From hierarchical leadership to distributed leadership using whole school inquiry

in partnership with higher education institutions: Comparing the Arab education in Israel

with the education system in England

Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of two high schools, one in the Arab Education system in Israel and the other in the UK Education system. The comparative analysis focuses on two principals' perspectives of how they led their schools, in partnership with the authors from Higher Education Institutions, by implementing a distinctive mark of distributed leadership using whole school inquiry, which led inter-cultural change. The change facilitated knowledge exchange, mobilisation, and dissemination activities that empowered staff and young people to become societal innovators for equity and renewal which improved student outcomes between - 17% and 27% The research reveals that distributed leadership, sharing aims, themes and methods through whole school inquiry developed new inter-cultural understandings. It built respect, trust, and local research priorities and practices in communities of diverse race, ethnicity, cultural, religious, for both citizens and refugees. Members of diverse communities were able to hold each other to account, and became more autonomous in their plans for the future in coping with gaps in status in both studied contexts.

Keywords: Middle East, European, developing intercultural awareness, Innovation, Equity, Renewal, Trust

Introduction

There is an inequity in education governance systems, which is challenging to address because principals are heavily involved in continuous and rapid reforms to education policy. Constant changes are imposed on them top-down, with little opportunity to challenge or contribute to the development of the reforms with their deep understanding of their underpinning conceptual framework. The hierarchical implementation of school reforms silences the voices of the professional educational leaders, and they copy this pattern of hierarchical leadership by simply telling their professional teachers, and the communities they serve what to do. Our interest in this research is to describe and understand the extent to which hierarchical leadership can be transformed to distributed leadership so that leaders can share the focus on improving school effectiveness and student outcomes. The objectives of the study are to document and compare the perspectives of a principal of an Arab high school in Israel (AHSI) and a principal of a high school in England (EHS) regarding the following issues (1) their partnership with the academy to introduce a mark of distributed leadership, using whole school inquiry to optimise learning how to learn and improve student outcomes; (2) the impact of state-of-the-art evidence-informed inter-cultural change strategies that promote trust and student attainment, achievement, and autonomy; changes that emerged from the implementation of a mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry using the same action research method of inquiry.

The two cases were studied under unequal regional conditions and expectations, both in terms of centralized vs. decentralised education systems and in different political and cultural contexts. In both systems, there is obvious marginalisation and segregation. In such a situation

education needs to respect and provide a place for diversity, while striving to be fair. Israeli society has a number of divisions, one of which is the national and ethnic division between Jews and Arabs. The indigenous Arab minority numbers 1.7 million, or 20.2% of Israel's population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017) and includes persons with refugee status. This population lives in communities segregated from Jewish communities, apart from a few towns with mixed ethnic inhabitants. The majority of the population lives in rural areas and suffers from economic deprivation. All the groups that compose the Arab minority (82.1% Muslims, 9.4% Christians and 8.4% Druze) share many social norms and cultural values (e.g., the centrality of the extended family, a traditional patriarchal lifestyle) with neighbouring Arab countries and use the same Arabic language. Arab and Jewish educational systems are segregated, and unequal in means and outputs, marginalising the Arab education system (Author & Other, 2016). Comparatively, the UK education policy and its text, in a European context, is inclusionary and welcomes all faiths and none (Author, 2018). However, in reality, in the UK, a steady creep of the commodification of education has resulted in wealthier groups having sufficient economic capital to buy houses in the catchment areas with high performing schools (Ball, 2004). The lack of equitable access to high performing schools based on socio-economic status has led to segregation and marginalisation based on socio-economic status (Ball, 2004).

To deliver on the objectives we ask two questions:

1. What does a comparative analysis of the perspectives of a principal in an Arab Israeli High School (AIHS) and a principal in an English High School (EHS) reveal about developing partnerships with the academy to distribute leadership through whole school inquiry?

2. What does the comparative analysis of the two principals' perspectives reveal about the impact of moving from hierarchical leadership to distributed leadership through whole school inquiry to optimise students' learning, and learning outcomes?

