ИНФОРМАТИКА И КОМПЮТЪРНИ НАУКИ
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THE MANAGEMENT PARADOX AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This study explores the management paradox and its impact on school principals, highlighting the challenges they face in balancing conflicting demands such as autonomy vs. centralization, control vs. flexibility, and innovation vs. stability. The research identifies key paradoxes within the education system and examines how school leaders navigate these contradictions while striving to maintain effective leadership. Using a qualitative research approach, the study investigates different leadership strategies, organizational structures, and external pressures influencing school management. The findings suggest that understanding paradoxes as inherent organizational dynamics rather than obstacles can empower principals to develop adaptive strategies, fostering both innovation and institutional stability.*

Keywords: *management paradox, school leadership, organizational challenges, educational governance, adaptive strategies*

INTRODUCTION

School principals operate in a dynamic environment characterized by multiple, often conflicting demands. The management paradox emerges as a central theme in their leadership, requiring them to balance opposing forces such as decentralization and governmental oversight, innovation and tradition, and individual autonomy and collective decision-making. The Israeli education system, like many others worldwide, faces a tension between granting school principals increased decision-making power while maintaining centralized policies. This paradox creates challenges in leadership, motivation, and institutional management. By examining the nature of paradoxes within school administration, this study aims to provide insights into how school principals can navigate these challenges effectively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, incorporating literature reviews, case studies, and interviews with experienced school principals. The research is structured around the following key components:

- **Literature Review:** Analysis of existing research on management paradoxes, educational leadership, and decentralized governance.
- **Case Studies:** Examination of real-world examples of school principals managing paradoxes in Israeli schools.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with school principals, focusing on their perceptions of paradoxes and strategies for balancing conflicting demands.

By synthesizing these data sources, the study aims to identify patterns in leadership behaviour, policy adaptation, and resilience among school principals navigating paradoxical challenges.

Distinguish between different types of paradoxes. Management scholars have gleaned foundational understandings from the realms of philosophy and psychology regarding the handling of paradoxes. Initially, they looked to prominent philosophers to glean insights on navigating and evolving through encounters with paradoxes. Subsequently, researchers investigated how organizations confronted paradoxes and managed them. From this exploration, they identified distinct and meaningful patterns in addressing paradoxes. This endeavor led to the development of six fundamental principles for addressing and evolving through paradoxes within organizational contexts (Schad 2016).

The six foundational elements (building blocks) of paradox within the science (study) of management are as follows:

a. Categories – These encompass various types of paradoxes that underscore the tension between divergent elements and highlight their inherently contradictory nature.
b. Interconnections – This pertains to how the diverse contradictions within an organization are interrelated and function within the same framework. Paradoxes are not discrete entities; rather, they mutually influence one another and the organization.
c. Collective Approaches –This aspect underscores the importance of incorporating diverse internal and external factors into the organization's understanding of paradoxes. It emphasizes the necessity for coordination and collaborative efforts among different stakeholders to leverage organizational paradoxes effectively.
d. Individual Perspectives – This segment delves into the emotional and cognitive approaches of individual actors in response to organizational paradoxes, examining their reactions and behaviours accordingly.
e. Outcomes – This section evaluates the outcomes resulting from various responses to paradoxes within the organizational context.
f. Dynamics – This component explores the recurring cycles characteristic of a paradoxical reality. Paradoxical tensions give rise to repeated patterns of interaction within an organization.

These foundational principles enable us to comprehend the inherent paradoxes within organizations and prepare ourselves to confront the associated challenges. When considering the broader education system, particularly focusing on the educational landscape in Israel, these fundamental concepts aid in identifying the obstacles encountered by school principals.

In general, in organizational settings (Smith W. K. 2011), conflicting demands manifest in various forms, impacting organizational processes and decision-making. Examples of such conflicting demands include:

Collaboration-Control: Organizations often grapple with the tension between fostering employee collaboration for innovation and teamwork while maintaining control over processes and outcomes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Individual-Collective: Striking a balance between the needs and aspirations of individual employees and the collective goals of the organization can lead to tensions regarding autonomy, teamwork, and organizational performance.

