

Managing Kindergartens organizational

How Parents perceive the organizational culture; Parental Involvement; difficulties of parental involvement; as compared to kindergarten managers?

Email : smershid@walla.co.il

Managing parental involvement in early childhood education is a vital component of the relations between parents and educators in the kindergarten system. The way parents feel towards their involvement and towards the system is transmitted to their children and affects them.

The purpose of this study was to obtain a situation report which shall reflect the connection between the cultural organizations within the Israeli Arab sector, as this is perceived by kindergarten managers and the parents of the children (aged 3 – 6) who are studying in the kindergartens. The study examined the way the parents in these kindergartens are managed and the hardships encountered by the kindergarten managers. This study also explored the way the three dimensions of the cultural organization that the kindergarten managers are obliged to preserve are affecting their performance.

Research Hypotheses: Parents perceive the organizational culture of the kindergarten more positively than the kindergarten manger- teachers; they perceive their involvement as higher; they perceive the difficulties of parental involvement as reduced, as compared to kindergarten managers. The second hypotheses: How do parents perceive the organizational culture, the managing parental involvement and the difficulties of managing- parental involvement in the kindergarten, and what are the relations between these perceptions?

I chose the quantitative research **method**. I have use three questionnaires

Allen & Meyer (1996)"Organizational Commitment" Fantuzzo, Tighe, Childs (2000)."parental involvement". Miri Sherf (2008). "Organizational culture in kindergartens" <http://www.nahariya.haifa.ac.il/survey.html>. Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz& Khawaldeh (2008). " Perception of problems of managing Parental Involvement".

I passed questionnaires to 100 kindergarten manages-teachers. And 300 parents of children attending the kindergartens of these teachers took part, in this research Kindergarten mangers-Teachers run state kindergartens in the north district that belong to the Education Ministry.

Important **results** from this study, for parents, it was found that the more positively they perceive the organizational culture, the higher their involvement is perceived and the lower their involvement in kindergarten is perceived. It was also found that the organizational culture and parental involvement were perceived more positively by the parents than by the kindergarten managers'-teachers, and the difficulties of parental involvement were perceived as higher by the kindergarten managers'-teachers than by parents in two dimensions. No differences were found in two dimensions: parental involvement in kindergarten and difficulties related to the management.

Key word: organizational culture; Pre-school education; parental involvement; Parental involvement in early childhood.

Organizational culture

The term "**organizational culture**" is considered to be a key concept in the field of organizations (Levi, 2008). An organizational culture is defined as a set of implicit assumptions, beliefs, values, norms and conventions, which are shared by a group of people in business, public or communal organizations or in a department in an organization. The organizational culture is explicitly expressed through texts, holidays, symbols, myths, stories of heroism and failure; and it constitutes the moral foundation upon which an organization is built (Levi, 2008, p. 228). Shahar. Sas and Sheran (2007) present distinctive features of the educational organizational culture according to the research literature: the efficiency of the teamwork; the clarity of the objectives of the educational framework, the degree of agreement with these objectives and the certainty of achieving them; the quality of the professional relations and the interactions among the team members; and, at last, the physical conditions which exist within the educational framework. (In; levi; 2008)

Organizational Culture within a school or kindergarten educational framework may be visible and compiled of typical behavior patterns. However, it may also be concealed and characterized by beliefs and values which are not visible on the surface. Within an educational system, the culture also affects the styles of teaching and learning. It also defines the nature of relations between the individual (teacher - student) and others (Pasternak, 2002). John Wherry (2008) also recognized the importance of the relationships between family and school. He specified the optimal practices which were reported by Hoover – Dempsey & Sandler (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005, as cited in: Sue A. Rieg & Joseph F. Marcoline, 2008): Sending

parents sincere invitations to visit the school; beginning to build a positive relationship both the students, as well as with their parents, before the beginning of the school year; sending an Information Pack to each family before the beginning of the school year; trying to make some home visits to the parents of the pupils; making efforts to recruit parents to take part in school activities and to get them involved in such activities; encouraging parents to invite other parents from the neighborhood;; and, at last, organizing small "learning circles" for parents.

