

# “A Compliment is all I need” – Teachers Telling Principals How to Promote Their Staff's Self-Efficacy

Efrat Kass

Achva Academic College

*The purpose of the present study is to compare the perceptions of teachers representing opposite ends of the self-efficacy spectrum regarding the effects of the principal's behavior on their professional self-efficacy. In the first quantitative stage, a statistical procedure was conducted to identify the two groups of teachers: a group of 16 teachers with a high self-efficacy and a group of 14 teachers with a low self-efficacy. In the second and main stage, the qualitative stage, the teachers were asked about their professional successes and failures, using in-depth, open-ended interviews. Data were analyzed using grounded theory. Five categories of management style were found pertinent to both groups: modes of communication, feedback from the principal, social atmosphere, strength of the principal, and shared values. Differences found between the two participant groups regarding each management style category are discussed. Findings also indicate that the human aspect of teacher-principal relations is the decisive factor determining those teachers' sense of professional self-efficacy.*

*L'objectif de la présente étude est de comparer des perceptions d'enseignants quant à l'effet du comportement du directeur d'école sur leur auto-efficacité professionnelle. Les perceptions recueillies représentent les extrémités opposées du spectre. Pendant la première étape quantitative, on a identifié les deux groupes d'enseignants par une procédure statistique : un groupe de 16 enseignants jouissant d'une grande auto-efficacité et un groupe de 14 enseignants avec un faible degré d'auto-efficacité. Pendant l'étape principale, la deuxième et qualitative cette fois, nous avons interrogé les enseignants sur leurs réussites et leurs échecs professionnels par le biais d'entrevues approfondies à questions ouvertes. Les données ont été analysées conformément à la théorie reposant sur les faits. Les résultats ont révélé cinq catégories de style de gestion, applicables aux deux groupes : modes de communication, rétroaction du directeur, ambiance sociale, autorité du directeur et valeurs partagées. Nous discutons des écarts entre les deux groupes par rapport aux styles de gestion. Les conclusions ont également indiqué que l'aspect humain du rapport enseignant-directeur est le facteur déterminant dans le sentiment d'auto-efficacité professionnelle chez les enseignants.*

## Introduction

There is a great deal of empirical evidence indicating that teachers' sense of self-efficacy has a critical effect on the quality of teaching and on students' achievements (Plourde, 2002;

Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2007). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy encourage students to work in cooperation (Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak & Egan, 2002), are willing to deal with special education students in their class (Soodak & Podell, 1993), are committed to teaching as a profession (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), and feel more satisfaction in their work (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003). It was also found that principals can take actions in their work with teachers to enhance and promote teacher efficacy (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2003). Principals' behaviors can have an impact on teacher effectiveness and on teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' achievements (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2007). As the principal is considered the leader at the school level, it is important to identify the management practices and leadership styles that enhance and those that impede teachers' sense of self-efficacy. A great deal of attention has been focused on observing leaders while little research has been focused on followers: what leaders (principals, in the current study) need to know regarding their followers (teachers in the current study) and what is the psychological contract between them (Crainer & Dearlove, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to distinguish principals' practices that promote and those that hinder the development of teachers' sense of self-efficacy based on teachers' perspectives. To this end, the study compared teachers' perceptions regarding determinants of professional self-efficacy between two groups of participants: teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy (HSE) and teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy (LSE). In light of the principal's role as the school's leader, the link between the principal's functioning and teachers' sense of self-efficacy is considered and the study reviews two well-known theories regarding leadership styles. Following the Introduction, the research methodology is presented and then the results are reviewed and discussed.

### **Teachers' Self-efficacy and the Principal**

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Teachers' self-efficacy has been found to be positively related to teaching effectiveness, pupils' achievements, and the rate of burn-out among teachers (Friedman, 2003; Plourde, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2007).

Friedman and Kass (2002) referred to two domains when measuring teachers' self-efficacy: the classroom domain in which the teacher leads and the organizational domain in which the teacher is led. The organizational domain, which is the focus of this study, includes task-related factors, which refer to teachers' beliefs in their ability to influence decision-making processes, ascend the hierarchical ladder, and take part in shaping school policies. It also includes environmental factors, which refer to teachers' relationships with both colleagues and superiors and, especially, with the principal. The purpose of this study was to explore, in the organizational domain, how teachers from opposite groups (high and low self-efficacy) describe common practices of their principals, which promote or hinder their sense of professional self-efficacy.

A link between teacher self-efficacy and the behavior of the principal has been identified by many researchers (Al-Rawajfih, Fook Fong, & Syed Idros, 2010; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Demir, 2008; Martinez-Pons & Smyth, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Within the school, the principal was found to be responsible for maintaining a

supportive and productive atmosphere (Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992), by establishing strong lines of communication with the teachers (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Whitaker, 2003), listening attentively (Fullan, 2001), and formally and informally recognizing outstanding work performed both in and outside of the classroom (Hipp, 1996; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005).

Based on previous research, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy (1998) argued that the principal plays a central role in raising or lowering the self-efficacy of the staff. A good principal is expected to emphasize and praise achievements, boost teachers' confidence in the value of their work, allocate appropriate resources, allow freedom of instruction in the classroom, generate a learning atmosphere, and mobilize the staff to work towards a common goal. Several studies have shown that a high sense of teacher self-efficacy is associated with less pressure placed on teachers as well as management that is considerate of its teaching staff's needs and welfare (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Ross, 1994).

