**An innovative model for developing middle leadership in Arab schools in the Haifa district**

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The development of middle leadership in Arab schools in Israel is a fundamental issue of professional development in the ‘Etgarim’ [challenges] program. Central issues include improving the quality of teachers and principals and empowering school principals. The goal is to establish frameworks for school officials; the target population is middle leadership in schools; the milestones are identification, training and empowerment; and the work method is to use simulation workshops as a platform for professional development.

Within the framework of the Etgarim program for the professional development of teachers, an innovative model for cultivating middle leadership was developed. According to this model, school coordinators receive special training in order to develop educational and pedagogic leadership with a high level of self-awareness that is motivated by values and ethical and professional codes, in addition to the tools and skills required for instilling far-reaching changes in the educational systems in which they operate.

According to this model of middle leadership development, the cultivation of educational middle leadership to develop, improve and polish excellence will facilitate the enhancement of student potential. In addition, it will enable the realization and refinement of an educational system which constantly strives for professional, ethical and civic excellence, as well as increasing the system’s capacity to implement changes and initiatives that will allow the best responses to the variety of challenges that face the educational systems at various levels: school, community and regional.

Twenty-four schools in the Arab sector of the Haifa District of Israel are operating according to this model; twelve schools have already been in the program for two years and twelve schools are new. Next year twelve more schools will join. So far, the findings from the program's evaluation have shown very positive signs, exhibited in the delegation of principals’ authority to the middle leadership, the acceptance of responsibility by middle leadership, and the improvement of the management environment in the schools.

**Key words**: Middle leadership, Professional development, Responsibility, Management environment.