Pre-school education

The pre-school education system perceives itself as being committed to creating optimal conditions for the best development of children, as well as for being an educational frame which constantly renews itself and adjusts to the changes which occur in the modern era. In the 2011-2012 school years, all of the Israeli kindergartens joined the "New Horizon" reform. This reform provides an opportunity to promote the quality of the learning system and the experiences of the children in kindergartens. The reform is expected to lead to re-defining the role of the kindergarten teacher and to improving the professional development process of the education and instruction within kindergartens. The characteristics of the reform which applied in kindergartens will focus on the following axes: (The Israeli Ministry of Education, 2012). Extending the kindergarten school day; changing the scope of the kindergarten teacher's job; organizing the structure of learning-teaching; developing individual and group instruction models within the kindergarten; strengthening the relations and collaboration with the parents of the children studying in the kindergarten; providing opportunities for the professional development of the kindergarten staff; and lastly, coordinating the relations between the support factors and the other work of the kindergarten teacher.⁽¹⁾

Parental involvement

Kaplan (2004) offered some points as **to** ways of encouragement the existence of positive and contributing parental involvement in schools. First of all, Kaplan distinguishes between home-focused involvement and school-focused involvement. Parents are an important resource; their involvement at home has advantages which are not less important than the advantages of their involvement in school. Therefore, they should be given tools for home-focused involvement and encouraged to hold

¹ <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/PreSchool/Mediniyut/OfekHadaash>

talks, to supervise and to emotional and academic support at home. In order to achieve this, the educational system must create and develop as many channels of communication as possible between the school staff and the family.

In a study conducted by Fisher and Freedman (2009), entitled: "Parents and School: Interaction and Involvement", they found that the most prominent factor in predicting active and passive involvement of parents in school life was **the school's trust in parents**, as was perceived by parents. The more the parent feels that the school trusts him or her, and tends to involve him or her in the activities being done, the more he or she tends to get more involved in the work of the school.

Parental involvement in early childhood

Providing proper education at a young age is very important. The main role of education between the ages of three and six is to prepare the child to learn, as well as preparation of his intellectual, emotional, cognitive and physical skills. In this age, the language skills, the ability to learn, the social ability, the self-control or the self-regulation of the child all develop. This development takes place within a social context and with others who are significant in the child's life (Abu Asba, 2007, p. 101). Various studies attributed great importance to the issue of parental involvement in general and in early childhood specifically (Ihmeideh et al; 2008; McWayne et al.2004; Lavenda, 2009).

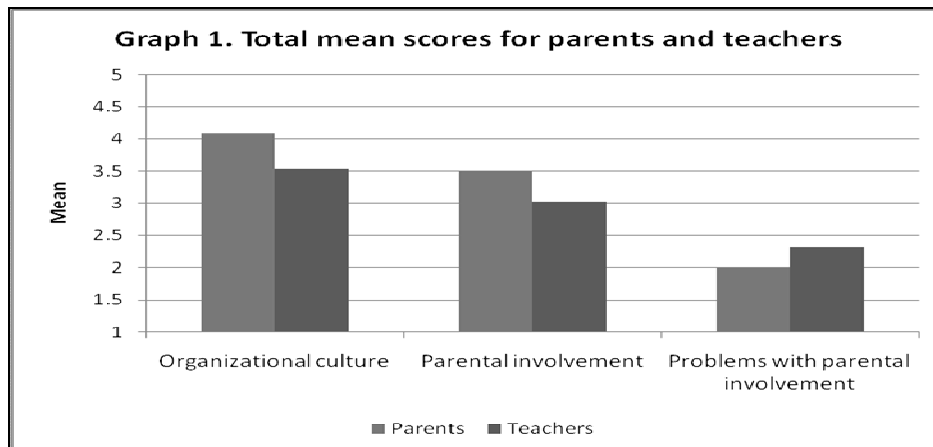
Studies show that the relationship between kindergarten managers and parents are better and closer when parents are more involved in the education of their children and this has positive effects on the academic achievements, the social adjustment and mainly on the normal, healthy development of children. Good relations and close ties reward both the kindergarten managers and the parents, but they constitute a complex challenge for everyone, so there is a need for proper preparation of the kindergarten managers and parents in this regard. Researchers point out that still there is no distinction between the responsibilities and authority of kindergarten managers and the responsibilities and authority of other agencies involved in the education of preschool children. In addition, the treatment of issues such as curriculum planning, work methods and kindergarten management changes frequently following frequent changes in the policy of the department for preschool education (in: Stodni, Izhar Aofltka, 2011). Ihmeideh et al; 2008; said; Researches suggests that parental involvement is useful for students of all in general and for preschoolers in particular. Parental involvement in kindergarten education not only enhances children's cognitive

