

Chapter #6

PRINCIPALS' ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP EMPOWERING PARENTS OF MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore principals' entrepreneurial leadership in a school of a socially marginalized population over a period of eighteen years. The school serves the children of undocumented work migrants and refugees in Israel. These people are perceived by the law as temporary, with no possibility of becoming citizens. However, their children are eligible for an education, as specified in the Law of Compulsory Education. Principals as entrepreneurs have a vision, seize opportunities and engage in innovations, and use networking to pursue their goals. This qualitative study used a 'critical event' inquiry method to reveal the events that triggered the principals' entrepreneurship towards the parents. Principals' acts and perceptions were retrieved from different sources. The different sources include interviews with teachers, interviews with the principals and their interviews on the media and the internet, and school observation, over a period of eighteen years. It was found that the principals applied entrepreneurial leadership to facilitate the parents in accumulating social and cultural capital that would enable them to become part of society by mobilizing funding, volunteers and projects. This study contributes to our knowledge, since it discusses the possibilities and scope of principals' entrepreneurial leadership.

Keywords: entrepreneurial leadership, refugee parents, migrant workers, critical events.

1. INTRODUCTION

Principals are required to be autonomous in their decisions and to act as entrepreneurs to implement innovations; yet at the same time they are required to comply with demands from the external environment (Eyal & Inbar, 2003), that consists of the increasing involvement of parents, stakeholders and regulating agencies (Goldring, 1995). Thus, principals have to bridge the contradictory demands of autonomy and conformity to the external environment.

In their interaction with parents, principals have a large array of strategies, depending on the characteristics of the parents, such as their SES and social and legal status. Parents of low SES are less active and participative than parents of high SES. This is salient in a school that serves socially marginalized populations such as work migrants and refugees. The principals use the resources available to them to advance the parents, so that they gain power and are able to help their children in school.

This study explores three principals acting as entrepreneurs to empower the parents of one school, serving children of migrant workers and refugees, over a period of eighteen years; suggesting that unique external events triggered forms of entrepreneurial leadership regarding the parents.

2. ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

Since the 1980's the educational system has changed due to decentralization (Addi-Raccach, 2006) as a result of a neo-liberal economy that made private funding available to schools (Man, 2010); and to the public's growing dissatisfaction with the low achievements and growing gaps in the educational system (Harel Ben Shahaar, 2018; Yemini, 2018). These developments were manifested in a policy of school autonomy and principals' entrepreneurship. Principals as entrepreneurs faced two contradictory demands: on the one hand, they were granted autonomy and personal discretion; on the other, their growing dependence on external resources while being unable to predict the rapidly changing environment, and the need to still conform to the regulatory environment or government policy (Eyal, 2007).

Research on business entrepreneurship shows that it increases a firm's capabilities of adapting to environmental uncertainty (Ensley, Pearce, & Hmieleski, 2006). There are numerous definitions of the term, since this term is studied in various disciplines (Yemini, 2018) and has a heterogeneous influence on firms across different countries (Terjesen, Hessels, & Li, 2013). However, the social entrepreneur is defined as individually motivated by his or her vision to fulfill social goals, rather than by profit as the business entrepreneur does (Dees, 2004). Social entrepreneurs have some common behaviors and traits (Yemini & Omer Attali, 2017). Vision shapes entrepreneurs' acts (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010).

In education vision is framed as "realistically achievable goals and targets" (Yemini & Omer Attali, 2017, p. 18), or as a philosophy (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Ruvio, Rosenblatt, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010). Seeking and exploiting opportunities to implement innovations, and identifying and seizing 'windows of opportunity' is an additional aspect of entrepreneurship (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Omer Attali & Yemini, 2017). An opportunity in education is perceived as an "opportunity to create change that aims to solve existing problems (Yemini & Omer Attali, 2017, p. 20). Innovation "is the specific instrument of entrepreneurs" (Drucker, 2015, p. 30) and is related to the creation of a social value (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; Omer Attali & Yemini, 2017). Innovation can come in different degrees (Man, 2010; Yemini & Omer Attali, 2017). From a radical change that has the potential of transforming the educational system or the individual school (Teske & Williamson, 2006), such as initiating new subject-matter that will extend the studies outside of school – e.g., into museums (Eyal & Inbar, 2003); up to small-scale, incremental changes which "improve the existing situation" (Yemini & Omer Attali, 2017, p. 12), such as maintaining test-scores, class structure, frontal teaching, and introducing methods previously not applied in school but which do not disrupt school stability and the status-quo (Eyal & Inbar, 2003), or supporting new programs for teachers (Teske & Williamson, 2006). Eyal and Inbar (2003) developed a tool for measuring the degree of entrepreneurial leadership based on quantity and degree of school innovation and principal proactiveness. Entrepreneurs also scan the environment "to identify unmet needs of clients" (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010, p. 17) and to identify threats (Kemelgor, 2002), so that they can modify their behavior to comply with its demands (Ensley, et al., 2006). That is because environmental factors, such as institutional regulatory factors and market variables (Man, 2010), geographical location (Eyal & Inbar, 2003), socio-economic status, and the ability of parents to act (Eyal, 2008) impact entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial leaders are willing to take risks in developing new products, especially in the business area (Terjesen, et al., 2013); in contrast, social entrepreneurs perceive risk as a risk of "missing the boat" rather than risking money (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010, p. 20). Networking and communicating their vision for building support is another trait of social entrepreneurs (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010).

