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**IS AN INSPECTOR NEEDED IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT
EDUCATIONAL REFORM?**

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Abstract

There are few educational reforms that have managed to cross over the classroom door and stay inside. History has taught that most attempts at changing school routines fail (Fisher & Michaeli, 2010). However, for various reasons, politicians and policy makers try time and again to promote educational reforms. It is easier to change education policy than it is to change school routines because schools are institutions immune to change (Eisner, 1992). Over the years, it appears that there have been many interested parties who have wanted to change the face of education, each for their own reasons: the desire to adapt education to the 21st century, improve achievements, moral views of equal opportunities, the desire to leave a mark, political and economic motives and more.

Many countries are dealing with the question of the importance of and defining the overall role of inspectors. Some reforms in education deal precisely with this topic as a means of influencing education systems. The current article will follow several educational reforms throughout the last decade, examining what works and what does not, leading to a discussion of an inspector's role in educational reforms. The role of school inspectors will be examined through a case study of the most recent Israeli reform, 'Ofek Hadash' (which means – New Horizon).

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Keywords: Educational reform, school inspector, elementary education, resistance to change.



1. Introduction

Many lecturers dealing with education and innovations especially in education, begin with a picture of a classroom from then and now being presented, as a way of emphasizing the gap between changes that society has undergone in contrast to the fixed state in which education finds itself.

Over the years, it appears that there have been many interested parties who have wanted to change the face of education, each for their own reasons: the desire to adapt education to the 21st century, improve achievements, moral views of equal opportunities, the desire to leave a mark, political and economic motives and more.

This article examines the role of school inspectors in implementing educational reforms, through an examination of leading educational reforms around the world in recent years with an emphasis on the 'Ofek Hadash' reform in Israel¹. Not much has been researched on the inspector's role in education. The concept of decentralization of powers is becoming commonly accepted in Europe, alongside of which the concept of accountability and evaluation are being incorporated as factors ensuring the maintenance of quality (Ehren et al., 2015). In Europe, school accountability is mostly in the hands of the school inspector. A recent research study found that school inspectors promote changes in indirect ways, such as encouraging development processes rather than imposing them. The article offers an initial look at the role of school inspector in the 21st century and serves as the basis for broader research on the question: the role of school inspector in implementing educational reforms, through an examination of leading educational reforms and promoting an innovative pedagogy in education systems. The study is conducted using mixed methodology, combined interviews with school principals and school inspectors, as well as questionnaires to be delivered in the second phase of the study. Initial findings indicate the centrality of the inspector as implementing reforms in schools, in contrast to the lack of a statement by the educational system and policy makers regarding the role of the school inspector as such.

2. Reforms in the educational system

2.1. Reforms in the educational system- the history

Reform in the field of education is defined as a planned change process meant to achieve praiseworthy purposes from the points of view of their initiators (Wideen, 1995).

This definition hints at the fact that reforms are top-down processes. Research carried out by the Rand Corporation in 1978, for the American Department of Education, examined what factors led to the success or failure of reforms in the education system funded by the government. However, many years have passed since then, but the research conclusions are relevant to this day. The principal finding was that if there is no teacher commitment from the earliest stages of the reform, there is no chance that their support will be garnered at later stages. For our purposes, the meaning of the research is that top-down reforms have a higher chance of failure (Berman & Mclaughlin, 1978). Indeed, there are few reforms meant to change something in classrooms that have crossed their threshold and remained there. Nonetheless, (Eisner, 1992) argued that schools are institutions immune to change and therefore it is easier to change educational

¹ During the 2007/8 school year, the Israeli government decided to implement the Ofek Chadash (New Horizon) reform – a national program to advance education in Israel in elementary and junior high schools.

policy than to change school's modus operandi. Ginzburg (1991) noted that the assumption accepted today is that educational reforms are influenced more by global political and economic processes and less by internal-systemic processes. In contrast to this assumption, there are those who espouse that educational systems have enough autonomy to manage reforms as they judge fit (Navarro, 1998).

2.2. Reforms in the educational system- now days

Hattie (2015a) maintains that reforms today focus on and invest huge amounts of money and effort in popular solutions that contribute very little, if anything, to pupils' advancement and concentrate these efforts on five 'families' of policy steps, which according to meta-analysis, have little if any effect on learning achievements:

- 1.To satisfy parents (for example, smaller classes, choosing schools)
- 2.To fix infrastructures
- 3.To fix pupils (for example, emphasis on diagnosing learning disabilities)
- 4.To fix schools (for example, school autonomy)
- 5.To fix teachers (for example, differential remuneration according to achievements).

In his article, Hattie even verified in research that each such 'family' testified to its minute effect on what happens in schools. Hattie did not just write about what did not work, but proposed eight steps on which educational reforms should focus, so that they will be assimilated and meaningful (Hattie, 2015b). I will not detail all eight steps, but I will point out they are mainly steps that are not 'visible' to parents or policy makers such as: changing the narrative from an achievements discourse to focusing on an individualized discussion about each child in a way that can the child's progress and fully utilize his/her hidden potential every year, so too with regard to teachers etc.

A position paper published by the Israeli Ministry of Education, reviewed educational reforms and proposed sorting them according to various criteria: Scope: Systemic reform that includes all school systems and seeks to bring about change to every aspect of school life so as to raise pupils' achievements (Greenberg & Sorek, 2003) in contrast to a limited reform, according to the objects of change, such as: teaching-learning processes, organization and structure, curricula, centralization or decentralization, core values such as : integration and inclusion or excellence, or units of change such as: teachers, school, professional practice.