abilities and school achievement, but it also develops their social awareness, boosts their emotional involvement in school life and helps modify their undesirable literacy behaviors(Allen & Daly, 2002; Lynch et al, 2006 . in : Ihmeideh et al; 2008). Scott (2002) states that: ‘It is important for children to feel that parents and teachers are working together for their benefit. Children are often proud that parents are involved in the school’ (Ihmeideh et al; 2008). Parent involvement has become a greater challenge in recent years as the characteristics of families are changing. Now more than ever, mothers constitute a significant portion of the work force; more children are also living in single-parent households. (McWayne et al; 2004).

Finding

According to the research hypothesis parents perceive the organizational culture of the kindergarten more positively than the kindergarten manager- teachers; they perceive their involvement as higher; they perceive the difficulties of parental involvement as reduced, compared to the perception of the kindergarten manager-teachers.

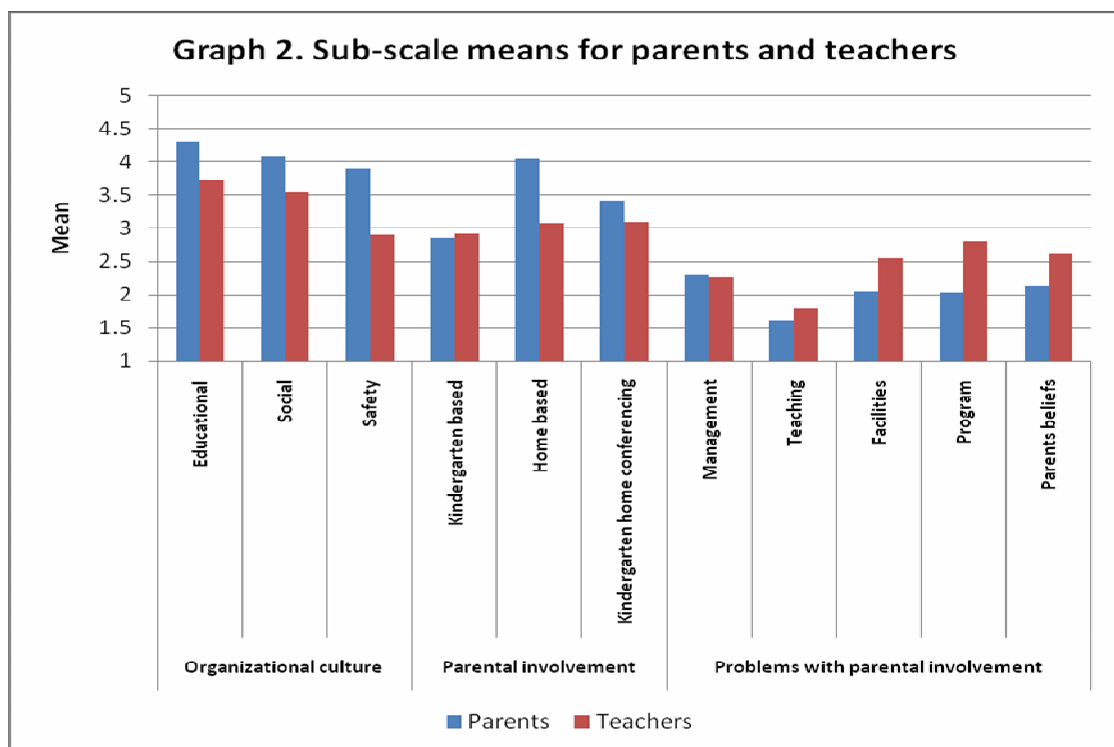
Diagrams 1 illustrate the differences that were found.