Flexibility-Efficiency: Finding an equilibrium between adaptability to changing market conditions and maintaining operational efficiency and resource utilization poses a challenging paradox for organizations.

Exploration-Exploitation: Organizations must navigate the tension between exploring new opportunities for growth and innovation while leveraging existing resources and capabilities to maximize current performance and profitability.

Profit-Social Responsibility: Balancing the pursuit of financial profitability with social and environmental responsibility can give rise to tensions surrounding ethical decision-making, stakeholder interests, and long-term sustainability.

These conflicting demands introduce complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty into organizational processes, necessitating the development of strategies to effectively manage these tensions. Adopting a dynamic equilibrium approach, which embraces paradoxical tensions, fosters creativity and learning, and allows for flexibility and resilience, is crucial for achieving long-term success (Teece D. J. 1997).

The internal and external paradox within schools. The internal and external paradox within schools is evident in the decentralization policy implemented by the Ministry of Education in Israel, which significantly impacts the authority and autonomy of school principals. This policy shifts decision-making power from centralized systems to individual schools, thereby augmenting administrators' (principals') authority, autonomy, and discretion. Consequently, principals are tasked with assuming leadership roles and shouldering increased responsibilities within their respective schools (Eden 1998).

This move towards decentralization empowers principals with greater control over decision-making processes within their schools. They possess the autonomy to make decisions concerning curriculum, staff management, and resource allocation based on the specific needs of their school community. This expanded

authority enables principals to customize educational programs and initiatives to better address the unique challenges and opportunities present in their schools.

As a result, there is an expectation placed on principals to foster growth and stability within their schools. To achieve this, administrators must first and foremost motivate their staff, particularly teachers, to collaborate in leading the school towards shared goals. However, they often encounter motivational challenges among teachers due to various reasons (Golding 1993):

Limited Incentives: Teachers may lack sufficient incentives to undertake additional work or responsibilities beyond their regular duties.

Burnout: The demanding nature of teaching can lead to burnout among teachers from the pressures of their regular workload.

Fear of Consequences: Teachers may fear negative repercussions, such as increased workload or testing, if they take on additional responsibilities.

This dynamic highlight the expectation from both supervision and external factors for school principals to drive progress, while simultaneously facing resistance or reluctance from the educational staff to embrace the changes being promoted (source). These factors underscore the importance of collective approaches and individual strategies embedded within the educational institution

Consequently, principals find themselves in a dilemma where they strive to push forward, sometimes independently, while also recognizing the significance of collaborative efforts (Gibton 2002). Zhang (2015) identifies five dimensions of paradoxical leader behaviour that reflect the seemingly conflicting, yet interconnected behaviours that leaders engage in, in order in order to manage a quality organization that functions even in paradoxical situations:

a. Balancing self-focus with focus on others
b. Maintaining both distance and closeness
c. Applying uniform treatment to subordinates while allowing for individualization
d. Enforcing work requirements while providing flexibility
e. Maintaining control over decisions while granting autonomy.

The challenge that schools' principals face is the difficulty of working in a public setting, which does not allow compensation and personal reward, with a team that does not always want the change it is trying to lead. It should be emphasized that different systems in the world cracked the system and found a way to allow the teacher in a system of conditions for growth and growth "only as a teacher" within the school (Darling-Hammond 2017). The Israeli education system has not yet cracked the possibility of personal growth within the system as a teacher compared to other systems in the world (Darling-Hammond 2017). Considering this, there is difficulty in giving personal expression to the growth of each of the team within the formal system of the principal.

In addition, principals see themselves as an autonomous system and the policy of decentralization and restructuring of schools in Israel. However, in Israel, unlike some other countries, decentralization is characterized by informal changes, which are rarely accompanied by legislation, and therefore not accompanied by an open public debate (Sergiovanni 1995) concerning decentralization and restructuring policies in Israel.

This situation leaves school principals in a position where they are expected to advance schools in line with decentralization principles mandated by the central government, yet at times, lack the necessary tools to enact internal changes, such as motivating teaching staff, and external changes, such as formal authority for structural changes (Gibton 2002).