Entrepreneurs are also good at solving problems by finding alternative strategies or approaches and responding to clients' needs (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010). The ability to innovate, articulate a vision and take risks is congruent with the notion of leadership (Man, 2010); proactivity is related to transformational leadership (Eyal & Kark, 2004). However, Borasi and Finnigan (2010) found that entrepreneurship and leadership require different traits, and entrepreneurs sometimes need a champion to carry out their innovation. Entrepreneurial leadership in education is not driven by competition for profit, but for its social values. School principals use their entrepreneurship when interacting with parents, especially when the parents come from marginalized populations such as migrant workers and refugees, and provide them with social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002). Thus, entrepreneurial leadership in education includes seeking to innovate, identifying opportunities to mobilize resources for fulfilling a vision regarding school, and working relentlessly to materialize it. This applies to innovations in school. However, principals may consider parents' involvement and wellbeing part of their role as entrepreneurs, as funding for parents comes entirely from outside sources, since they are all extra-curricular activities; thus, they are not restricted by the government (Eyal, 2007).

3. SCHOOL-PARENT RELATIONS

Parent-school relations were typified by Epstein (2010) as: help families establish home environments to support children as pupils; design school-to-home and home-to-school communications; recruit and organize parents' help and support; provide information to the family about how to help pupils with curriculum-related activities; include parents in school decisions; and collaborate with the community.

The above types can be classified by degrees of involvement (Goldring & Shapira, 1993). Parental involvement refers to participation or reactions of parents when they do not have control over the educational processes in schools. Parental empowerment refers to parental control in schools, manifested by the principal letting parents take part in decision-making (Eyal, 2008).

The degree of parent involvement is dependent on the economic, cultural and social capital they have. Economic capital, e.g. their SES, affects their ability to provide their children with extra educational services; cultural capital consists of knowing the rules of the game, having information in general and in particular, such as their children's rights and school standards and values (Lareau, 2015), and congruence between their values and those of the school (Lareau, 2015); social capital consists of networks that grant them access to resources, so that they become members of society (Bourdieu, 2002). All these affect the children's ability to obtain high achievements (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Low-SES parents, such as migrants and refugees, are passive in their relations with school and the patterns of their involvement are different. That is because they lack the means to contribute materially to the school, they do not have information, there is incongruence between their values and those of the school, and they do not have access to social networks.

The relations between school and parents have changed since the establishment of the State in 1948. The Israeli educational system was centralized on its establishment and parents were not allowed to be involved until the 80's, due to the mass immigration of Jews into the country and the need to build a national identity (Eyal, 2008). Since then the system has been decentralized and partially privatized (Harel Ben Shahar, 2018). This promoted parental initiatives and schools of choice (Eyal, 2008). Parents became involved in several areas and on various levels.

3.1. Refugee and immigrant parents' involvement

Migrant and refugee parents are unable to provide academic, emotional or cultural capital to their children, because they lack these resources, and because they have encountered trauma themselves (McBrien, 2005; Rah, Choi & Nguyễn, 2009).

There are several barriers to refugee parents' involvement in school: (1) lack of language proficiency (Bergset, 2017; Rah et al., 2009); (2) time constraints due to family socio-economic status; (3) traditional family structures (Rah et al., 2009); (4) cultural differences - for instance, home-school collaboration is not the norm in the refugees' countries of origin (McBrien, 2005), or parents express dissatisfaction with the lack of discipline (Tadmor-Shimoni, 2008; Bergset, 2017) in the host country; (5) deferential attitudes towards school authority - perceiving that voicing an opinion about school matters is a lack of respect for the teachers (Bouakaz, 2009 in Bergset, 2017); and (6) lack of information regarding their new environs (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002).