Other studies have shown that when a principal increasingly presses towards better academic achievements, the sense of self-efficacy among teachers actually rises (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2007) noted that there are contextual factors, such as the teaching resources and interpersonal support, which were found to be much more significant to the self-efficacy beliefs of novice teachers. Among experienced teachers, for whom an abundance of mastery experiences were available, contextual factors played a far less significant role in their beliefs.

Many researchers have pointed out that teacher retention decreased when teachers were confronted with inadequate support from administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kelley, 2004; Wood, 2001), while teachers who reported feeling more support from the school principal reported feeling more competent in their work (Edwards & Briers, 2000; Harlin, Edwards & Briers, 2001).

To summarize this issue, research has shown supportive leadership to be a major contributor to a high sense of self-efficacy (Reames & Spencer, 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990), as was a supportive school climate (Moore & Esselman, 1994; Walker & Slear, 2011).

Thomas Sergiovani (2005) stated that we live in an era of educational leadership, a fact that is clearly reflected by the addition of the term "leadership" to the titles of different programs of school principals' training. In light of this perception, the Israeli Ministry of Education established a special institute for training school principals as educational leaders. This widespread use of the term "educational leaders" stems from the logical assumption that a school principal, who functions as a leader, will lead the school to better achievements. Consequently, the next segment is dedicated to models of leadership, which serve as foundations to a better understanding of these research findings.

### **Theories of Leadership – What Should We Chose?**

The vast literature on leadership produced many alternative models, and sometimes even conflicting models (Bush & Glover, 2003). There were numerous attempts to categorize the models through various typologies in a variety of sources including Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, (2006) and Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, (2002), but I have chosen to discuss two:

1. Collins Leadership Stage 5 (Collins, 2006).

2. Full Range Leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004) that joins two typologies into one: Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership

These two theories would later be instrumental in the conceptualization of the two types of principals described by teachers of both groups in the study: teachers possessing low or high self-efficacy.

### **Leadership Stage 5**

Collins’ research (2001) on leading corporate institutions visualizes leadership as a succession of behaviors from management to leadership. Collins describes the characteristics of leading figures at the head of some very successful organizations. He concludes that leadership is based on five steps or stages and Stage 5 is the highest. This kind of leadership leads organizations to excellent achievements and is reliant upon two essential characteristics: modesty and determination. Stage 5 leaders do not seek publicity; quite the contrary. They do not rely on their personal magnetism or charisma, but on challenging criteria providing inspiration, which in turn, leads to motivation. They closely associate the success of their organization with their employees and the circumstances, and do not claim the credit for themselves. They assume full responsibility for their actions and are determined to succeed. They organize and coach a winning team and promote excellent managers, like themselves, to work under their supervision. They reinforce their employees, but mainly, they mutually create an ideal and challenging vision, which is at the core of their employees’ constant responsible behavior. It is characteristic of them to concentrate on their personnel as the most important factor behind the success of the organization as a whole. Therefore, they do not resort primarily to targets or strategies as their line of action.

### **Transactional and Transformational Leadership**

A very well-known leadership model, Transactional Leadership Theory, views effective leadership practice as engaging in an exchange of rewards or discipline that is dependent on the performance levels of followers (Bass, 2008). These closely related approaches to leadership are defined in terms of leaders’ influence over their colleagues and the nature of leader-follower relations. Bass and Riggio (2006) state that there are three modes of transactional leadership—each varying in effectiveness. The modes are labeled Contingent Reward, Management by Exception-Active, and Management-by-Exception—Passive. They will be explained later in the full range model of leadership.

Bass and Riggio (2006) define an additional form of leadership, one that seeks to help followers become, professionally and personally, the best they can ever be—a form of leadership that eventually transforms followers into leaders. They firmly believe that Transformational Leadership is the most effective form of leadership. Oplatka (2004) assumes that Transformational Leadership Theory has had considerable influence on the art of educational leadership. Kruger, Witziers, and Slegers (2007) “clearly showed that transformational leadership has a positive impact on teacher motivation, professional growth, and on a variety of organizational conditions, including school culture, contributing to educational change in schools” (p. 16). Ross and Gray (2006) added that transformational leadership contributes to teachers’ outcomes and commitment. Bass (2008) defines transformational leadership as being constructed of four distinct subcomponents titled, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation,

Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. They will be explained later in the full range of leadership. The work of Avolio and Bass (2004) related to transformational leadership has resulted in the development of an instrument to measure transactional, non-transactional, and transformational leadership.

Many studies that examined Transformational Leadership drew the conclusion that the charismatic element was less relevant for schools because the employees are trained professionals. On the other hand, Individualized Consideration is highly significant in schools, as it is based upon informal relations between schools' team members and on the flat hierarchical structure. Teachers in schools, where the principal functions as a transformational leader, find and express higher levels of satisfaction and therefore tend to stay in their jobs (Oplatka, 2004). In what follows, I present the typology of Bass & Avolio (2004). Their theory is considered important and influential even today and it will serve as a basis for analysis of my study's findings pertaining to the two opposite model groups of teachers.

### **The Full Range Model of Leadership**

The Full Range Model of Leadership (Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Bass, 2004) presents eight styles of leadership within three categories, namely, (1) the *non-transactional*; (2) the *transactional*, which includes *management-by-exceptions—passive*, *management-by-exceptions—active*, and *contingent reward*; and (3) the *transformational* management style, which includes *individualized consideration*, *intellectual stimulation*, *inspirational motivation*, and *idealized influence*.

Non-transactional leadership is management in *laissez-faire* style. It is attributed to the indecisive leader who is indifferent to her surroundings and her presence is unfelt.