Looking at the paradox from a different angle. Lewis (Lewis 2000) proposes a framework for comprehending paradoxical tensions and their management, along with reviewing studies exploring paradoxes that hinder change and expansion. Examples of common paradoxes in organizational studies encompass tensions between authority and democracy, discipline and empowerment, and formalization and discretion. These paradoxes underscore the coexistence of seemingly contradictory elements within organizations, such as the simultaneous need for control and flexibility, or the dual emphasis on efficiency and creativity. Moreover, learning paradoxes involve the tension between traditional and innovative modes

of thinking and acting, while organizational paradoxes highlight simultaneously conflicting demands for performance, empowerment, and formalization.

Principals can transcend merely labeling paradoxes as problematic by utilizing the paradox framework as a thought-provoking tool or perspective to examine apparently surprising findings of organizational life. This framework aids principals in addressing existing tensions, understanding why they may fuel cycles of reinforcement, and managing paradoxes to foster change and comprehension. By actively seeking out paradoxes or explaining anomalies as they arise, principals can deepen their understanding of conflicting emotions, demands, and practices, which are more aligned with the paradoxical nature of individuals, groups, and organizational life, especially within their own organization.

A principal entrenched in the reality of inherent paradoxes can view the paradox not as an obstacle or crisis, but rather as a component that enables them to rethink the situation from a different angle. Lewis discovered that administrators who approach problems from a unique perspective often find creative solutions to these challenges.

When a administrator opts to integrate both creative and conformist teachers into the educational team, research suggests that including a mix of creative and conforming members enhances the team's radical innovation, while an imbalance towards detail-oriented members beyond a certain proportion hampers it (Cress 1997). Creative members elevate conflict within a task but impede meeting team standards, whereas conformists struggle to handle a task when it has a conflict within it but bolster the team's adherence to standards. The study identified specific ratios of different styles that influenced task conflict, team strength, and compliance with team standards. However, only team intensity mediated the impact of styles on team innovativeness (Leifer 2001).

The research concluded that team intensity mediated the effect of conformists on team innovativeness. Conformist team members contribute to team innovation by reinforcing group harmony, cohesion, and their team's confidence in successfully achieving performance goals.

As per the theory, creative members hinder adherence to standards, whereas detail-oriented and conformist members enhance it. However, this adherence, in turn, impedes the team's radical innovation (Livne-Tarandach 2004).

In light of the above, it appears imperative for the school principal to construct a team with the appropriate blend that enables them to address conflicts while also maintaining cohesion and precision in detail. Additionally, team strength serves as a crucial factor that, in turn, contributes to the ability to confront the challenges of the educational team with various factors and facilitates creativity and innovation.

Strategies to support managers in navigating organizational paradoxes

Hatch (2002) found that one can use several strategies for identifying and addressing paradoxes within the duties of the principal. These include narrative, psychodynamic, and multi-paradigm approaches.

Narrative approaches concentrate on everyday organizational life, aiming to uncover self-evident contradictions. Psychodynamic approaches delve into the underlying psychological forces and unconscious dynamics contributing to paradoxes. Multi-paradigm approaches involve integrating multiple perspectives to grasp the complexity of paradoxical phenomena. These strategies aid in identifying and interpreting tensions, as well as conceptualizing, mapping, and theorizing paradoxes, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of paradox within organizational contexts.

When Principals adopt a perspective that acknowledges the framework of paradox within the organization and views the work within the school accordingly, they can employ these strategies to lead their teams internally while also referring external factors. For instance, consider the narrative approach: it allows us to perceive reality, which at times might present itself, as expressing the tension between central and local governments as a space filled with self-evident contradictions. Each entity advocates for its respective agendas, with the central government as a regulator striving to ensure uniformity and equal educational opportunities nationwide, while local authorities prioritize enhancing the quality of education within their jurisdictions. On the contrary, the local government will push for education which will be as good as possible in the local realm. The head of the local government is at times elected to promote the local education system.

In this conflict, the principal is often found in the range as someone who tries to respond to the national needs of the system on the one hand and trying to respond locally to the local demands of the community and of course the local government on the other hand. When a Principal recognizes this space as a reality that must be acted upon, it reduces the accompanying tension and allows him to leverage it for enhancing school performance. Recognizing this inherent contradiction within the system alleviates the constant pressure to find a solution and empowers the principal to navigate between national and local priorities. An organization that embraces this complexity and paradox as inherent elements can effectively address challenges and find solutions (alternative: An organization that knows how to provide a solution from the understanding that this is complex and paradoxical built into the organization).