This study aims at exploring the actions principals take to pursue their vision regarding the parents, and the entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviors they use for that purpose.

4. THE ISRAELI CASE

The school studied here is a Jewish State school that serves the children of work migrants in Israel, and refugees who claim to be asylum-seekers, most of whom have not been granted that special status and remained undocumented. The first influx of migrant workers to Israel occurred in 1998. They came from Latin America, Africa, the Far East Turkey and the Former Soviet Union, either as tourists or as temporary permit holders (called 'foreign workers' in Israel) due to the shortage of caregivers and manual workers in Israel but stayed on in the country and became undocumented. Most of these parents are perceived now as residents, with no possibility of obtaining citizenship. In 2007 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from the war-stricken countries of Sudan and Eritrea, infiltrated the country. Their children are more exposed than veteran pupils to events such as parents being arrested by the police or immigration police, fathers living abroad because they left or were deported, or physical violence in the family (Meir, Slone, & Lavi, 2012). These parents are perceived by the law as potentially deportable. Although the United Nations Conference of July 28, 1951 framed laws, regulations and definitions regarding refugees, which are implemented by the UN Commissioner for Refugees (Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, & Frater-Matherson, 2004), in Israel these parents are not recognized legally and they are not welcome. However, their children are eligible for education, as specified in the Compulsory Education Act of 1949. The school population comes from 48 Third-world countries, speaking 20 languages.

The principals applied their entrepreneurship to organize and empower the parents by mobilizing funding, recruiting volunteers and initiating projects, and caring for their needs beyond school boundaries. The questions that arise are: (a) what triggered the principals to use their entrepreneurial skills to empower the parents? (b) how did the principals perceive their role vis-à-vis the parents? (c) how did the principals use their entrepreneurial skills to enhance parents' integration? Although the school is in a unique situation, the actions of the principals are generalizable to entrepreneurial leadership and its opportunities.

5. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study uses a 'critical events' narrative inquiry method (Mertova & Webster, 2012), with the interviewees identifying the critical events (McLaren, Murray, & Campbell, 2014). A critical event is "an unplanned and unstructured event that significantly impacts the professional practice of an academic practitioner" (Mertova & Webster, 2012, p. 16). The event can be internal or external. The impact of the event on these people has considerably changed their professional worldview. Mertova and Webster (2012) distinguish between 'critical', 'like' and 'other' events, depending on the degree of significance and uniqueness of the event. A 'critical' event is "unique, illustrative, and confirmatory in nature in relation to the studied phenomenon" (Mertova & Webster, 2012, p. 16). An event that is not unique as the critical event but is identically significant and repeated the experience and broadened the knowledge of the critical event, was labelled a 'like' event (Mertova & Webster, 2012). Events that occurred independently of a 'critical' event but were interwoven in it were labelled as 'other' events, since they added information regarding the 'critical' event (Ibid). This study includes only 'critical' events.

Usually critical events (or incidents) are identified through narratives of the informants in face-to-face interviews (Ibid). However, in this study numerous sources of information were used to present their narratives, due to the limited time of the staff and principals for long interviews, because of the growing attention they have been given by the media. Thus, information was retrieved using a 'data triangulation', which is the use of multiple sources of data to reach the same data set, to study the phenomenon from different perspectives (Eyal 2008; Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Douthirt Cohen & Eliason, 2015). The different sources include face-to-face interviews with teachers and supporting staff, two out of the three principals, document-reading such as interviews in the newspapers and on the internet, and school observation.

The data were collected during a period of eighteen years, which included three principals. This study is part of a larger study conducted since 2002, which explored developments in this school in different fields. The first part explored the teachers (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002), this study explores parent-school relations, and the next study (in progress) will examine school-State relations.

6. FINDINGS

The findings are presented for each principal separately, to show the external and internal events that occurred and the way they shaped the principals' entrepreneurial leadership. Only activities initiated by principals as a result of critical events are presented here. All three principals shared a vision in which the pupils and parents "are all Israelis to us" (a phrase stated repeatedly by interviewed teachers and staff members), contradictory to official State policy and to the opinion of a large portion of society. Thus, their actions aim at achieving this worldview. First, the external events that influenced principals at the external macro level, which are State policy, are presented; then events on the mezzo-community level; and finally, the internal micro level of innovations the principals introduced vis-a-vis the parents are discussed.

