

How can teachers' performance (pupils' achievements) be improved?

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Abstract

This article presents many challenges for examination: "how can teachers' performance (pupils' achievements) be improved, and so guarantee the reaching of targets set by the Ministry of Education?" the examination of the effect of inspector's leadership style, and the examination of general educational indicators.

This review would discuss the variables of: Economic educational indicators, Inspector's Leadership Style and would attempt to examine the complex of correlations between these variables.

Schools in Israel and around the world are required to function in an intensive period of powerful changes. The needs of Man and the society change in their essence as well as in their level of complexity [37]. Therefore, the success of an organization greatly depends upon its ability to deliver its inherent knowledge to its clients [42].

This reality dictates a new perception of the essence of knowledge – a perception that focuses on the development of knowledge building "work tools": flexible thinking, information management, literacy, learning ability and self-monitoring of the learning process [41].

The Ministry of Education in the state of Israel is responsible for the existence and promotion of education in Israel. The principal goals of the Ministry of Education are: reinforcement of a teacher's status and improvement of the quality of teaching, improvement of achievements and decrease of study gaps, focusing on the core subjects, promotion of excellence, reinforcement of the early education stages and cultivation of a more educated and scholarly society Oah¹ [40].

¹ Oah – Hebrew acronyms for Internet and Educational Information, the official portal of the Ministry of Education

It is not incidental that the Ministry of Education sets forth the goal of "reinforcement of a teacher's status and improvement of the quality of teaching" as a priority; there is a recognition amongst the public in general and those practicing education in particular, that a prerequisite for meeting the goals of learning and education is the improvement of the position of a teacher.

Both research literature and educational literature are united in their opinion that the key component which is most influential upon educational system's activity outcome is quality of teachers. Additionally, there is broad agreement presently, that the job of a teacher is more complex than it has been in the past, and the reasons for this are: changes in pupils' population and parents' demands of teachers. Which variables are most influential upon a teacher's quality? What are the reasons for new teachers' joining the educational system? [18],[20],[28],[31].

Therefore, education is not just another process. A school is more than another place or environment. The school comprises a cultural environment for cultivating of teachers and pupils [9]. It is a place where knowledge is not simply processed and delivered, but is also created. Each pupil is expected to acquire relevant abilities in order to succeed in the future. That is the reason why presently, the school finds itself in a contest over the interest and motivation of pupils and parents and requires new ways and strategies. It is a status quo that the modern age includes more changes and vicissitudes than earlier periods, the school must refer to the changes and deal with them; otherwise, the school would be conceived as irrelevant to the lives of its clients [9].

The performance of employees especially in the field of education, relates to new results, such as: implementation and application of new ideas, achievements [21], performance in work functioning and a function of personal ability and motivation. This ability depends upon education, experience and practice, its improvement is a slow process but with a significant meaning for internal motivation.

The need for improvement of job performance has brought about a multitude of studies which have attempted to locate the predictors which explain job performance [2],[6],[24],[30].

N. Ballas [31]; E.A. Hanushek D.M, O'Brien S.G. Rivkin [10] have examined teachers' performance and achievements of about one quarter of a million pupils in Texas and reached a two-fold conclusion:

- It is impossible to predict the achievements of pupils according to traditional characteristics of teachers (experience, education, gender and more).
- Some teachers managed to advance the pupils better than other teachers, and they have been considered as better teachers.
- On the other hand, another study of H.F. Ladd., R.P. Walsh [15] has characterized the effect of teachers' attributes over pupils' achievements in North Carolina, the findings indicate that a teacher's experience in the profession and his education, have a significant effect upon the performance of teachers – pupils' achievements.
- Majority of studies have tied job performance with variables such as: reward, work conditions, commitment, organizational support, citizen behavior, stress, attrition, absence, etc.

