help teachers. Explaining such a preference, one representative participant reported, "I don't just want to leave teaching. Rather, I seek to have an even closer relationship with teachers and stronger influence on them."

Interviews supported this data, in the sense that since all participants were religiously observant many pointed to their fervent religious beliefs as strong motivations for wanting to serve as a school leader. "Most definitely," responded one male representative participant, "my deeply religious convictions support my strong desire to help my people by running a school to produce God-fearing individuals in the service of the Almighty." "I find this job a calling," said another. "I find it more rewarding than other pursuits, … at least for me." A female participant, during the group focus, sharply stated that serving as a school leader is a "*shlichut* (a calling) in which I can use my God-given skills, …" She continued, "leadership is an expression of my religious values."

Although our intended sample targeted religious teachers teaching in Jewish schools, we did not purposely set out to understand the "religious" motivations, in particular, that led participants to aspire to leadership. Rather, their ideological convictions naturally emerged from the interviews.

A majority of those interviews pointed out, in one way or another, the impact of their religious beliefs as a motivating factor. Through follow-up questions, we understood that when these teachers indicated that a "sense of mission:" drove them, they, in effect, meant that their decision to pursue school leadership was, in the words, of one representative participant "a natural consequence of who we are religiously." "I mean to inspire students, teachers, parents, and the community at large by promoting Torah values as a school leader."

When asked to explain the manner in which such an approach plays out, one participant stated, "Many dilemmas are encountered in running a school and I intend to rely on *halakhah* (ethical Jewish law) to guide my decision-making." Another female participant, during the group focus, explained she has a "strong belief" in her "mission … to do God's work." In effect, we underestimated the impact that religious orientation might have on their aspirations for school leadership.

Our data revealed that considerations of personal career advancement and financial benefits accrued by those who occupy administrative positions in the school system were of significantly less concern among study participants. "Although you might have expected me, as a male, to become a principal because of the financial benefits, … I mean, as a way to earn more money to support my family, I am primarily interested … because I can do a lot of good for the school … if I was the principal." Although some participants did, in fact, indicate that they aspired to leadership for reasons other than altruism, most were committed to "making a difference."

Along this line, some representative responses include:

> Sure, earning more money is nice, … but you know here in Israel principals do not get paid much more than teachers. You have to really want to make a difference to become a principal in this country.

> Of course I like to have more authority, … but it's not because of the prestige. We are commanded [by God] to be humble. But being a principal does give me more authority to ensure my ideas about how to run a good school are listened to.

> I want my work to matter.

By in large, our findings related to the first research question do reflect the literature in terms of the span of reasons or motivations for teachers wanting to aspire to school leadership. The richness and depth afforded by interviews were able to reveal attitudes that a questionnaire could not address. For instance, the fact that the interviews brought to light the role played by one's religious convictions proved to be enlightening.

Finally, we think one major implication of this research is that schools that prepare leaders can capitalize on the varied reasons for interest in leadership by reinforcing those very reasons through reflective activities throughout the preparation process. Administering a survey, not unlike our own, at various stages in the program may prove as an invaluable tool to deepen commitment to leadership.

(2) Our second research question examined the factors that might inhibit teachers from seeking an administrative position and how important those factors are in actualizing aspirations for school leadership. Our findings indicated that, although, motivating factors for leadership outweighed inhibitors, perceived bureaucratic constraints imposed by the Ministry of Education clearly troubled study participants.

During interviews, while acknowledging the difficulties and challenges of school leadership, some participants stressed their sense of idealism. "Sure, I know serving as a principal is a lonely job and the pressures can be extreme at times, yet," explained a male participant, "I look forward to the challenge." Such optimism and even starry-eyed enthusiasm is not surprising given the fact that most of our participants had not yet assumed a leadership position beyond that of a teacher. An added limitation or perspective to keep in mind is that these individuals were already motivated enough since they entered a program leading to a master's degree in educational administration.

Still, dealing with the school bureaucracy within the confines of a top-down board of education (called in Israel, The Ministry of Education) was the most discouraging factor acknowledged by all study participants. During individual interviews, participants offered these varied, yet similar opinions:

> I have been teaching for only three years, yet the overwhelming amount of paperwork we have to submit is disturbing; it detracts from my ability to focus on teaching the children.

> My principal tells us all the time, "Sorry, but we have to do this because the Ministry requires so much wasteful paperwork."

