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RETHINKING INSPECTORS ROLE IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

"The changes that we are facing in the 21st century have a profound impact on educational goals in various parts of the world" (Zohar, 2012, 2). The required changes are at the level of educational policy, organizational structures, educational leadership, pedagogy, technology, etc.

School inspectors as an educational leaders have to adapt and change their role in relation to the changes and the expectations of the education system. The role of school inspectors in Israel was first defined by the education law in 1956. The role included: representation of the Ministry of Education policy, examination of school achievements, and feedback on the quality of management- a role that is mainly regulatory. Hence, there is a need to rethink inspectors' role. In many countries, attempts have been made to change inspectors' role. For example, Denver, Colorado, has recently undergone a change whereby inspectors were added and the number of principals under the responsibility of each reduced. Inspectors became less of regulators and more of mentors (Gill, 2013). This article will discuss the changes that should be made in inspectors' role in light of the changes required in the 21st century relating to educational leadership that is not only regulatory. This serves as the basis of the doctoral thesis of the researcher: "Inspector's role in leading education staff towards promoting school educational policy". The question that will lead the investigator will be :What is the role of the inspectors, according to the official documents?. The research method will be a mixed method.

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Keywords: Inspector in education; Educational Leadership; Inspectors' role; Reforms in Education; The changes of the 21st century.



1. Introduction

The thought about education systems that are adapted to the 21st century have challenged many developed countries that have tried to make the necessary changes and make these adjustments through varied reform processes.

Reform processes in education systems create changes in schools that demand dealing with and developing many components such as: reorganizing the system, rethinking roles in the Ministry of Education, organization of learning, organizational climate, training and developing staff, infrastructure and resources, online policies and alternative methods of evaluation (Zohar, 2012).

In recent years, the role of inspectors has been discussed around the world and in Israel. A recognition that inspectors have become a significant player in implementing educational policies creates many expectations about their influence on school principals and achieving education systems' aims. Inspectors who constitute part of educational leadership must lead and implement changes being undergone by an education system. Roles such as: accompanying and developing principals, supporting core teaching, training, role-holders have been added to the regulatory role of inspectors (Shaul & Barak, 2016).

School inspectors constitute the link between policy makers and its implementation in schools. As such, their role is critical mainly on implementing educational policies in schools (Ehren & Shackleton, 2016).

It is necessary to reexamine school inspectors' role as educational leaders in an innovative pedagogical world, as the people who represent and lead policy and assimilate the policy and goals of the education system in the days of a paradigm shift.

Taking into account that many studies point to the influence of leadership on student achievements and school success, it is clear that there is a need to change the thinking about principals' training and ways of management (Southworth, 2009). As such, there is an urgent need for parallel development of school inspectors as a way to expand the educational leadership circle of influence.

2. Definition of the inspectors in Israel

Various reforms in Israel over the years have dealt with policy, teachers' and principals' professional development, but not with the role of inspectors. The role of inspectors in Israel was first defined as part of the Education Act in the Government Education Regulations (Inspection Arrangements) in 1956. There, clear roles were defined to represent the Ministry of Education's educational policy in supervision, evaluation and inspection - a role that is primarily regulatory.

The definition of the position formulated in the past does not correspond to the changes the education system has undergone over the years, and it is probably not suitable for contemporary inspectors in carrying out their duties effectively and in a meaningful manner.

This article argues that the definition of inspectors' role should be reexamined and adapted to the tasks required of an educational leader in the reality of a changing world. In addition, this article will constitute the ideational grounds for the proposal to define inspectors' role as educational leaders, with this definition necessarily influencing appointment and training of inspectors.

3. Changes in the world' supervisory systems

The debate around the role of school inspectors is not unique to Israel and is addressed in many countries in the world. In recent years, the city of Denver in Colorado carried out a change in its pedagogical inspectorate. The change was necessary after principals testified that they feared there was no connection between inspectors and the field and at the same time, inspectors testified to frustration and lack of success in their roles. At the heart of the changes - additional inspectors and reducing the number of principals for whom each inspector is responsible. This organizational change led to significant pedagogical improvements as inspectors visits have become more meaningful. Both principals and inspectors reported substantial change in their work their work. In some schools, the change was also expressed in improved pupils' achievements, and principals and inspectors testified that inspectors were more available, partners in school processes, more significant. Principals argued that they are the most important link between regional leadership and schools (Shaul in Gill, 2013).