In the psychodynamic approach, discussions frequently arise between parents and team members regarding effective strategies for interacting with and supporting children. A child experiencing difficulties often projects onto their parents a sense of parental inadequacy, possibly stemming from similar childhood experiences or an inability to grasp the complexity of the situation. This may be due to various factors such as: religious or communal backgrounds, etc. Conversely, the teacher may also encounter frustration when unable to effectively engage with the child, sometimes resorting to seeking quick solutions to remove the child from the classroom.

Conversations with parents are inherently emotional rather than purely professional. Principals can discern the underlying currents beneath such exchanges, recognizing the paradoxes they create in developing collaborative work plans involving parents, teachers, and principals.

In the medical field, emergency room doctors navigate tensions related to effective communication by understanding the various dimensions of communication (Putnam 2016). This involves the exchange of clear and timely information, maintaining professionalism and empathy in interactions with patients and colleagues, and managing the fast-paced, high-pressure environment of the ER. Strategies for managing these tensions may include training in effective communication skills, establishing protocols for information sharing and decision-making, and fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration among healthcare team members (Dean 2014).

These actions can also assist teaching staff in comprehending the complexities faced by individuals who may be experiencing crises as seriously as those encountered in an emergency room. A school principal who grasps the underlying dynamics can engage in effective and empathetic dialogues with all stakeholders. Furthermore, interventions such as process consultation, facilitating dialogue, and storytelling can aid in involving stakeholders, fostering shared understanding, and navigating the intricacies of change (Denis 2012). It's imperative to consider the unique organizational context and customize interventions to address specific challenges and opportunities for change (Larson 2005).

In the third multi-paradigm approach, principal may find themselves addressing all the aforementioned factors gathered around one table: the Ministry of Education, local authorities, educational staff, and parents. In such a broad forum, each participant arrives with a desire to advocate for a particular topic or plan. The principal must anticipate and reconcile the sometimes-conflicting desires of the various parties, striving to unite them in collaborative efforts.

Key strategies for managing cultural differences and internal tensions in strategic alliances include forming partnerships based on shared understanding of goals, pre-emptively addressing conflicts, establishing clear communication channels, and cultivating trust and mutual respect between partners (Cunliffe 2016). By recognizing the needs of all stakeholders and providing them with a platform, principals can foster common alliances and bridge divides between parties.

The paradox as a tool to improve processes and thinking

Paradoxical frameworks contribute to increasing personal creativity through several psychological processes. The study (Miron-Spektor 2011) indicates that adopting paradoxical frames evokes a sense of conflict and increases people's complex thinking, which leads to increased inquiry, sensitivity to unusual associations and the creation of new connections between seemingly contradictory elements. This process increases the thought processes of differentiation and integration, as expressed in the level of integrative complexity of people, which in turn increases personal creativity. The sense of conflict experienced when

adopting paradoxical frameworks may affect job satisfaction, well-being and motivation to engage in a creative task, but it also leads to the identification of creative connections between seemingly unrelated stimuli and the discovery of hidden insights (Tierney 1999).

Paradoxical frameworks play a crucial role in fostering personal creativity through various psychological mechanisms. Research conducted by Miron-Spektor (2011) suggests that embracing paradoxical perspectives triggers a sense of conflict, prompting individuals to engage in more complex thinking. This heightened cognitive processing encourages increased exploration, sensitivity to extreme situations, a greater openness to unconventional associations, and the formation of novel connections among seemingly contradictory elements. Consequently, this cognitive process enhances both differentiation and integration, as evidentt in the elevated level of integrative complexity observed in individuals, ultimately fostering personal creativity. While the experience of conflict arising from adopting paradoxical frameworks may impact factors such as job satisfaction, well-being, and motivation for engaging in creative tasks, it also facilitates the recognition of creative associations between seemingly disparate stimuli and the revelation of latent insights (Tierney 1999).