The transactional leadership style comprises three possible styles. *Management-by-exceptions—passive style* is based on detecting mistakes and correcting them. This is a leader who only acts when there is a mishap. The underlying expectation is that certain standards must be followed and any mistake is considered a disruption. In the *management-by-exceptions—active style*, the leader focuses also on discovering mistakes, and the primary goal is to maintain the status quo. However, leaders who operate in this style do not wait until problems are brought to their attention; rather, they keep close tabs on the situation in order to detect problems as early as possible. In the *contingent reward style*, the leader clearly states the goals of the organization, delegates responsibilities, and clarifies what rewards will be given to those who achieve these goals. This type of leader takes an active part in the activities, provides constructive feedback and commends the employees.

Transformational management comprises four possible leadership styles. The first is *individual consideration* in which the leader expresses personal interest in and consideration for employees, is accessible and available to them, provides a supportive atmosphere, and allows for two-way communication. In the second type, *intellectual stimulation*, the leader encourages staff members to think originally, creatively, and innovatively, and promotes autonomy and alternative ideas. Mistakes are considered a constructive aspect of the learning process. In the *inspirational motivation style* the leader presents a clear and exciting vision for the future while raising the employees' confidence in their abilities as well as their expectations regarding their own performance. The *idealized influence style* is the highest level of transformational leadership. Leaders that operate in this manner play an exemplary role, modeling ethical behavior for employees to imitate. They display power and self-confidence, and exercise their

power only for the benefit of the organization.

Thus, it is clear that the principal is a very decisive figure in the teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. Indeed, there is ample research on the relation between the principal’s leadership style and the teacher’s sense of self-efficacy. However, there has been little research, if any, on the teachers’ own comprehensive view of the principals’ management style, and none that we know of which compares the perspective of teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy with that of teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy.

Therefore, the following research questions were formulated: 1) how do teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy and teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy perceive the behavior patterns of the principal in the context of their sense of professional self-efficacy? In other words, in gathering input from teachers with high self-efficacy levels and from teachers with low self-efficacy levels, which aspects of the principal’s conduct are perceived by each group as promoting or hindering their sense of self-efficacy? 2) When comparing the findings, will the perspectives of the two groups coincide or will the patterns considered by one group as promoting professional self-efficacy be considered by the other group as hindering professional self-efficacy?

### **Research Methodology**

This study used two methods: a quantitative methodology (questionnaire) was used to identify participants, and a qualitative methodology (open, in-depth interviews) was used to obtain information from the participants who had been identified in the quantitative stage.

#### **Quantitative Stage**

In the first stage of identifying the participants, questionnaires were distributed in schools as well as in the Department of Professional Development of a teachers college. Participants were 357 women teachers from the center and south of Israel, who participated voluntarily and completed the questionnaire designed to measure their level of professional efficacy. The questionnaire was developed using a population of 1100 Israeli teachers that included both genders, however, because 90% of teachers in Israel are female, this study focused on the self-efficacy experiences of 30 female teachers and their principals. The questionnaire's reliability was  $\alpha=.86$ ,  $r=.89$ . Further information on the questionnaire can be found in Friedman & Kass, (2002). Participants provided responses to six questionnaire items using a Likert-like scale ranging from 0 (low)-6 (high). The average score of the Low Self-esteem (LSE) group on perceived professional efficacy was 3.95; the average score of the High Self-esteem (HSE) group was 5.16.

For the 357 participants who completed the questionnaire, the standard score was calculated and two end groups were identified: the HSE group (standard score greater than +1) and the LSE group (standard score smaller than 0.75). Of these two groups, a total of 102 consented to be contacted for a subsequent interview. The same statistical procedure was again employed, having finally 20 participants from each group. Of the 20 participants who were identified as the LSE group (standard score smaller than 0.75), 14 consented to be interviewed. From the HSE group 16 consented to be interviewed.

In order to ensure that the distribution of scores obtained from the questionnaires was not biased by the participants’ willingness to be interviewed at a later stage, a Chi-square

Distribution Test was conducted on the self-efficacy scores of those who agreed to the interview and of those who did not. It was found that there was no significant difference between the two groups,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.006, p = 0.32$ . In order to avoid bias, the interviewees were not informed about the research question, nor were they aware of being categorized in the low or high efficacy group.

### **The Qualitative Stage: The Main Research**

The qualitative approach was found suitable for the purposes of this study since it allows for the participants' own perceptions and assumptions to be expressed (Miriam & Simpson, 1995; Taylor, 1998). This is the most open and direct way of investigating the factors affecting teachers' sense of self-efficacy as they perceive it, without being limited by the researcher's pre-existing assumptions. Data in the present study were collected through open-ended, in-depth interviews. Most research on self-efficacy thus far has used self-reported quantitative ratings of confidence levels (Wheatley, 2002). Although self-report questionnaires allow for participants' perceptions to be expressed, they limit their responses to pre-conceived categories. Using open-ended, in-depth interviews, on the other hand, allowed for new categories and new relationships to emerge freely.

After receiving each participant's consent to an interview and its recording, an open interview was conducted individually with each teacher. The interview was conducted in Hebrew and no translation was needed. The recruitment of participants and data collection was completed over a period of six months. Each interviewee received a brief explanation of the topic of the interview, which was defined as the 'professional development of teachers.' Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using aliases and eliminating any identifiable details from the published materials. In addition, the researcher promised not to use any of the data beyond the needs of the present study. The open-ended question was phrased, "Tell me frankly the story of your teaching successes and failures". Any interruptions served solely to request that the interviewee clarify or elaborate the subject being discussed. Given that most interviewees tended to spontaneously introduce the topic of their parents and nuclear families, participants who did not raise the topic spontaneously were asked about it specifically at the end of the interview.