"Tomorrow 98" report (1992) assigns great importance to professional training of math teachers, addition of teaching hours as a minimum basis for the training of all pupils, without exceptions, for the integration in a high-tech and knowledge society, as citizens of the future in an era of information [39].

A review of data of the OECD, the Central Bureau of Statistics, research organizations in Israel and around the world and the results of international tests with the participation of Israel in the last two decades, reveals that the achievements of Israeli pupils in math are lower than those of their peers in the developed countries. This finding is repeated consistently several times in the TIMSS studies which measure the ability of pupils in fields of math and science. Israel is one of the countries which achievements have significantly decreased in math. In 2007, Israel reached 24th place out of 49 states that have participated in the study, with 463 points (whereas the average of participating countries was 466). In the last publication of the TIMSS study findings in December of 2012, we witness a trend of improvement in the achievements of Israel in comparison to participating countries, a rise from the 24th place in 2007 to the 7th place in math out of 49 countries. Israel is in an esteemed place with 516 points, whereas the international average is 467 [25].

The Ministry of Education attributes the success of 2012 to the promotion of achievements in the TIMSS-R test, in a program enacted in schools in 2011. The program included an additional allocation of resources the likes of: math, science and language teaching hours, allocation of instruction days, more instructors in schools and training apprenticeships for teachers.

Nonetheless, the findings of the national test in the Meizav of 2012 (Hebrew acronym for: Indexes of School Efficiency and Growth), indicate a descent in achievements by 20 points in comparison to 2011 [43]. The performance data in the national test, indicate a worrisome failure to reach the targets of the Ministry of Education and the author of this paper believes that a key to the solution of the problem, be it a partial one, lies in the hands of math teachers.

Therefore, it is of importance to examine the Correlation between the performance of math teachers (achievements) and the moderating variable - economic educational indicators, such as: resources, school size, teacher's training, class size).

purpose of improving teachers' performance (pupils' achievements) in math in the Israeli educational system process. From the study year of 2002, there is a gradual process in the activity of reinforcing the studies of mathematics in Primary schools, a first step in a multi-year process – training of general teachers for the subject of math in all Primary schools in Israel. Program purposes: raising of pupils' achievements, training of general teachers that work in a team, for professional mastering in the field of mathematical knowledge, according to the study program and required achievements, development of teaching the subject and evaluating of pupils, extending the study hours in math for each pupil [40].

The subject of mathematics has a unique status of its own [9]. Mathematics is one of the study subjects that constitute a stumbling block on the way of many pupils throughout their years of studying in Primary and post-Primary education. Thus, doors are being shut before them quite often towards their future life [16].

for the implementation of the "specialization" program in schools are the general inspectors of schools. The researcher has found that schools that have succeeded in implementing the "specialization" program, have a professional team that frequently meets and inspectors with an inclusive approach in decision making, who assist and support the teachers by giving advice, solving technical and professional problems. The recommendations of the "Dovrat Committee" (2005) have dealt in reorganization of the educational system. In addition, a public appeal has been published that presently, the role of general inspectors is ineffective, does not allow for effective activation and is in fact unnecessary [38, p. 28].

This attempt to cancel the role of inspectors has born no success, and invoked much objection amongst senior personnel in the Ministry of Education.

In the current era, there are many widespread approaches of teaching improvement leadership. After reviewing 82 issues of a Journal of academic publications in the field of education - the Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, the conclusion of E.C. Short [22] is that the field is short in anything related to the practice of teaching improvement leadership. Empiric studies conducted so far have produced few descriptions of behavior of effective leaders for the improvement of teaching and affecting teachers [3],[12],[22].

Each supervision style allows for choosing of several means.

Glickman [8] has dealt in the developmental theory and related to three main styles of supervision: direct, inclusive and indirect. They differ in that different styles can be employed for working with different teachers.

D.C. McClelland [17] has found three motivators that exist in people, however at different levels: ambitiousness, power to affect and belonging.