The findings in the Diagrams 1 show that there were significant differences between parents' evaluation and kindergarten managers'- teachers' evaluation in the three general scores of: organizational culture, parental involvement and difficulties of parental involvement. The organizational culture and parental involvement were perceived more positively and significantly by parents than by the kindergarten managers'- teachers, while the difficulties of parental involvement were perceived as higher by the kindergarten managers'- teachers than by parents.

In addition, the findings show that all the dimensions of the organizational culture were significantly perceived as more positive by parents than by the kindergarten managers' teachers: the professional domain, the behavioral/social domain and the domain of security and physical conditions. Significant differences were also found in the perception of parental involvement in the domains of parental involvement at home and communication between parent-kindergarten manager- teacher, where the evaluation of parents is higher than the evaluation of the kindergarten managers'-teachers. No differences were found between the parents' perception the kindergarten managers'-teachers' perception of parental involvement in kindergarten. On the other hand, significant differences were found between the perceptions of difficulties of parental involvement, when the kindergarten managers'- teachers perceive the difficulties related to their instruction, the difficulties related to the building and equipment, the difficulties related to the curriculum and the difficulties related to the beliefs of parents as higher than parents do. It is interesting to note that the difficulties related to management were perceived similarly by the kindergarten managers'-teachers and the parents, without any significant difference.

Diagrams 2 illustrate the differences that were found.



These findings show that the organizational culture and parental involvement were perceived more positively by parents than by the kindergarten managers'- teachers, and accordingly, the difficulties of parental involvement were perceived as higher by the kindergarten managers'- teachers than by parents (except the dimension of involvement in kindergarten and the dimension of difficulties related to management, where no differences were found). Thus, this research hypothesis was confirmed to a large extent.

To sum up

The organizational culture serves as the moral foundation on which the educational framework rests. It gives workers a **meaning** for their actions and this sense of meaning nurtures their energy. It provides them with a sense of common purpose derived from their belief in and commitment to the organization.

Subsequently, the conclusion is that the management of the organizational culture that includes reference to basic assumptions, to the professionalism of the kindergarten manager and to the social-behavioral domain which includes building relations with parents and children, and the physical conditions and safety; all of these have an impact on the ability to manage parental involvement positively and they can reduce the difficulties of parental involvement management.

I can explain this finding and the difference between the perceptions of parents and the perceptions of kindergarten managers of the different research dimensions by the fact that this difference was hypothesized first by the researcher. When I referred to parents, to their responsibilities and aspirations regarding their children in this study, they said that their involvement is high in their children's kindergarten and that they see few difficulties related to parental involvement. What parents said is the opposite of what the kindergarten managers say. According to the kindergarten managers the responsibility laid on their shoulders is very big and their role includes many educational, pedagogical and managerial aspects. In order for the kindergarten manager to succeed in her educational practice, which is a very important goal in the eyes of the parents, the educators and the professionals, she has to set clear rules in her work and in the kindergarten, she has to set boundaries and to make the right decisions according to the situations she faces. The kindergarten manager should be skilled, should have the ability to lead the significant and important organization which is under her responsibility, "the kindergarten". On the other hand, she should be an expert in the educational practice. This requires her to be a woman with a high

capacity in various areas, to be motivated, and to have high organizational commitment. To the best of my knowledge, there no studies that included both parents and kindergarten managers who expressed their perception of the variables investigated in this research. This makes me think that we should start reviewing in depth the relationship and perceptions, even if they are similar or different, between parents and kindergarten managers to establish the foundations of efficient management of the kindergarten and proper communication between the parties. Undoubtedly, the establishment of such foundations will first and foremost affect the young child and the organization of the kindergarten positively and it will lead to proper development of the young child from all aspects including the organization of the kindergarten and the organization at home.