6.1. First event: The influx of migrant workers

The first principal who experienced this critical event led the school in 1992-2003. On the macro level, the first children of migrant workers entered school in the early 2000's. On the mezzo level, some local parents objected to these children attending school. On the micro level, this elementary school was faced with the challenge of dealing with these children, most of whom were born in Israel but did not speak the language and were not Jewish; who were obliged to attend school but were ignored by the State and not financed until 2002. In addition, their parents did not speak the language and were poor but not eligible for any financial assistance from government agencies (Ministry of Education, health care and insurance, welfare services).

The principal responded to these events by mobilizing support from the municipality and from local parents who welcomed the newly-arrived families as a result of the principal's actions.

Mobilizing resources: because the children were ignored by the authorities (Ministry of Education, municipality) the principal did not have alternative sources of funding. She sought funding from the municipality. She negotiated with them until they did, as she said about herself "I am a leech" (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002). Later, the municipality established an information center for the migrant workers and cooperated with the school.

Mobilizing veteran parents: in her struggle to have the Ministry of Education recognize these children and allocate money for them, the principal mobilized some local parents from the Parents Association, who had connections with some politicians attempting to influence political decision-making.

Collaboration with the community: the undocumented parents would bring their children to school, but then the police would appear at the school and arrest the fathers. The principal initiated an agreement with the police not to position themselves close to the school. The police have stayed away from the school since then (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002).

Cultural mediator: having a bilingual liaison officer is mandated by the Ministry of Education for Jewish immigrants. However, children of migrant workers were denied any educational service except for the obligation to attend school. Therefore, the principal demanded that one of the qualifications required from teachers be the knowledge of a foreign language which was spoken in school. Later the parents who became more veteran served this function.

Assisting with bureaucracy: The principal also helped a parent with documents of application for family reunification (Eden & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002).

In sum, the first principal had limited opportunities to act, but she acted beyond her role as a principal and established the basis of networking for her successors and for the establishment of relations of trust with the parents (Bergset, 2017).

6.2. Second event: The influx of refugees and asylum seekers

The second principal experienced the macro critical event of the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers while leading the school in 2005-2011; they were undocumented and status-less, mostly from Africa. The mezzo community level was the merger of the elementary school with a junior- and high- school to form a k-12 campus. Also, the local veteran Jewish families left the neighborhood or sent their children to schools outside their zone; due either to objections to their children learning with the Africans, or because they moved to more affluent places. For the first time in the country, a State-Jewish school was comprised of non-Jews, non-citizens who did not speak the language, and did not know the history of the country. This is contrary to planned only-refugee schools in other countries such as Sweden, where the schools could consolidate resources, competences, and

minority-language teachers in a single school (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). The principal recruited volunteers, funding, and initiated activities for parents that would enable them to integrate into the host society.

Mobilizing resources: By the time this principal was in office, school principals were granted more autonomy and had more opportunities to network and mobilize support. The principal approached a non-profit anti-deportation organization to help the parents, by advising them how to deal with the bureaucracy they faced. This NGO has operated on the school premises since then. The NGO advises parents how to avoid deportation, finds other countries that agree to host the deportees, and how to write letters to authorities regarding their status, such as asylum seekers (Davy, 2016). NGOs operate in schools or in the community in other countries (Rah et al., 2009); however, here they operate in a situation of deportation threats to parents.

Another source is volunteers such as retired professionals and teachers. These volunteers work in various areas needed by the asylum-seekers and refugee pupils and their parents.

Information: Medical students from a neighboring university volunteered to teach hygiene and health issues in Israel to refugee parents, since refugees lack information and access to health services (Davy, 2016). Volunteers were also brought in to teach the new language to the parents as it is linguistic capital (Blackledge, 2001), the lack of which is a barrier to helping children with homework and to involvement in school (Rah et al, 2009). They also arranged psychological diagnoses for pupils who underwent traumas, which the parents could not afford to pay; and informed parents of potential dangers, such as a case of a pedophile in the neighborhood, as most parents are mostly interested in their children's safety (Ibid).

Parents received help in finding employment and professional training, through the school's cooperation with the private sector, to help the parents become contributing members of the community (Davy, 2016).

The school also provided them with counselling on parents-adolescents relations, since these are different in Israel from those in their home countries. In addition, guided field trips were organized for parents through non-profit organizations and museums, to learn about the history of the country. This was done to socialize them nationally, and to give them a sense of belonging.

In sum, the autonomy granted to principals enabled the principals to look for opportunities outside school for assistance, and to mobilize financial and manpower resources to initiate innovations that meet the unique needs of these parents.