### **Participants**

The participants were 30 female Israeli elementary school teachers with various degrees of teaching experience. All teachers were employed in public schools; however, the schools varied significantly in their characteristics including schools of different sizes (small/large), sectors (state/ state-religious), and student ages (elementary school/ junior high school). Though the source schools were characteristically varied, a common voice emerged amongst participants who shared similar experiences with principals regarding their senses of self-efficacy.

Characteristics of the HSE group: Age range was 26 to 52 years. Experience in teaching ranged from 2 to 33 years. All teachers taught mainstream classes, with the exception of two teachers who taught special education classes. In this group, 8 teachers had a B.Ed. degree and 8 had been granted a teaching certificate by a recognized teachers college.

Characteristics of the LSE group: Age range was 34 to 50 years. Experience in teaching ranged from 1 to 26 years. In this group, 6 teachers had a B.Ed. degree and 7 had been granted a teaching certificate by a recognized teachers college. All teachers taught mainstream classes with

the exception of three teachers who taught special education classes.

## **Research Tools**

In the quantitative stage two scales were used. 1) a questionnaire designed to measure teachers’ professional self-efficacy (Friedman & Kass, 2002). This scale includes two domains: the class domain and the organizational domain. The questionnaire consists of twenty-nine self-report statements based on a Likert-like scale of six levels (ranging from “always” to “never”). 2) A scale collecting data concerning the teacher’s background variables like age, sex, experience, formal education, school affiliation (public, public-religious or independent-religious), type of population (mainstream or special education), grades taught, and responsibilities in the school. In the qualitative stage data was gathered through in-depth interviews as described below.

## **Data Analysis**

As the goal was to develop a model that would reflect teachers’ voices the reality of their lives was reported as faithfully as possible and there was a concerted effort to preserve their exact phrasing; the approach known as Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was selected. According to this approach, the researcher must use every word the participants expressed and then generalize from the data categories of meaning. Within this approach, the researcher implemented the axial coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), which begins with finding a core category (presented in the Results section).

## **Limitations of the Study**

The interviewees were asked to write their names on the questionnaire that measured efficacy levels, so that the researcher could contact them afterwards. This could allow for a presumed bias. Another limitation is that this is a qualitative research with 30 participants so its generalization validity is limited. In addition, the participants were all female. A study with an all-male participant group or with a mixed gender participant group may produce different results.

## **Results**

Data analysis demonstrated that both groups of teachers, the HSE and the LSE teachers, referred to five identical subcategories of management, but expressed opposing views about these categories. The five subcategories are *modes of communication*, *feedback from the principal*, *social atmosphere*, *strength of the principal*, and *shared values*.

Below is a detailed description of each subcategory.

### **Modes of Communication**

HSE teachers described their communication with the school principal as direct and open, while LSE teachers described their communication with the principal in opposite terms. Several issues have a bearing on whether there is open communication between teacher and principal: conveyance of messages, ability to admit to failures in front of the principal, and ability to



criticize the principal. Two additional issues were expressed by the LSE only: cover-ups and one way communication.

**Conveyance of messages:** HSE teachers reported that the principal passed on messages directly, thereby, making sure that all teachers knew exactly what was expected of them in terms of educational approach and evaluation criteria. “I vividly remember the first meeting,” said Havazelet, a teacher with seniority of 5 years, “[the principal] said, ‘I don’t mind if a teacher scores 70 in pedagogy as long as he/she scores 100 as a human being.’” In contrast, LSE teachers felt that their principal conveyed ambiguous messages. This impression may be rooted in a number of factors, among them the fact that at times, the principal did not share his or her plans with the staff. The perception of some LSE teachers was that “in terms of communication, there was nothing. No communication the whole year.” (Carmel, a senior, experienced teacher; her face expresses anger when she speaks). Other times, conflicting messages were the problem; teachers felt confused and were left wondering what was expected of them:

‘You know what, cover less material, teach what you can,’ but at the end of the year she issues a report about the material that I have covered. She’ll [the principal] make a face and say, ‘what, that’s all you’ve covered? What have you been doing all year? Playing?’ (Hannah, has been a teacher for the last 20 years, her face expresses frustration when she talks).

**Opportunity to admit to failures in front of the principal:** HSE teachers felt that failures were allowed and admitting them would not affect their professional standing. Hadas, a fairly new teacher, who has been teaching for the last 2 years, gave an example of an incident in which she inappropriately blew up in front of a student whose parents subsequently wrote a letter of complaint to the regional supervisor:

The supervisor really likes me. She received this letter and didn’t even talk to me about it. She spoke to the principal and the principal told me that there was a letter of complaint. So we talked. I immediately described what had happened; in fact, I approached the principal that very same day, as soon as it was brought to my attention; I didn’t let it slide. I told her about the incident and then went to look for the student in the office.

In contrast, LSE teachers were apprehensive about admitting failures. Even when a teacher wanted to reveal her failure to the principal in hopes of receiving help and learning how to avoid repeating the same mistake, the silencing policy of the school prevented it. Gavriela immigrated from Argentina to Israel related the following:

At the beginning of the year, there was this student with whom I was having trouble, so I asked around. My colleague and friend warned me, ‘Don’t advertise your problems. You’d better sweep everything under the rug. If you admit you’re not managing so well and that you have difficulties, you’ll be in trouble’.

**Opportunity to criticize the principal:** The fear of acknowledging failures was related to the ability to criticize the principal. HSE teachers felt that expressing criticism and confrontation were within the accepted boundaries:

. . . so I was angry, very angry, but the main thing was that we debated the issue and she [the

principal] was fine with it, and then she said, ‘I leave it to your discretion’. But she is always open to listening and receiving opposing views. When she is wrong, she knows it, and she is not afraid to admit it (Hadas).