> I often hear that the Ministry mandates school reforms without the consent or participation of the principal.
>
> I really do not know if I want to become a principal because I hear from everyone that you can't really do your job because you are constrained by administrivia.
>
> Anyone who has been part of the system knows that the Ministry controls everything … like mandating curricula, etc.
>
> My cousin is a secondary school principal and he tells me that the amount of paperwork and attention to top-down mandates makes his job not only hard, but unsatisfying. … It scares me …

Almost all participants, in some form or another, indicated their hesitation about assuming school leadership due to the perceived intrusionary policies of the Ministry of Education. Many comments made by study participants reflect classical dimensions of bureaucracy (Bennis, 1966) such as, impersonal approached to interpersonal relations and a division of labor based on hierarchy. Although these and other bureaucratic dimensions can be viewed positively in its theoretical model (Kimbrough & Todd, 1967), in application, participants, in their interviews, referred to possible negative connotations.

One representative participants stated, "Sure, bringing order is fine, but when rules and regulations are unclear or not applied fairly, then confusion and dissatisfaction results … not uncommon in our Israeli educational system." Although most participants alluded to bureaucracy as a major inhibiting factor in becoming a school leader, a majority indicated that they would, as one participant stated, "still give it a shot." Yet nearly 40% indicated that bureaucracy might indeed prevent them from actually seeking a principalship.

It is interesting to note, that during the interviews participants indicated that serving "under the position of principal" (such as a dean or assistant principal) might be more appealing because "the mandates and pushy nature of the Ministry affects me much less, … [*T*]he principal takes the brunt of the stress."

Follow-up questions to participants focused on ways to mitigate the negative influences of bureaucracy as manifested either on the school level or in the Ministry of Education. Most participants lamented bureaucracy, though, at the Ministry level. Some representative responses include: "I hope this program [master's degree in educational administration] can suggest ways of handling bureaucracy"; "Maybe visits [in this program] to the Ministry to better understand the nature of educational policies would help us … "; "A course on Ministry of Education policy that highlights issues in its bureaucratic operations would be especially beneficial."

Implications for Recruiting Candidates to the Principalship and Educational Reform

Educational reform initiatives continue to shape the educational landscape in Israel and elsewhere (Oplatka, 2018). As new technologies proliferate and socio-economic pressures mount, school are once again expected to develop new initiatives to meet ever increasing demands (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011). The pressures placed on educational ministries to meet these pressing social, economic, political, and educational exigencies are enormous (Waite et al., 2015).

Consequently, these reform efforts continue, in many cases, to be implemented in a top-down fashion, reminiscent of past reforms (Fullan, 2016). Reasons for the bureaucratic response by ministries of education are varied. Yet, the effect remains the same. Principals are ever burdened by hierarchically initiated mandates that they had little, or no say about (Arar et al., 2019).

The recent research of Arar et al. (2019) illustrates the problems that confront Israeli school leaders with these hierarchically imposed reforms. The authors write that findings indicate "that the reforms have added further burden to school principals' complex, varied tasks and that they lack sufficient time or the ability to implement the reforms with the thorough consideration and appraisal that they require" (p. 2). In addition to their overwhelming responsibilities, principals are hard-pressed to meet required expectations.

Moreover, they often resist reform initiatives in various ways. Such a pressured work environment affects those considering to the enter the principalship (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002). Although the research reported by Arar, Tamir, and Abu-Hussain emphasizes the ability of current principals to meet reform expectations, our research indicates that prospective principals are quite concerned about entering the prncipalship due, in large measure, to the inordinate and sometimes onerous bureaucratic pressures emanating from the Ministry of Education (also, see Leavy, 2010).

The question that remains, which this research does not necessarily answer is, "Is the perception of the ministerial bureaucracy a proverbial monolithic steel monster that even youthful idealism cannot overcome, or are prospective and neophyte administrators willing to "give it a shot," as one of the study participants indicated? Our study's major contribution seems to be that prospective school principals are very concerned about the bureaucratic nature of the Ministry of Education and its impact on their ability to function effectively. It is difficult to assess if this bureaucratic roadblock, reported by participants, will actually prevent our study participants to seek a principalship.

The reason is that we surveyed potential school leaders already enrolled in a master's degree program leading to administrative certification. Hence, this pool of participants may already possess high levels of motivation to enter the principalship or related administrative positions. Although, it is interesting to keep in mind that many study participants did report that given their apprehensions of the Ministry's bureaucratic structure, they would seek a non-principal position since it is perceived that an

assistant principal, for instance, is less affected, at least directly, with bureaucratic mandates of the Ministry of Education.