Literature Review

Shifting from hierarchical leadership to distributed leadership

Top-down hierarchical leadership ignores community members' voices, and the diversity of school communities and prevents young people developing tools for methods of inquiry that can encourage political liberalism in the school education system (Bolden, 2011; Gronn, 2009). Top-down hierarchical processes and practices do not induct young people into methods of inquiry, critical thinking and educated debate, thus hindering inclusion processes. Being told what to do does not empower leaders to empower teachers to empower young people to problem solve as independent autonomous young people (Wagner, 2010). Using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) approach to evaluation as suggested by Stufflebeam (1983), if decisions are based solely on numeric data, then decisions are not informed by engaging in dialogue with diverse community members. Such school evaluations, based on numbers, will not include the consideration of different worldviews of community members, including those who may be members of marginalised groups with different languages or dialects, or consider the intersectionality of discrimination. Hierarchical leadership that is top-down and does not consider conflicting conceptualisations of worldviews of diversified groups, cannot engage with moral methods of inquiry into the ethical rules, and perpetuates the predisposed evaluation of the marginalised and finds them wanting (Pring, 2007), which reduces the chance to develop whole

school conceptualisations of what is good, and how to live a good life (Lewin, 1946). Under these conditions, it is of paramount import to find ways and means to engage in deep dialogue so that diverse groups can represent their different interests. Dewey (1916) identifies that full and free participation in decision making enables people to make decisions characterised by equity and justice that affect both their personal and social life spheres . As envisioned by Rawls (2005) in his explanation of political liberalism, participation enables a distributed power share for all free and equal citizens where no culture or religion is favoured by people of a free state. He argues that to achieve a working definition of political liberalism, all citizens will need to have a comprehensive conception of a socially just society, and can identify and address the intersectionality of discrimination (Author, 2015). The important distinguishing element of Rawls' political pluralism is that it is conceptualised by all citizens before they know which position they will take in the system once it is created, thus assuring equity for all, because no one wishes to be disadvantaged.

To be able to realise the theories of participation of Dewey and Rawls in practice, methods of inquiry are required to identify the intersectionality of discrimination, to enable members of diverse communities to develop cultural awareness. This will enable them to arrive at provisional consensus on key principles together through flatter pedagogical relationships. Flatter pedagogical relationships release talent such that principals can trust and depend upon autonomous professional educators to empower their students and optimise learning, employing their shared ability to organise public schools (Donaldson, Marnik, Mackenzie, & Ackerman, 2009; Devos, Tuyents and Hulpa, 2014). Timperley (2005) argued that in contrast, the heroic hierarchical leadership model

is limited in effectiveness because it does not promote relationships to release talent, and therefore is not sustainable.

The impact of distributed leadership as a process of empowerment

As Socrates argued, distributed leadership realised through participatory processes and practices requires people to know themselves, (Brown, 2009). Knowing the self can lead to a sense of security in selfhood, or identity, enabling the self to deeply listen to the narratives of others. Being self-aware and having self-control and being able to regulate the self, based on self-evaluation, are important characteristics for a "quiet ego", able to establish and attain realistic goals (Kesebir, 2014). Kesebir indicated that those who were not self-focused and had realistic expectations understood the self on a deep level in relation to the other, and were more likely to share control with others through distributed leadership. Those keen to distribute leadership and empower others sought to reach a mutual understanding with others to develop intercultural awareness, and cultural alignment (Harris, 2012; Author, 2013). Angelle (2010) suggested that positive relationships are not only important to the practice of distributed leadership, but can also influence organizational culture, including self-efficacy, increased trust, enhanced job satisfaction, and teacher intent to stay. Organizational culture could be improved if relationships were respected within the practice of distributed leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Klar, Huggins & Hammonds, 2016; Misfud, 2017; Woods et al., 2004). Mascall, Leithwood, Strauss, and Sacks (2008) indicated that for distributed leadership to be effective, there must be relational trust.