LSE teachers, in contrast, were afraid to criticize the principal. Carmel, her expression is simultaneously one of anger and fear remarked, “it’s always quiet, a subdued atmosphere. Reluctance to speak out in fear that she [the principal] will fire you as well. In short, it’s a depressing atmosphere”.

**Cover-ups:** In addition to the communication aspects described by both groups, LSE teachers also mentioned cover-ups as an issue that contributes to the silencing policy. They claimed that the principal concealed problems and forced teachers to play along:

The parents are brought in when the class is decorated, but they are not taken to the foul-smelling places where the pupils study. Nor do they realize that due to the lack of a gym, sports classes take place outside, in the scorching heat of summer. No, they are not shown that. On the surface everything is clean, but underneath, the whole place stinks. That’s what’s happening (Iris, a veteran science teacher, who cries when she talks about it).

**One-way communication:** This is another communication characteristic that generates a silencing policy. LSE teachers mentioned the absence of two-way communicative relationship and sometimes a total lack of communication that characterizes the teacher-principal relationship. Anat described the principal at her school by saying, "She sometimes has a tendency to speak (rather than listen)", while Gavriela said, "It's not a two-way street, there's no sharing. Only you [the principal] get information from us".

### **Feedback from the Principal**

The second subcategory that emerged from both participant groups was feedback from the principal. HSE teachers remarked that the principal gave positive feedback regularly. “Our principal highly values those who work. She is aware of those who work and contribute full-heartedly. That’s the ‘icing on the cake” (Ella has been a teacher for the last 5 years; a mother of two young daughters).

LSE teachers, however, felt that lack of feedback from the principal affected their confidence in their abilities. “The principal was never there. If my class was quiet and there were no outstanding problems, nobody knew what I was doing with the class” (Amit is a teacher in a Kibbutz and a mother of 3. She looks desperate during our conversation). And Hanna summed up principal feedback with, “I don’t need a medal. A good word is a good enough reward for me. I don’t need more. I just want it to be said at the right time, when the right people are nearby.”

A different type of positive feedback is expressed functionally rather than vocally by both granting teachers autonomy in the classroom and including them in the decision making process at the organizational level. HSE teachers felt that by granting them freedom in planning and performance, the principal acknowledged their professionalism and responsibility:

She counts on me. She constantly gives us the feeling that we can do things on our own and she’s not a nuisance. Due to her faith in me, I found the courage to do things differently, without asking her first, (Meirav is smiling at me. She’s been a teacher for the last 7 years and her school is considered an

excellent school).

LSE teachers felt that their professionalism was doubted and belittled and that they were excluded from the schools' decision making processes. They said that orders were dictated from above and work-related resources were not supplied. Iris described the disrespect she felt at work as follows:

So I called her [the principal] just before the end of the holidays and told her I need the schedule, I need to know what I'm doing this year. I have to prepare, even though I know I am teaching fourth, fifth and sixth grades. She gave me the schedule and said, 'By the way, you're not teaching small classes; you're teaching full-capacity classes. And by the way [mockingly], I moved you from sixth grade to second grade.' All of it 'by the way'. So I said to her [furiously], and by the way, do sixth graders and second graders study the same materials?

When offered a special position in the school, HSE teachers interpreted it as a reward and as a sign of the principal's appreciation:

First of all, personally, it builds you up. It gives you the confidence that you are in the right direction, on the right track, that you are really doing everything right. And the fact that she counts on me, it's great, it's really flattering. (Refaela, a mother of 5, has been a teacher for 17 years. She lives in a town in the south of Israel and seems happy when she talks).

In contrast, LSE teachers spoke sorrowfully and painfully about positions they had never been given or about holding positions that had no substance or authority.

### **Social Atmosphere**

The third subcategory which emerged was the social atmosphere at the school and the sense of belonging to the organization. HSE teachers described the social atmosphere in the school as family-like, warm, supportive, and united, "Very warm atmosphere, supportive, homey. We organize many after-school get-togethers, whether going to a restaurant or seeing a play. I think it really unites the team and contributes to the pleasant atmosphere" (Havazelet has been a teacher for 8 years, a mother of 3 children).

In contrast, LSE teachers had felt isolated. "I think that in general, due to weak management, nobody in the school feels any sense of togetherness, any joint effort. The element of cohesiveness was truly missing" (Amit). Another element that affects teachers' sense of unity is the question of support: the degree to which the principal supports the teachers. HSE teachers believed that the principal was prepared to back them up whenever needed. Havazelet explained, "She offers complete support, whenever the teachers need it. We work with a student body that is problematic. We have difficult pupils, difficult parents, but we always have support. The principal will always be on our side."

LSE teachers blamed the lack of backing on the principal's weakness:

. . . in elementary school there is always a struggle to stay above water . . . you do what you can and then, when something happens, there is no backing . . . I believe that even if I complained to the principal, he wouldn't have the strength to help me, (Zleta is a mother of 10. She is intelligent and vents her frustration with the principal).

Another element that affects unity or alienation is the principal’s ability to see the teacher as a person, beyond the role of an educator. LSE teachers felt that the principal did not see them as individuals, but only as employees. In contrast, HSE teachers felt that the principal did see them as individuals and was aware of their uniqueness:

There were several situations in which she told me, ‘I know your worth, I know you, I know you would use such and such a reply, but not such and such a reply.’ So I saw that she knew me, she knew who was working for her (Ela).