Nonetheless, given the fact that schools everywhere, including Israel, need talented, highly motivated individuals willing to serve as principals policy makers need to address issues involving the bureaucratic nature of the Ministry (or its Board of Education). If schools of education want to attract candidates to eventually serve as principals, then a number of initiatives need to be established. Our recommends for reform are noted below and are divided into two categories: internal and external.

Internal considerations. Programs that prepare future school leaders can do much to prepare candidates for the realities and exigencies they will face (Brown et al., 2014). We will discuss two programmatic considerations that are vital to address the issues raised in our research:

1. *Teaching strategies for navigating bureaucratic challenges that are inevitably part of a school leader's work*. We believe that case studies such as those, for instance, published by the *Journal of Case Studies* or the *International Journal of Case Studies*, among other journals should be vigorously incorporated in curricula in programs that prepare school leaders, especially in large countries with ministries that mandate much curricula and other related school matters. Such case studies could be part of courses on organizational management, or even separate courses by themselves. Our research indicates the severity of the problem as perceived by prospective and practicing school leaders warranting, therefore, greater attention to incorporating case studies in which candidates are challenged by the realities of system wide bureaucracies and how to successfully manage them.
2. *Utilizing the field experience component to challenge candidates in varied ways to grapple with issues related to bureaucracy*. Although programs in Israel, for instance, incorporate field experiences in some of its principal preparation programs, much improvement is necessary (e.g., Shaked et al., 2017). The scope and amount of time devoted to meaningful field work varies. Moreover, in many programs in Israel, field work is not even required. Nor is there systematic oversight of such experiences. Our research demonstrates that greater attention to field work, especially targeted to experiences handling challenges related to bureaucratic mandates is necessary.

External considerations. Initiatives have commenced in various locations to reform hierarchical structures that allow easier flow of information from Ministry to the school. The Ministry of Education in Israel needs to consider the impact that top-down managerial mandates has on the day-to-day work of a principal.

To some extent, there is a realization of its import. For instance, strategies for systemic change have been promulgated in Israel (e.g., Israel's crisis in education, 2014, retrieved from https://mida.org.il/2014/09/04/israels-crisis-education/). Coordinated by Volansky (2014), the Israeli Ministry of Education itself conducted a research study

inviting seven different education systems to suggest ways of reforming schools. This survey included mostly European and Asian countries and addressed issues such as school and principal, autonomy including school based management (Grinshtain & Gibton, 2018).

Strategies particularly focused on ways to mitigate the ill-effects of a highly centralized system on teachers and principals. Recommendations centered on decentralizing government services "including education, and replace government bureaucracy and clumsy services with private or semi-private entities" (p. 25). A major conclusion was the perceived need to "shift to school-based management" (p. 26).

Relatedly, clarifying roles and responsibilities, giving day-to-day managerial decision-making to principals at the same time minimizing top-down mandates received attention. These educational reform suggestions were implemented on a small scale at first to assess their efficacy in addressing problems with the educational bureaucracy in Israel.

While a comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives is in progress, some studies have been published to indicate that although progress have been made, several other issues emerged. The research of Arar et al. (2019) indicate, in part, that principals are still encumbered by policy directives that constrain their efforts to work less bureaucratically. Future research is needed to examine the current situation and strategies to ameliorate problematic issues (e.g., Streamlining regulation in Israel and easing the bureaucratic burden: Multi-year program. Retrieved from https://www.idi.org.il/media/8904/streamlining-regulation-in-israel-and-easing-the-bureaucratic-burden.pdf).

In sum, participants in our study railed against the bureaucratic nature of the Ministry of Education in Israel as a strong disincentive in assuming the principalship. For sure, previous studies indicated that as efforts to encourage talented individuals increase, the challenges in successful recruitment of qualified candidates become problematic. For instance, a study by Winter and Morgenthal (2002), and replicated several times since, indicate that increased job demands, including greater accountability on the part of principals for student achievement, make the job less attractive. Although bureaucratic pressure in these studies played less an important role to possibly discourage prospective principals, the problem of recruitment is very real.

Our participants complained less about the pressures of student academic achievement as a chief deterrent. Given the unique cultural, historical, and cultural context in Israel, our participants stressed bureaucratic intrusions and unreasonable meddling on part of the Ministry of Education over other possible deterrents. Although it is true that we need additional empirical knowledge about factors that affect principal recruitment, the perceived deterrent of bureaucracy was clearly a concern for our participants.

