**Training School Principals in Israel: From Pre-Administration, to Guidance, Training, and Initial Experience in the Field**

**Dr. Shmuel Shenhav**

**Introduction**

There is a gap between the way in which school principals are trained, and the way they conduct themselves in practice. This gap necessitates a multi-dimensional examination. On the one hand we have the administrative candidate, the processes he experiences, and the information he receives during his training and preparation for his future role as principal. On the other hand we have the framework of knowledge, modes of action, and perception of administration as dictated and directed by those in charge of the state’s education system. To these two aspects we could add the professional-administrative one, which seeks to determine the optimal training process for preparing the school principal for his upcoming role, where this aspect is devoid of personal and political interests. I wish to focus on the third of the aforementioned aspects, and examine it through a triple prism which includes the current program, the desired program, and the proposed one.

This chapter focusses on the gap between the training programs and the principal’s functioning, especially during the initial stages of his administration. First, I will present the training program for principals in Israel, as implemented in school management training programs supervised by the “Avney Rosha” institute in Israel. After a discussion and critique, I will propose an optimal training program which includes guidance during the principal’s initial stages of school administration.

**Keywords**: Training school principals, practical experience, administrator guidance, pedagogical leadership, leading change

**Training School Principals (in Israel)**

Over the past few years, programs which train school principals, particularly in Israel, focused on several points. Pedagogical leadership,[[1]](#footnote-1) meaning that the principal serves as head of the school’s pedagogical hierarchy, is concerned not only with leading the students to achievements and quality learning (Male & Palaiologou, 2012), but also – and primarily – to lay the groundwork which will enable teachers to improve their methods of instruction and conduce learning processes (Forssten-Seiser, 2020).

“The profound meaning of the principal's task lies in the pedagogic aspect of his role.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Bozo-Schwartz and Mendel-Levi describe pedagogical leadership as the school principal’s responsibility for spearheading teaching and learning processes and improving them:

Processes for improving instruction by directing the teachers’ professional training is complex, and necessitates expertise. The leadership practice with the greatest impact on improving students’ achievements is the creation of formal and informal opportunities for learning processes and teachers’ professional development, with the participation of the principal as both participant and leader. If so, the principal’s role as pedagogical leader is to strengthen and deepen the skills and knowledge of the school staff, and to create a school culture of information sharing and its use.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The second focal point is the ability of practical experience of leading change as a vital and central skill required of the school principal (Shahaf et al., 2011). The training processes of school principals in Israel includes the practical experience of those positioned for administration, and focusses on experience in promoting change in the school. The topic of change, beyond being part of management, includes spearheading pedagogical processes which, within the framework of the training program, train candidates for their future positions as school administrators.

1. See details and expansion on the term “Pedagogical leadership”: *Avney Rosha* (January, 2016), *Administrating Practices of Active Principals during the Initial Stages of Administration, and their Attitudes towards “Avney Rosha” Activities*, Rama, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Evans (1991), p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bozo-Schwartz & Mendel-Levi (2016), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)