### **Strength of the Principal**

HSE teachers believed that the principal always used his or her power for the good of the school, although this was done in several ways. Refaela said the power was used to choose a high-quality team:

Our principal is very capable. She succeeded in putting together a school with an excellent team. She chooses her team very carefully. As I have heard and also seen, when she feels she has made a mistake she doesn’t think twice. She replaces the unfit team member immediately.

Some teachers commented that the principal’s power was channeled into improving performance: “The whole school works very hard. Our principal is extremely assertive, demanding, very particular, very organized” (Michal has been a teacher in a big school for the last 6 years. She is a mother of 2 daughters).

LSE teachers perceived the principal as either weak or as one who employed power to hurt the teachers. A principal’s weakness can affect the team’s morale. “I think that in general, because the principal wasn’t strong enough, there was no comradeship, no joint effort. I really felt the absence of it all” (Amit).

LSE teachers felt that when a principal did use power, it was used to hurt the teachers. “Yes, the principal has the power to destroy you and trample you until . . .” (and at that point Iris mimics a trampling motion with her foot, as if squashing a bug).

### **Shared Values**

HSE teachers described the experience of being in tune with a principal who “allowed them to have more freedom of action”. Havazelet said the following:

I understand her way of thinking and she understands mine. Sometimes we argue over small details which she really doesn't like. I know she has rules. There are rules that if you follow them then, the rest is okay with her.

LSE teachers, in contrast, claimed that the gap in values generated problems because the principal did not allow pluralism:

I reached the conclusion that if I didn’t work according to her preferences and values, I didn’t belong in that school. The attitude towards me was very unpleasant. I didn’t feel good about the whole thing and I almost quit teaching, (Tali is a special education teacher).

Table 1

*A Summary of the Differences between the Two Participant Groups*

Subcategory	High Self-efficacy	Low Self-efficacy
Modes of Communication	Direct and open communication	Blocked communication
Feedback from the Principal	Regular positive feedback	No feedback
Social Atmosphere	Support and unity	Isolation and loneliness
Strength of the principal	The principal is strong and uses her/his power for the good of the school	The principle is either weak or uses her/his strength to hurt the teachers
Shared Values	Shared values, acting for the benefit of the school	A gap in values, preventing the teacher from acting

In summary, results reveal categories of management behaviors, based on the principal's choice (fulfilling or rejecting the described behavior), render two contrasting principal profiles: one which encourages and the other which discourages teachers' sense of self-efficacy. For a summary of the findings, see Table 1.

**Discussion**

As mentioned in the review of the literature, teachers' self-efficacy is crucial to the quality of teaching. The findings of the present study demonstrate how the principal contributes to the level of his teachers' self-efficacy, which of his practices may enhance this sense, and which practices would stand in the way.

To better conceptualize and understand these findings I will discuss them in the light of the conventional approach today, one that visualizes school principals as leaders. There are various models and typologies of leadership, but I have chosen a fairly recent one, Collins', and an additional well-known, classic typology, one that is still considered essential in the domain of leadership. Both approaches focus on leader-follower relations and go hand in hand with the findings of this study.

In my current research I sought to study closely the two groups of teachers and based my analysis upon two leadership models. The findings of the study are discussed in relation to both, the leadership models presented herein, and the various roles of leader corresponding to the leadership patterns described by the participants.

*Collins Typology*

In this typology, Stage 5 Leadership is the highest level of leadership, one that is responsible for significant achievements relying on two basic attributes: determination and modesty. Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy did not use these concepts directly; however, they referred to them in the following manner. The principal was viewed as a person who was willing to show fierce determination for the benefit of the school. A determined principal, for instance, would employ only the best teachers who possessed general excellence. On the other hand, he or she does not have an inflated ego and is attentive to, and considerate of his teachers, granting them the liberty to act according to their principles, even when these are not exactly his own. Leaders

like these encourage and give a boost to their employees. Teachers in the high sense self-efficacy group outlined the autonomy granted by their principals, and how it made them act more effectively. Contrarily, teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy described a weak principal as one who tries to master the teachers using the strategy of divide and rule.

Stage 5 leaders do not start their activities by targets and strategies, but with people. Indeed, teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy talked about the importance of the attitude the principal assumed towards them as human beings and how this fact was important in boosting their self-efficacy, while teachers in the other group (LSE) regarded it as unimportant.

#### *The Bass & Avolio Model*

The Full Range Model of Leadership (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 2004) presents eight styles of leadership, four of which appeared in the teachers' descriptions. Analyzing the two profiles of school principals described by the participants reveals that the profile described by LSE teachers corresponds to the non-transactional leadership of the *laissez-faire* management style and to the transactional leadership of management-by-exceptions—passive style. Conversely, HSE teachers described a principal profile that combines the transformational style of leadership with some elements of transactional leadership, such as contingent reward.

The principals described by teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy combine two styles of the leadership model: the non-transactional (*laissez faire*) style and the transactional style of management-by-exception—passive style. According to the model, leadership in the style of *laissez faire* is expressed by a leader who is indecisive, uninvolved, and whose presence is unfelt. In the present study, the teachers with low self-efficacy indeed described similar types of behavior such as the absence of straightforward communication, lack of positive feedback, chronic shortage of teaching resources, and lack of support for teachers facing problems. This absent state is demonstrated also by the principals' inability to regard the teachers, on a personal level as unique individuals, which is necessary for developing the social cohesiveness of the staff. The weakness of the principal was manifested in the LSE teachers' perception of the principal as inaccessible or unavailable for their needs. All of these behaviors indicate a failure on the part of the principal to function effectively as well as a lack of involvement in school life.