Contributions of the Study and Future Avenues for Research

This study contributes to the existing knowledge base available regarding the motivations of teachers who aspire to leadership positions, especially since the literature in

this area, as indicated earlier, is sparse. Both the listed motivations and discouraging factors, though, reflect previous research. The unique aspect of this study is the focus on religious teachers in Israeli schools and the role religion played in supporting positive aspirations to leadership positions.

Moreover, although the bureaucracy appeared to be an impediment to participants' interest in the principalship, many demonstrated a sense of idealism, if not religious fervor, to aspire to the principalship. Many, though, had second thoughts given the perceived onerous nature of the Israeli school bureaucracy.

We would hope that this study might prompt further investigations specifically in the form of comparative research by replicating the study, for instance, between religious and non-religious teachers in Israel, and in different religious contexts; for example, Arab, Israeli, and Catholic schools. Further, a comparison for instance, between Israeli religious teachers and their counterparts in U.S. schools might prove interesting.

Conclusion

Our study explored the reasons that teachers in Israel are motivated to become school leaders. Their sense of purpose and idealism were major motivators. Our sample pointed to the hierachical nature of the Board or Ministry of Education as one important factor that tended to discourage their involvemnt in school leadership. Yet, their sense of idealism overrode, by in large, such concerns. They felt the principalship served as an invaluable opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of students.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID ID

Jeffrey Glanz https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5318-1242

References

Arar, K., Tamir, E., & Abu-Hussain, J. (2019). Understanding reforms, school reactions to major changes: The case of Israel. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *51*(4), 402–418. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2019.1624511

Bass, T. (2006). To be or not to be: Issues influencing educators' decisions to enter the principalship. *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, *2*(4), 19–30.

Bennis, W. G. (1966). *Changing organizations*. McGraw Hill.

Blase, J., & Blasé, J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership: How successful principals promote teaching and learning* (2nd ed). Corwin.

Bradley, K. D., & Loadman, W. E. (2005). Urban secondary educators' views of teacher recruitment and retention. *NASSP Bulletin*, *89*(644), 2–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263650508964402

Brown, W. R., Martin, G., & Danzig, A. (2014). Pathways for performance: Recruitment and selection, University preparation, licensure, and professional development for school principals. *NCPEA Education Leadership Review*, *15*(2), 1–13.

Central Bureau of Statistics. (2016). In Israel. http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/?MIval=%2Fcw_usr_view_SHTML&ID=188

Cranston, N. C. (2007). Through the eyes of potential aspirants: Another view of the principalship. *School Leadership & Management*, *27*(2), 109–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701237115

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Rothman, R. (2011). *Teacher and leader effectiveness in high performing education*. ERIC: Alliance for Excelent Education.

Doyle, D., & Locke, G. (2014). *The challenges of principal recruitment, selection, and placement*. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Educational Research Service. (2000). *The principal, keystone of a high-achieving school: Attracting and keeping the leaders we need*. Author.

Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Grinshtain, Y., & Gibton, D. (2018). Responsibility, authority, and accountability in school-based and non-school-based management. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(1), 2–17. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2017-0005

Guthrie, J., & Schuermann, P. (2010). *Successful school leadership: Planning, politics, performance, and power*. Allyn and Bacon.

Gutterman, K., & Katzin, O. (2013). *BaDerekh LeNihul: Motivatzya Umesugalut Shel Pirhei Nihul [The road to the principalship – Self-efficacy and motivation of leadership candidates]. HaHinukh uSevivo [Education and its Environs: Yearbook of the Kibbutz Seminar College]* (Vol. 35) [Hebrew].

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2011). Exploring the journey of school improvement: Classifying and analyzing patterns of change in school improvement processes and learning outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *22*(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2010.536322

Hallinger, P., & Lee, M. (2016). Mapping instructional leadership in Thailand: Has education reform impacted principal practice? *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*, *42*(1), 6–29.

Hancock, D., Black, T., & Bird, J. (2006). A study of factors that influence teachers to become school administrators. *Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, *6*(1), 91–105.

Harris, S., Arnold, S., Lowery, S. L., & Crocker, C. (2000). Deciding to become a principal: What factors motivate or inhibit that decision. *ERS Spectrum*, *18*(2), 40–45.

Herr, N. (2002) Addressing shortages in the principalship: Perceptions of novice administrators in Pennsylvania. *Addressing shortages in the principalship: Perceptions of novice administrators in Pennsylvania* (Publication No: 64, 2326A) [Doctoral Dissertation, Widener University]. Dissertation Abstracts International.