Nevertheless, Nappi (2014) stated that the overall culture of a school campus, including aspects of principal, teacher, and student success, are more likely to improve with the dedicated practice of distributed leadership. Nappi suggests that when professional educators share leadership with their principal and other formal leaders, social capital is increased amongst all involved parties. Yet, Copland (2003) indicated that distributed leadership could not be successful unless there is a campus culture that embodies collaboration, trust, professional learning, and reciprocal accountability. Distributed leadership variables such as leadership of formal leaders, teacher leaders, the cooperation of leadership teams, and participative decision-making help improve the relational climate within a school culture as well as the principal's and professional educators' commitment to the school (Devos et al., 2014). Shifting a school culture needs to be conducted with delicate engagement with cultural differences in diverse communities and needs to consider different worldviews. Rubin and Peplau (1975) suggest worldviews are constructed in three ways:

1. by education systems that transmit scientific knowledge which might be empirical or logical and may or may not have a moral compass that assures the prevalence of an ethical framework;

2. through the metaphysical;

3. by religions and the intersectionality of generation, race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Thus, inquiry into classroom and whole school processes and practices needs to engage with all these three constructs to recognise the different worldviews of community members to

assure that education systems offer pathways to all, particularly to those who need to raise themselves up out of poverty (Stanton-Salazar, 2010; Carter, 2008).

The notion of distributed leadership might be used as a mask by policy-makers and government officials to ease in their agenda as a normalizing discourse in schools. Hall, Gunter, and Forrester (2008) recognize distributed leadership as the 'officially sanctioned model of good practice' (p. 32) advocated by government departments. They note that this sanctioned model of distributed leadership reflects normative narratives that are part of the English government's rhetoric that power and autonomy are being shared with schools, when the reality points to centralisation, managerialism, and government reform of public services (Hartley, 2007). Gunter and Forrester (2008) argue that distributed leadership, in practice, becomes delegated leadership. Some critics of distributed leadership inquire whether it offers a genuine alternative to other forms of leadership or whether it serves as 'the emperor's new clothes' (Bolden, 2011, p. 254) or a pragmatic response to society's demand for equity and purpose. Gronn (2009) noted how the term 'distributed can inadvertently mislabel a situation in which the influence of a number of individuals continues to be significant' (p. 285).

Although, Jackson and Marriott (2012) indicated that poorly performing urban schools and struggling free school-lunch-eligible students are often associated with leadership that fails to either understand or implement distributed leadership from an organizational perspective. Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins (2007) found that the practice of distributed leadership by formal and informal leaders, especially as it pertains to context-specific and situationally bound issues, has the potential to improve student outcomes within minority-majority schools, and improve

social mobility for social justice. Moreover, Woods and Roberts (2016) stated that socially just leadership could only be actualised in communities of practice with humility, this conceptualization resembles Kesebir's (2014) concept of a "quiet ego". Thus, distributed leadership is particularly important as a strategy to include marginalised groups and move 'the other' from being a stranger, or an enemy to being part of the community (Kakos & Palaiologou, 2014). Hallinger and Heck (2010) used the terms collaborative, shared and distributed interchangeably to describe such distributed 'leadership that is exercised by the principal along with other key staff' This type of leadership is expressed by respecting and allowing room for the diversity of different voices heard in the school and striving to ensure fairness in listening to these different voices and representing the different interests of the different stakeholders in the school community.

In addition to the work of Klar et al. (2016), other researchers have examined the role that principals can play in fostering the capacities of other leaders. It has been suggested by Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008) and MacBeath (2005) that leadership distribution is a developmental process. Based on a study of distributed leadership in 11 English schools, MacBeath (2005) described how distributed leadership can also allow succession planning as different members of the school can take on increasingly more difficult activities supported by the principal. The conceptualisation of distributed leadership is theoretically challenging, and it has been used to describe, and theorise different forms of leadership in practice. Thus, our critical review of the literature identifies that there is no 'pure' distributed leadership in theory or in practice.