Moreover, paradoxical frameworks foster a concept known as "paradoxical inquiry", where conflicting elements are exposed and explored, leading to the discovery and testing of alternative solutions. This method enhances individuals' capacity to address strategic contradictions, ultimately yielding fresh perspectives on existing issues. Research consistently demonstrates that paradoxical perspectives boost creativity (DeFillippi 2007).

Paradoxical frameworks contribute to enhancing individual creativity by eliciting a sense of conflict, fostering complex thinking, and encouraging exploration and the formation of new associations, thereby resulting in heightened creativity.

The dynamic equilibrium model of organizational dynamics posits that paradoxical tensions are inherent and enduring within organizations. It elucidates how purposeful and cyclical responses to paradox over time facilitate sustainability, which encompasses peak performance in the present while ensuring future success. The model proposes that organizations can manage paradoxical tensions by simultaneously embracing them rather than attempting to resolve them (Smith W. K. 2011). This approach involves four key steps: stress identification, stress acceptance, stress reframing, and stress alignment. According to the model, this virtuous cycle fosters sustainability by promoting creativity and learning, fostering flexibility and resilience, and unlocking human potential (Jarzabkowski 2007).

RESULTS

The study reveals several key paradoxes influencing school leadership:

1. Autonomy vs. Centralization: While decentralization grants principals more authority, the lack of legislative backing results in limited actual control over systemic decisions.
2. Control vs. Flexibility: Principals are expected to enforce educational standards while also fostering creativity and adaptability in their schools.
3. Innovation vs. Stability: School leaders must encourage pedagogical innovation while maintaining structured, stable learning environments.
4. Collaboration vs. Individual Responsibility: Principals must balance teamwork among teachers and staff while ensuring accountability at the individual level.

Findings suggest that principals who embrace paradox as an integral part of their role–rather than a problem to be solved–develop more adaptive, creative, and sustainable leadership strategies. These include distributed leadership models, collaborative decision-making frameworks, and enhanced stakeholder engagement. The study underscores the need for professional training programs, leadership development initiatives, and policy reforms to better equip school principals for navigating paradoxical challenges in educational management.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the management paradox as a fundamental challenge in school leadership, emphasizing the complex and often contradictory demands placed on school principals. The findings reveal that principals must navigate tensions between autonomy and centralization, control and flexibility, innovation and stability, and collaboration and individual responsibility. These paradoxes create unique challenges that require adaptive leadership, strategic thinking, and resilience.

The research suggests that school principals who embrace paradox as an inherent aspect of their role–rather than viewing it as a problem to be solved–develop more effective leadership strategies. Key approaches include distributed leadership, collaborative decision-making, and fostering a culture of adaptability and innovation. Additionally, stakeholder engagement, professional development, and policy reforms are essential in supporting principals as they manage these complexities.

To strengthen the role of school principals in handling paradoxes, educational policymakers and administrators should invest in leadership training, mentorship programs, and structural reforms that promote a balance between centralized oversight and school autonomy. By equipping principals with the necessary tools to manage paradoxes constructively, educational institutions can foster more resilient, innovative, and high-performing school environments.

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УПРАВЛЕНСКИЯТ ПАРАДОКС И ЕФЕКТЪТ ВЪРХУ УЧИЛИЩЕТО

Резюме: *Изследването разглежда управленския парадокс и неговото въздействие върху директорите на училища, като подчертава предизвикателствата, пред които те са изправени при балансирането на противоречиви изисквания като автономия срещу централизация, контрол срещу гъвкавост и иновация срещу стабилност. Изследването идентифицира ключови парадокси в образователната система и изследва как училищните лидери се справят с тези противоречия, стремейки се да поддържат ефективно лидерство. Чрез качествен изследователски подход проучването изследва различни лидерски стратегии, организационни структури и външни фактори, които влияят на управлението на училищата. Резултатите предполагат, че разбирането на парадоксите като присъщи организационни динамики, а не като пречки, може да даде възможност на директорите да развиват адаптивни стратегии, насърчаващи както иновацията, така и институционалната стабилност.*

Ключови думи: *управленски парадокс, училищно лидерство, организационни предизвикателства, образователно управление, адаптивни стратегии*

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