Greenberg and Sorek (2003) refer to groups of variables constituting part of a comprehensive systematic reform:

- 1.Core variables - this group includes pupils' achievements, curricula, teaching and assessment.
- 2.Advancement variables - this group includes learning environment, technology, school-community relationships and time.
- 3.Separating variables, including supervision and administration, teachers' leadership, human resource structures and work relationships (Vidislavski, 2012).

Faced with all proposed models, Gaziel (2007) summarized his review of educational reforms pessimistically, maintaining that they are based on rhetoric and there is no hope that they will be implemented. According to him, what will be will be, reforms range between poles - between centralization

and decentralization, between conservative and progressive education - but in fact, do not make any real change at all.

A more optimistic note can

that found that schools in which principals tend to carry out internal school changes frequently, their feelings are that change leads to constant renewal and charges them with new energies and a sense of self-fulfillment.

If we define the success of a reform by its assimilation into school routine, then the actions required for success are cut directly from the same factors that we enumerated as responsible for their failure. The Israeli policy paper discussion educational reforms proposed four foundation stones for their success, which I will detail without expanding on them:

1. Nature of a school, its structure and customary practice: structure of ideas, beliefs, values and routines, leadership skills and functioning, parental and community involvement, curricula, facilities and funding.

2. Reform its content, how it is formulated and activated - congruence between reform components, for example, ongoing assessment of learning and teaching as well as external exams have to be adapted to the desired goals. Guaranteed ideological grounds for a reform, and matching it to the regional context of each inspectorate region, settlement and school, and finally developing organizational structural components that support pedagogical changes.

3. Stakeholders: to guarantee their partnership and participation both as a group and as individuals.

4. Political echelons and policy makers - and commitment of all echelons to the reform, including creating a suitable atmosphere, removing administrative obstacles, allocating required resources in budgets, time, professional knowledge, facilities and the like (Vidislavski, 2012).

One can argue whether these components are ranked by importance and my view is that there is no one that stands alone and that each one constitutes an essential condition but are not enough for a successful reform. Many studies have examined reform frameworks or the role of principals and teachers as key figures in their success. A few have examined the overall place of inspectors in leading and implementing educational reforms in schools (Gaziel, 2007). One of the reasons for this is the tendency not to differentiate between the roles of principals and inspectors and differences in their training, as well as a lack of agreement among researchers regarding what should be studied (Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson, & Poster, 2002). This is amazing in itself, mainly because one of the components of successful implementation of reforms - included in the fourth component identified by policy makers and that is the link connecting political echelons and managers in the education field. It appears as if the role of inspectors is obvious, but this is not the case

2. Is an Inspector Needed in Order to Implement Educational Reform?

Many countries are dealing with the question of the importance of and defining the overall role of inspectors. Some reforms in education deal precisely with this topic as a means of influencing education systems. In the U.S.A. the role of inspectors is undergoing a conversion from assessing how principals meet their goals and correcting structural deficiencies to inspectors as "leadership instructional program directors" (Saltzman, 2016, p.2). What motivated change was the understanding that school principals are required to improve pupils' performance, but in practice feel alone in the system. Over and above low school

achievements - regions were required to cope with frequent turnover of principals who simply did not 'survive'. School inspectors were recruited as a supporting force for principals. The idea - to create a role whose stated purpose is to help principals improve the quality of teaching and learning at their schools - indicates a dramatic parting from the accepted approach. According to this view, the number of inspectors increased and the number of schools for which they are responsible decreased, so that inspectors can accompany schools in a meaningful way (Saltzman, 2016).

In Britain, OFSTED was established, a bureau of standards whose role is to improve school functioning and create public transparency in everything related to their functioning and the education system's achievements. Consequently, the role of inspectors changed significantly. Such a dramatic change is expressed by subjugating teacher education departments at British universities to external inspection by educational inspectors (under the direct control of OFSTED, and not the British Ministry of Education).

Inspecting teams visit schools once every few years, based on information collected in the form of standards by a central body, work as a team and intervene after the event. The change forced the inspectors to undergo appropriate professional training (Paz, 2014).

A previous Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Education noted in a discussion of reforms in education that introducing an educational reform is a very complex process, whose success or failure depends on how one relates to change (Cohen, 2011). She even added that for change to be accepted and effective, commitment among team members must be created: commitment will be created in a partnership process (Ibid) and more: Inspectors have a well-known contribution in a reform implementation process in many and varied aspects (Ibid). However, it appears that inspectors are perceived as those who identify completely with decisions made by Ministry of Education staff or political echelons, to the extent that they are not considered necessary partners in decisions or have to be recruited to the change and on this basis, start to implement reforms with the inspectors help. Inspectors, on their part, are required to carry out implementation processes with principals under their patronage and to which a lot of time and thought is devoted.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that various stakeholders identify the need and potential hidden in changes in educational systems. One can review different and various educational systems around the world and find differences in views, approaches and means of implementation, but the basic assumption is that overall, inspectors are required, among others, to implement policy and reforms, is common to all. Thus, it is amazing that there are almost no studies dealing with the role of inspectors as reform implements in education or any training required of inspectors to implement any reform, as if they are a missed link in the chain.

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