In England, systemic thinking was required to improve schools. In examining difficulties, it was noticeable that the external inspection system was ineffective. Inspectors could not do their jobs due to multiple roles and too many schools under their inspection. Through legislation a new body was established - Office for Standard in Education (OFSTED). This body constituted inspection of schools. Change in the inspection system created a significant change in the partnership between principals and inspectors. Trust was created between schools and the inspectorate and it became a significant tool for principals. Inspectors were focused on their task: improving inner school processes through genuine discourse. Changes in inspectors' work led to changes in schools (Townsend, 2002).

In various districts in the United States, inspectors allocate their time to assessing principals' compliance with the requirements and to correcting deficiencies in schools' infrastructure. Each inspector is responsible for 24 schools on average, and sometimes 40 schools or more. Inspectors are unable to create change in the schools and do not support the difficulties experienced by school principals. Many U.S. districts such as Washington, DC and Tulsa have turned this approach around. The idea is to create a role whose declared purpose is to help principals improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. It marks a dramatic departure from the accepted approach. In both districts, inspectors now focus on providing support to principals, so as to improve teaching quality. Furthermore, the number of schools under the responsibility of each inspector has decreased so that inspectors can provide principals with the guidance and supervision that many of them have lacked in the past (Saltzm, 2016).

4. The need to redefine the role of the Inspector

The State Comptroller's report for 2016, which dealt with the issue of defining the role of inspectors, was recently published in Israel, and this report resurfaced the discussion regarding the need to redefine inspectors' role. In addition, there has been a significant change in both the conceptual-pedagogical and organizational-structural levels, including decentralization of authority to the local authorities and school principals, an increase in the number of factors operating in the field of education, Reforms in teaching and learning processes.

Dagan also referred to the fact that the education system has expanded and become more complex since the role of inspectors was last defined. Many changes have taken place in the education system both

on the perceptual-pedagogical level and on the organizational-structural level, including decentralizing authority to local authorities and school principals, an increase of the number of factors that are active in the field of education and implementation of reforms in teaching and learning processes. Dagan (1998) also referred to the fact that rules and directives that guide inspectors have not been updated for a long time, and have not been adapted to changes that have taken in today's educational reality. Changes have taken place in teachers' and principals' status, the public legitimacy given to differentiation in teaching processes and the required changes in teaching methods.

In light of these changes, it appears that the Israeli education system is the last to preserve the methods of historical supervision that used to be accepted in most education systems around the world (Dagan, 1998).

The roles of inspectors in Israel were defined in 1956. The roles were mostly regulatory, such as representing the Ministry of Education with principals and local authorities, confirming implementation of the Ministry's educational policies and instructions such as: curricula, standard hours and more; evaluating and inspecting institutions and providing feedback on the quality of management, extent of pupils' success, educational climate at institutions and more; helping in developmental processes and guiding principals. Participating in decision making with regard to the role of principals and evaluating teachers at principals' request (State Education Regulations, 1956).

This role description is not consistent with various contemporary theories dealing with the leadership leading change in systems in general and in the education system in particular, regarding pedagogical leaders as educational leaders. Since there are almost no studies dealing with inspectors as leaders, I will apply these theories as well as the basic assumptions that developed from them to the role of inspectors as educational leaders. The basic assumption that guides me is that current day inspectors are required to be educational leaders who guide principals towards pedagogical and organizational leadership processes.

Thus, for example, Ciulla (2003) noted that there have been changes in definitions of leadership since the 1940's. In sharp contrast to the traditional, uni-lateral approach to leadership, in the 1990's support of leaders was characterized by a leader - followers mutual dependence.