In many studies, it has been found that leadership affects motivation of employees [19],[29]. The process of social influence is manifested in hiring of quality employees and motivation, achieving the goals of the organization. This Correlation exists when motivation is based upon free consent on the part of those being led.

A successful leadership motivates for execution of the missions of an organization [1]. D.A. Waldman, B.M. Bass, W.O. Einstein [26] have found in their study that the charisma of a transformation leader has a significant Correlation with the classification of employees' performance, and many aspects that characterize transformational leadership are related to **improvement of personal performance.**

Teachers with a strong need for belonging and teachers with a strong need for power and influence can be not less productive and effective than teachers with a strong need for accomplishment. The assumption that pupils' achievements improve as the leader principal or inspector invests time and resources in pedagogical subjects has not been confirmed yet [11],[27].

All of these studies have **not** made the distinction between the various educational personnel: **school principals and inspectors.**

Therefore, it is of importance to attempt at locating personal and systematic factors related to teachers' performance (achievements) in Correlation to the attitudes and perceptions of teachers, coordinators, math instructors, principals and inspectors.

In summary, this article presents many challenges for examination: **"how can teachers' performance (pupils' achievements) be improved, and so guarantee the reaching of targets set by the Ministry of Education?"**: the examination of the effect of inspector's leadership style, examination of perception of external prestige of the school, teaching staff and the teaching subject, examination of the multitude of identities and the examination of general educational indicators.

So far, no empiric evidence has been found for the establishment of the premise that pupils' achievements are improved as the principal devotes time and resources to pedagogical matters [11],[27].

Fullan [7] maintains that a new breed of leaders is required in an educational climate, as there is no single correct answer for all the required complexities in an organization and therefore, the expectation from leaders to suggest solutions, puts them in an impossible situation.

A principal is responsible for the development of internal leadership and the school organization in a structure that supports educational activity [13].

The cultivation of internal leadership contributes to creation of internal gradation of positions in the organizational structure of a school [34].

The efficiency of teamwork depends upon a leadership style that delegates authorities to additional participants and that encourages the understanding of purposes and values of an organization. Team leaders that would allow team members "to get control for the purposes of the situation" would prove as extremely efficient [32].

H. Steven, G. Appelbaum Frederic [23] have written as well, that from the different models developed in the research literature it has been diagnosed that crises in a team delay the success; nonetheless, a supportive management promotes the team and makes it function efficiently and successfully.

An emphasis has been created in schools on the importance of cooperation between people in order to develop and award an experience of quality studying, and the need in a scope of complementary skills, in specialty and personal qualities amongst the group members [44].

The research literature that deals in school effectiveness emphasizes that excelling schools pose high expectations of every pupil in relation to achievements, clearly define purposes of study planning and contents and issue instructions as to how these targets are achieved by teaching methods.

A principal who leads his school and strives for efficiency and improvement for the institution he is in charge of, is one who formulates educational policy with the teachers' team, initiates changes and promotes projects, takes care of resources and allocates time for planning, discussion and thinking with the teachers' team [33],[35].

D. Inbar [36] ; J.R. Hoyle [14] emphasize that a leadership that brings about a breakthrough in the limits of school is required. The key to commitment, motivation and investing of effort is in the relationship between the leaders and the people he leads.

The identity of the inspector's job in the Ministry of Education can be characterized in two main aspects. One, as a representative of the Ministry of Education, with an authoritative part that criticizes and evaluates – the duty of Inspection and the second is as the representative of the school and teachers' team serves as a guide, consultant and supporter on the basis of mutual trust, the duty of Supervision.

Therefore, an inspector functions at the same time in two functions while each one feeds the other [4],[5].

Empirical studies conducted thus far, have yielded few description of behaviors of effective leaders for the improvement of teaching and their impact upon teachers [3],[12],[22].

What motivates teachers? Teachers' responses to same inspection style partially reflect the motives that get them to work. So we have many challenges for examination.

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