The second style described by the LSE teachers is the management—by-exception—passive style. In this style, the leader expects the subordinates to behave according to a set of standards and each mistake is considered a disruption. Problems are dealt with only after they surface. LSE teachers in the current study described many situations that match the characteristics of this style, such as their reluctance to own up to their own mistakes or criticize the principal out of fear of the principal's scathing response, being forced to cover up mistakes, and conceal the true state of affairs at the school due to the principal's inability to cope with difficulties. They also described having to adhere to the principals' values and not being able to express any other opinion. The principals that correspond to this profile are perceived as weak individuals who use the power of their position against teachers who disagree with them.

In contrast, the participants with high self-efficacy described the opposite kind of principals. The leadership styles depicted were the contingent reward style and the transformational style. In the contingent reward style, the most effective style of transactional leadership, there is clear communication. The subordinates are informed of the organizational goals, share areas of responsibility, and know how they will be rewarded for achieving the goals. This type of leader takes an active part in the activities and provides constructive feedback. The teachers in the study described several attributes of this style; for example, clear messages conveyed by the

principal to the teachers, as well as sharing of information, and promotions were perceived as rewards for achieving goals.

The main style described by the HSE group corresponds to transformational leadership, which includes four types. According to the model, a leader of the *individual consideration* type personal relationships and encouraged a two-way communication, while emphasizing the human dimension of the staff. In the present study, this leadership style was demonstrated by principals who knew each teacher on a personal level (above and beyond the level required for the job) formed personal relationships with the teachers, and created a warm and pleasant atmosphere among the staff. In these schools there was a two-way and open channel of communication.

The second type of leadership described by HSE participants was *intellectual stimulation*, in which the leader encouraged those around her to think originally, creatively, and innovatively. This leader viewed mistakes as a constructive aspect of the learning process and promoted the subordinates' autonomy. She also allowed the employees to voice criticism and opinions. In the present study, this style was demonstrated in HSE teachers' reports about principals who allowed the staff to criticize their policies and actions enabling them to work autonomously and accepting their independently-made decisions. This type of leader allowed the teachers to own up to their failures without fear of retribution, thereby, transforming the mistake into a tool for learning.

The third type of leadership that emerged from the HSE participants' descriptions was the *inspirational motivation* type. According to this style, the leader has a clear vision for the future, believes in the staff's ability, and raises the bar for the organization as a whole. In the present study, this style was demonstrated by principals who used their power for the good of the school, chose an outstanding teaching staff, and demanded high standards. The principal's vision for a quality school was not only clearly expressed to the staff, but also implemented, as demonstrated by the dismissal of unfit teachers.

The fourth transformational type of leadership is *idealized influence* in which the leader sets her or himself as an exemplary role model. This leader displays power, but uses it only for the benefit of the organization. In the present study, such principals served as role models for the teachers in several respects. The teachers saw the principal climb the managerial ladder and attain this position and their feeling of being able to follow suit and attain such a position was enhanced. The teachers felt that the values they shared with the principal would lead to significant educational activity. Finally, when principals with this leadership style displayed confidence and strength, it was for the benefit of the educational enterprise, and in doing so, they induced the teachers to do likewise, empowering the teachers through their strength.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the principals described by teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy is the type of leader who integrates transformational leadership with some elements of transactional leadership; whereas, the principal described by teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy is the type who *sits and does nothing* or the type who practices passive transactional leadership. Each group of teachers described principals located on opposite ends of the leadership continuum. Neither of the extremes on the professional continuum corresponds to the formal job definition of the principal; rather, they are attributable to the personal and informal aspects that the individual principal brings to the job. It is this interpersonal dimension of the principals' role that the teachers of both groups perceived as most crucial for their sense of self-efficacy. The human dimension of teacher-principal relationships is the decisive factor determining those teachers' sense of professional self-efficacy. When one refers

to the question, “What is the psychological contract between them?” (Crainer & Dearlove, 2008), the answer seems to be from teachers in both groups is, our sense of self-efficacy would be higher if the principal would treat us as human beings. This is the most important factor determining our sense of self-efficacy, and not other factors, such as vision, management proficiency, pedagogy and teaching skills, as discussed in the professional literature (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999). In conclusion, this study looks at two polarized groups of teachers measuring their sense of self-efficacy. The findings might indicate which practices principals should adopt in order to reinforce the sense of self-efficacy and which practices to stay away from, so as not to hinder that sense. These findings might suggest practices that should serve as practical guidelines for school principals.

### **Acknowledgments**

The author wishes to thank Professor Isaac Friedman for his wise and helpful comments and Chen Yardenay for her help in preparing this manuscript.

### **References**

- Al-Rawajfih, K. Fook Fong, S. Syed Idros, SH. N. (2010). Effects of principals' support on teachers' self-efficacy in integrating e-learning in the Jordanian Discovery Schools. *Modern Applied Science* 4(9), 147-151.
- Avolio, B. (1999). Full range leadership as a means of raising the effectiveness level of the individual, the group and the organization. In A. Gonen and A. Zakai (Eds.), *Manhigut uPituach Manhigut – miHalakha leMa'aseh* (Leadership and Leadership Development – Theory and Practice) (pp.65-75). Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishers, IDF, Educational Corps, School of Leadership Development.
- Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (2004). Multifactor leadership questionnaire: Manual and sampler set (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Menlo Park, CA: Mindgarden, Inc.
- Bandura, A (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Barnett, K., & McCormick, J. (2004). Leadership and individual principal-teacher relationships in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40, 406-434.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Blasé J., & Kirby, P. C. (2000). *Bringing out the best in teachers: What effective principals do* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Burns, J. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bush, T. & Glover, D. (2003). *School leadership: Concepts and evidence*. Nottingham, England: National College for School Leadership
- Caprara, G.V., Barbaranelli, C., Steca, P., & Malone, P.S. (2006). Teachers' self efficacy beliefs as determinants of job satisfaction and students' academic achievement: A study at the school level. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(6), 473-490.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great and the social sectors: A monograph to accompany good and great*. Boulder, CO: William Collins.
- Crainer, S., & Dearlove, D. (2008). *The Future of Leadership*. Nottingham: NCSL.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 7-13.
- Dee, J. R., Henkin, A. B., & Duemer, L. (2003). Structural antecedents and psychological correlates of teacher empowerment. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41, 257-277.