6.3. The third event: The deportation threats against refugees and asylum-seekers

The third principal was appointed in 2011 and is still in office. He experienced, in addition to all the above events, the event of increasing threats of deportation of parents and children made by the government. In August 2010 the State issued a statement which granted legal status (but not citizenship) to children of migrant workers born in Israel who attended school at that time, but not to children of asylum seekers and refugees who were born abroad and who joined school later, or were graduates at that time (Kibbutsim College, 2011). In 2018 the threats became more real, as the government concluded an agreement with an African state to receive them, even non-voluntarily. The micro-level event was the sudden absence of children from school, and its impact on the remaining pupils, some of whom were in the same situation. That plan was later cancelled following major objections by the general public.

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Informing parents: The actions initiated by the principal aimed at revoking the State decision about deportation. The principal gathered the parents in a special meeting, stating to the media that the school would issue them a document confirming that their children attend school to prevent deportation, and denounced the government deportation decision as an immoral decision (Fishbain, 2018).

Mobilizing support: the principal mobilized the media by inviting them to the above meetings and by being interviewed on the main media channels. The principal opened a hotline, on which parents could call him 24 hours a day when informed about their coming deportation or other emergency situations. Thus, the staff perceived the principal as "forming a fence between the parents and the State" (staff member). The pupils and staff of this school, together with other schools that have a growing number of undocumented children and parents, demonstrated against the recent deportation threats of some of the parents and children (Alon, 2019).

In sum, the principal used his networking skills to struggle for his vision of turning the parents into Israelis and revoking the government decision to deport them.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The principals used their resources and their acquired entrepreneurship abilities to pursue two goals. The first was to improve parent-school relations by "imparting the skills parents needed to navigate the educational system on their own" (Davy 2016, p. 175). The second was to enhance social and cultural capital in parents, that would enable them to integrate into the host society. For this vision, articulated in cooperation with the staff, they mobilized money and volunteers and media attention. They scanned the environment for support such as the media; they relentlessly sought opportunities and seized them. such as the growing size of civil society manifested in volunteers; and gathered information regarding the projects they implemented in school.

The actions of the principals regarding the parents over the years can be analyzed using Bourdieu's (2002) notions of social and cultural capital, defined as the accumulation of resources that provide power in various situations. The literature shows that there is a connection between low capital and pupils' low achievements (Ciabattari, 2010), and between teachers' use of their capital and their interaction with parents (Addi-Racah & Grinshtain, 2016).

The principals helped parents accumulate the three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. They enabled the parents to accumulate economic capital, manifested in their attempts to find employment and training for them. The principals enabled the parents to accumulate cultural capital which means qualifications, habits, norms and behavior (Bourdieu, 2002), and knowing 'the rules of the game' of how the school system and society in general work, so that they can use it to their advantage (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This is acquired by socialization or inherited (Lareau, 2015). The principals achieved this by providing parents with knowledge about how things are done here, such as the health system, counseling on adolescent rearing, and language proficiency. Social capital, which the principals enabled the parents to acquire, is defined as an "aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to...membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 286). The principals provided parents with opportunities by connecting them with NGO's, and by creating a hotline on which parents can call at all times when they face deportation notices or any other emergency; thus, establishing a social network for the parents. The principals also provided the parents with national socialization aimed at turning them into members of Israeli society and minimizing their marginalization and 'outsider' status. They acted to

provide parents with information. Information is defined by Coleman (1988) as an important element of social capital, as through information people acquire the norms and values of the local society. These include their children's education and neighborhood safety, in addition to the usual activities that schools conduct with parents. The more knowledge parents have and the more norms they hold that are congruent with school norms, the more they feel comfortable in interacting with teachers (Lareau, 2015). Thus, teaching the parents the dominant norms will make them more involved and integrated into society.

Parental involvement is encouraged in every setting as the pre-determinant of children's outcomes. Parental lack of direct involvement in school is perceived by teachers as bad parenting (Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Blackledge, 2010; Lareau, 2015). This case reveals that principals extended their entrepreneurship beyond their original role, and used their autonomy to encourage parents who came with no capital required for effective participation in school and society. The principals did not wait for "big-level societal change to address the inequities that marginalized pupils are experiencing" (Davy 2016, p. 174). Rather, they provided assistance to the parents, thus replacing the regulatory agencies. Entrepreneurship is related to neo-liberal ideas that stress competition and marketization of education, thus it serves to reproduce the hierarchical structure of the educational system. However, it also holds opportunities when principals have a social vision, as it enables changes that are not deep at the macro level but generate transformation of parents of marginalized populations at the micro school level by empowering them.

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