The conclusion obtained from the results of the study was that parents perceive difficulties in the kindergarten management, while the kindergarten managers referred to difficulties regarding the curriculum, difficulties regarding parents' beliefs and difficulties regarding the building and equipment in the kindergarten. This means that the kindergarten managers today can assess the points of difficulty in their work, they now see that in order to manage parental involvement there is a need to strengthen parents' belief in the organization, and to refer largely to the building, the equipment and safety in the kindergarten, which are a very significant part in building the educational process and the relationships with the environment especially the children's parents. This leads me to conclude that there is still room to develop the relationship between the kindergarten managers and parents and base this relationship on a constructive dialogue with the defined limits of each party. There is a need to increase awareness regarding the importance of parental involvement in kindergartens. There is no doubt that this skill is not easy to acquire and there is room to improve the ability of kindergarten managers to cope in this domain in terms of developing leadership skills through participation in workshops that highlight and analyze cases from the field and that present points to consider that will help them in their work in the kindergarten and that will be based on their professional perception. It is also important to plan and examine the phenomenon based on how we, as professionals, can help in strengthening parental involvement in the kindergarten, and what are the things that really can get them to establish it. Because in my opinion it is not enough to say and declare that there is involvement, or that I believe in involvement; now is the stage of asking questions like, how to do? What to do? When

to do? Is there a possibility to start to take the matter into our own hands? Because it is not necessarily that what works in the Jewish sector would fit the Arab sector. I think, as a professional working in the field, that this is one of the cons. After 20 years of work I can see that there is a missing link that the implementation of the process does not always come from intrinsic motivation of the employee, or from a strong belief in knowledge, motivation and performance capability.

Bibliography

- Abu Asba, (2007). Arab Education in Israel - Dilemmas of a National Minority. Floersheimer Institute for Policy Research.
- Fantuzzo,j. & Tighe, E (2000). Family Involvement Questionnaire: A Multivariate Assessment of Family Participation in Early Childhood Education. *Journal of educational Psychology*. Val, 92, No.2, 367-376.
- Fisher and Friedman (2009). Parents and school: interaction and involvement. **Journal of MOFET Institute**. March 2012. Issue 47.
- Ihmeideh , F. Khasawneh,S. Mahfouz,S. Khawaldeh, M.(2008). The new workforce Generation: understanding the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian Kindergartens. **Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood**. Volume 9 . N,2 .(pp 161-172).
- Kaplan Toren, N. (2004). **Parental involvement, self-esteem and achievements of student in junior high**. A Thesis for Ph.D. Degree, Faculty of Education, Haifa University.
- Lavenda, A. (2009). Parental involvement in communal high schools. Testing a model of the influence of the perceptions of parents' role, self-capability, initiation of involvement on the part of school, the teacher and the child and time, power, knowledge and ability of the parent's resources. Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Hebrew University.
- Levi, A. (2008). **Management and Leadership: Change and Innovation**. Ramat-Gan: Rimonem
- Miri Sherf (2008) The questionnaire "organizational culture in kindergartens" <http://www.nahariya.haifa.ac.il/survey.html>.
- MCWAYNE *et al*;2004. A multivariate Examination of Parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten. **Psychology in the Schools**, Vol. 41(3), 2004. (www.interscience.wiley.com).

- Pasternak, R. (2002). **Chapters about Sociology of Education**. Volume II, Tel Aviv, Ramat Aviv: Open University. (899-903).
- Stodni; M & Aofltika; I (2011). "This Is Beyond My Job", Components of the Organizational Civilian Behavior of Kindergarten Teachers in Israel. Pages (51)
- Sue A. Rieg, Joseph F. Marcoline(2008). Eastern Education Research. Association, February **(2008)**.
- <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/PreSchool/Mediniyut/OfekHada>
sh