- Demir, K. (2008) Transformational leadership and collective efficacy: The moderating roles of collaborative culture and teachers' self-efficacy. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 33, 93-112.
- Edwards, M. C., & Briers, G. E. (2000). *Cooperating teachers' perceptions of important elements of the student teaching experience: A focus group approach with quantitative follow-up*. Paper presented at the National Agricultural Education Research Conference, San Diego, CA.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 25-29.
- Friedman, I. (2003). Self-efficacy and burnout in teaching: The importance of interpersonal-relations efficacy. *Social Psychology of Education*, 6, 191-215.
- Friedman, I.A. & Kass, E. (2002). Teacher self efficacy: A classroom-organization conceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 675-686.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aladdin.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Haney, J. J., Lumpe, A. T., Czerniak, C. M. & Egan, V. (2002). From beliefs to actions: The beliefs and actions of teachers implementing change. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 13(3), 171-187.
- Harlin, J. F., Edwards, M. C., & Briers, G. E. (2001). A comparison of student teachers' perceptions of important elements of the student teaching experience before and after completing an 11-week field experience. Paper presented at the National Agricultural Education Research Conference, New Orleans, LA.
- Hebert, E., & Worthy, T. (2001). Does the first year of teaching have to be a bad one? A case study of success. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 879-911.
- Hipp, K. A. (1996, April). *Teacher efficacy: Influence of principal leadership behavior*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Educational Research Association, New York.
- Hoy, W.K., Tarter, C.J., & Witkoskie, L. (1992). Faculty trust in colleagues: linking the principal with school effectiveness, *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 26, 38-45.
- Hoy, W. K., & Woolfolk, A. E. (1993). Teachers' sense of efficacy and the organizational health of schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 93, 356-372.
- Johnson, S.M., & Birkeland, S.E. (2003). The schools that teachers choose. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 20-24.
- Kelley, L.M. (2004). Why induction matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55, 438-448.
- Kruger, M. L., Witziers, B., & Slegers, P. (2007). The impact of school leadership on school level factors: Validation of a causal model. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 18, 1-20.
- Leithwood, Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R., (1999). *Changing Leadership for Changing Times*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Leithwood, J.K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006) *Successful School Leadership: What It Is and How It Influences Pupil Learning*. University of Nottingham. Research Report 880.
- Martinez-Pons, M., & Smyth, C. (2006). *School principals' influence on school collective efficacy, teacher self-efficacy and teacher commitment*. Poster presented at the 18th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science, New York.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Miriam, S., & Simpson, E. (1995). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults* (2nd ed.). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company.
- Moore, W. P., & Esselman, M.E. (1994). *Exploring the context of teacher efficacy: The role of achievement and climate*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational

- Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Oplatka, I. (2004). The principal's career stage: An absent element in leadership perspectives. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice* 7(1), 43-55. doi: 10.1080/1360312032000154540
- Plourde, L. A. (2002). The influence of student teaching on preservice elementary teachers' science self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 29(4), 245-253.
- Reames, E. H., & Spencer, W. A. (1998). *Teacher efficacy and commitment: Relationships to middle school culture*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Ross, J. A. (1994). The impact of an in-service to promote cooperative learning on the stability of teacher efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 10(4), 381-394.
- Ross, J.A. & Gray, P. (2006) Transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values: The mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 17(2), 179-199.
- Sergiovanni, T.J., (2005) 'The Virtues of Leadership'. *The Educational Forum* 69(2): 112-123.
- Soodak, L. C., & Podell, D. M. (1993). Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. *Journal of Special Education*, 27, 66–81.
- Taylor, J. R. (1998). *Linguistic categorization: Prototypes in linguistic theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273-285). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk-Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(2), 202-248.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783–805.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(6), 944-956.
- Walker, J., & Slear, S. (2011). The impact of principal leadership on efficacy of new and experienced middle school teachers. *NASSP Bulletin, Reston* 95(1), 46-65.
- Wheatley, K. F. (2002). The potential benefits of teacher efficacy doubts for educational reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18, 5-22.
- Whitaker, T. (2003). *What great principals do differently: Fifteen things that matter most*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Wood, A. L. (2001). What does research say about teacher induction and IHE/LEA collaborative programs? *Issues in Teacher Education*, 10(2), 69-81.
- Woolfolk, A.E., & Hoy, W. K. (1990). Prospective teachers' sense of efficacy and beliefs about control. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82, 81-91.

---

*Dr. Efrat Kass* is a senior lecturer and a researcher in Achva Academic College and in Lewinsky College in Israel. She is also a member of the research committee of Mofet Institution. Her main topics are Self-efficacy in Education, Teacher Education, psychology of teaching and professional development. She published many articles and three books. Her last book (2013) is "Don't Be Afraid of Fear-Development of Teachers' Personal and Professional Sense of Self-efficacy"