Shaul and Barak (2016) described inspectors as systemic pedagogical leaders and as such, they must lead, influence and conduct professional learning processes among its principals. Inspectors today have a significant standing and with development of the reform in the specifically in the education system. Inspectors are required to nurture and develop school principals, who today more than ever, are examined and tested on their performance.

The nature of school principals' leadership affects the effectiveness of education provided by school (MacNeil, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2003). I maintain that school inspectors who are responsible for these principals must adapt their work to the new leaders.

Lashway supported the theory that the instructional leadership of the 1980's, for the improvement of teaching and learning, was such that principals were central figures, that went hand in hand with images of heroic leaders, who led their schools on their own. Nevertheless, according to an increasing number of researchers, instructional leadership for the improvement of teaching is decentralized to the entire school community, and principal, inspectors, teachers and policymakers have complementary responsibilities. (Lashway, 2002).

The State Comptroller's report emphasizes that a renewed vision of inspectors' role is needed in the coming future, to redefine the tasks assigned to them and set new priorities within the time frame available to them.

Redefinition of inspectors' role is of great significance in the attempt to reduce the number of cases where inspectors operate under recurring pressures by various factors in the education system (local authority, parents and more), or under pressure of 'burning' issues, while neglecting long-term needs.

Apparently, the inspector's role is undergoing changes, though they are not formally anchored in orderly reforms, and at times it seems that at least in Israel, the changes are dictated by the local reality. In Israel, one can also see a change in the construction of school inspectors' professional development (Shaul and Barak, 2016).

Two major steps taken regarding the role of general inspectors in Israel, which have recently developed so as to facilitate the change inspectors' work vis-à-vis the principals and empower them as influential educational leaders, are: (a) The 'Inspector and Principals' in-service program is a designated course for principals on issues pertaining to teaching-learning processes. The course is constructed and implemented by inspectors. It includes principals' assessment for tenure and advancement through a tool developed by the Evaluation and Measurement Authority, and facilitates in-depth dialogue with school principals. (Shaul and Barak, 2016); (b) Visiting schools that focus on learning processes.

These steps are important for developing inspectors as educational leaders and their influence on the principals under their supervision as pedagogical leaders. All that in order to improve the quality of teaching and the education system in Israel.

This marks the beginning of change. This is a starting point, but it seems that the changes are made intuitively, from the field, rather than as an organized doctrine based on a fundamental understanding of the importance of overall inspectors as educational leaders. Evidence of this understanding will be expressed when policy makers implement the State Comptroller's Report and decide to examine and redefine this role in light of the challenges of the 21st century.

5. Conclusion

Countries around the world and Israel are facing many challenges to improve education systems with regard to 21st century challenges, and moreover - to challenges of the future world in which our children will live. Reforms initiated in education. Education is one of the most important investments a country can make to improve its future. Nonetheless, carrying out reforms without considering in depth and training educational leadership will not succeed. One must refer to developing role holders in the system and among those - school inspectors. It is necessary to rethink the role of inspectors in the near future, to redefine what they should do and determine new priorities within the framework of time available to them. Redefining their roles will reduce the cases in which they operate according to incidental pressures of diverse factors in the education system (local authorities, parents, etc.) or according to pressurized, immediate and burning issues, whilst neglecting long term needs (Dagan, 1998).

Education is one of the most important investments a country can make to improve its future and status. Hence, it is incumbent upon them to continue the reforms they initiated on education.

My argument is that carrying out reforms without having to think deeply about educational leadership will not succeed. The development of the system's functionaries, including the school inspector, should be considered. There is a need to reexamine inspectors' role in the coming years, to redefine the tasks assigned to him, and to set new priorities within the time frame available to him. Restructuring its functions will reduce the cases in which it operates according to the occasional pressures of various elements in the education system (local authority, parents, etc.) or by pressing, immediate and burning issues, while neglecting long-term needs (Dagan, 1998).

Now, at a point where we have a better understanding than ever about the demands of the school leadership and how it should be developed, we must ensure its continued existence (Southworth, 2009).

Defining a new role for inspectors, in accordance with the skills required today from an educational leader, will enable a coherent and holistic assimilation of the policy makers in the relationship between them and the schools, thereby improving the entire education system.

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