Howley, A., Adrianaivo, S., & Perry, J. (2005). The pain outweighs the gain: Why teachers don't want to become principals. *Teachers College Press*, *107*(4), 757–782.

Husny Arar, K., & Massry-Herzllah, A. (2016). Motivation to teach: The case of Arab teachers in Israel. *Educational Studies*, *42*(1), 19–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2015.1127136

Katz, Y. J. (2017). Religious education in the Israeli state school system. In M. Sivasubramaniam & R. Hayhoe (Eds.), *Religion and education: Comparative and international perspectives* (pp. 251–270). Oxford.

Kimbrough, R. B., & Todd, E. A. (1967). Bureaucratic organization and educational change. *Educational Leadership*. http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_196712_kimbrough.pdf

Koelsch, L. E. (2013). Reconceptualizing the member check interview. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *12*(1), 168–179. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691301200105

Leavy, A. F. (2010). The failure of education policy in Israel: Politics vs. bureaucracy. *College Undergraduate Research Electronic Journal.* University of Pennsylvania. https://repository.upenn.edu/curej/115

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. University of Minnesota.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. University of Chicago Press.

Lortie, D. C. (2009). *School principal: Managing in public*. The University of Chicago Press.

McCreight, C. (2001). *Solutions to securing qualified principals*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. (ED 452613).

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Moore, D., & Ditzhazy, G. (1999). *Where have all the principals gone? Responses from graduate students currently in two educational leadership programs* [Paper presentation]. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for Professors of Educational Administration, Jackson Hole, WY.

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2019). NAESP fact sheet on the principal shortage. https://www.naesp.org/factsheet/

Oplatka, I. (2016). Israel: Research on school principals in Israel: Varied topics and limited scope. In H. Artestig, C. Day, & O. Johanson (Eds.), *A decade of research on school principals* (pp. 403–420). Springer.

Oplatka, I. (2018). *Reforming education in developing countries: From neoliberalism to communitarianism*. Routledge.

Pew Research Center. (2013). A portrait of Jewish Americans: Overview. http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/10/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey-overview.pdf

Pounder, D. G., & Merrill, R. J. (2001). Job desirability of the high school principalship: A job choice theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *37*(1), 27–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X01371003

Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2013). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Salomon, L. (2010). *The decision to teach: Why orthodox Jewish day school teachers choose the profession* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Yeshiva University. https://www.iataskforce.org/sites/default/files/resource/resource-1426.pdf

Shaked, H., Rabinowitz, C., Shenhav, S., & Zaretsky, R. (2017). Instructional leadership practices among principals in Israeli and US Jewish schools. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, *26*(2), 132–153.

Taylor, S., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (4th ed). John Wiley and Sons.

Tracy, S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell*. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL).

Volansky, A. (2014). International study on school autonomy, curriculum reform, and 21st century skills: Summary, synthesis, and concluding remarks on six education system reports. http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/15_62.pdf

Waite, D., Rodriguez, G., & Wadende, A. (2015). Globalization and the business of educational reform. In J. Zajda (Ed.), *Second international handbook in globalization, education, and policy research* (pp. 353–374). Dordrecht.

Waters, T., Marzano, R., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement: A working paper*. Mid-Continental Regional Educational Lab.

Winter, P. A., & Morgenthal, J. R. (2002). Principal recruitment in a reform environment: Effects of school achievement and school level on applicant attraction to the job. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *38*(3), 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02383002

Wolff, L., & Breit, C. (2012). *Education in Israel: The challenges ahead. Research paper, 8*. The Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies (GIIS). University of Maryland.

Zepeda, S. J. (2012). *Instructional supervision: Applying tools and concepts* (3rd ed.). Eye on Education.

Author Biographies

Shmuel Shenhav, Ph.D., is Head of the Graduate School of Education at Michlalah Jerusalem College, in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, Israel, Head of the Avney Rosha Program for the training of school leaders in the Israel Ministry of Education, and Head of the National-Religious Center for Leadership in Israel. shenhav@huji.ac.il

Ayal Geffon is a lecturer at Michlalah Jerusalem College, in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, Israel and a doctoral student at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. aygeffon@gmail.com

Laya Salomon, Ed.D., is Associate Professor at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University in New York City. laya.salomon@yu.edu

Jeffrey Glanz, Ed.D., is Professor and Program Head of the Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Michlalah Jerusalem College, in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, Israel. yosglanz@gmail.com