Comparative Methodology

This study adopts a comparative research approach. In contrast to the usual comparison between nations, we compare cross-cultural and national differences (Cheong, 2000; Dimmock, 2009). We draw on the approach of Dale (2014) to emphasise the practical application of comparative education that seeks to inform education systems' policy and practice. We examined principals' reflections concerning a three-year action research project that had been implemented in their schools in a partnership between each of the authors, who are professional academic researchers from higher educational institutions, and school leaders, teachers, and students. The research focused on both principals' understanding of a shift from hierarchical relationships to more participatory processes and practices (Harrison, Taysum, McNamara & O'Hara, 2016). The semi-structured interview questions focused on:
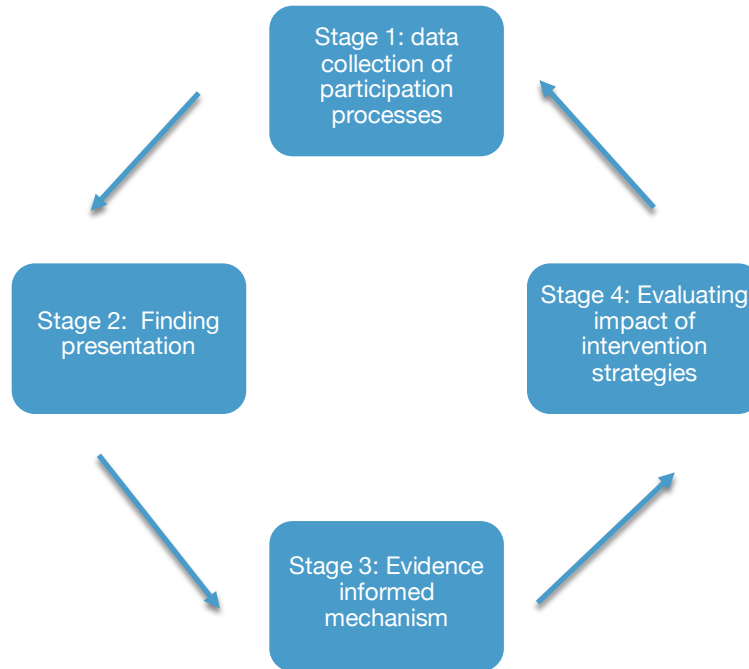
- the school partnership with the academy

- the implementation of the whole school inquiry action research approach to empower the educational professionals and the students to engage with participatory school improvement strategies, and

- the impact of the whole school inquiry.

The study followed a model that facilitated describing and understanding the culturally relevant local and particular processes and practices. Both research projects were part of a boundary-crossing international survey of 14 nation states, all using the same whole school inquiry for an action research design.

The action research was a collaborative process within each school taking teacher research as a tool that both builds capacity for school improvement within the school, and enhances the

teaching profession (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The action research followed four stages suggested by Lewin (1946), who developed action research to develop inter-group relationships. The purpose of the first stage was to gather baseline data focusing on how the teachers and students of the educational institutions described and understood the way they participated and/or were consulted on the processes and practices of the educational institution. The second stage gathered impact data following the presentation of the findings of each of the case studies to the leadership team of each respective educational institution. The third stage documented the development, and implementation of the evidence-informed change strategies by the principal, leadership team, staff, and students. The change strategies focused on improving the ways in which teachers and students participated in and/or contributed to processes and practices within the institution. The fourth stage gathered and reported the impact of the intervention strategies drawing on the views of the teachers and students, and educational outcomes.

Diagram 1: Action Research Cycle Drawing from Lewin (1946)

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                  ┌─────────────────┐
                  │    Stage 1: data │
                  │   collection of  │
                  │   participation  │
                  │    processes     │
                  └─────────────────┘

┌─────────────────┐           ┌─────────────────┐
│  Stage 2: Finding│           │ Stage 4: Evaluating│
│   presentation   │           │    impact of     │
│                  │           │   intervention   │
│                  │           │    strategies    │
└─────────────────┘           └─────────────────┘

                  ┌─────────────────┐
                  │ Stage 3: Evidence│
                  │    informed      │
                  │   mechanism      │
                  └─────────────────┘
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Our position in this research is that we recognise the acts of educational leaders are affected by, and affect the social context in which they operate (Berkovich, 2014). We are mindful of the characteristics of Palestinian Arab, and English societal structures and educational governance systems.

Participants and research procedures

The first author accompanied the Arab Israeli school principal and interviewed him, and the second author accompanied the English school principal and interviewed him. Both principals were invited in writing to be interviewed and both principals chose to be interviewed in their schools. The authors used the same semi-structured interview schedules that lasted about two hours. The focus was on each principal's reflection on the partnership project implementation.

The Arab school principal: Yousif (pseudonym) was in his mid-fifties, with 21 years' experience in education and 8 years in principalship, holds an MA in Educational Administration, and was individually interviewed for about two hours over two sessions. The interviews were conducted in in Arabic and their transcriptions were translated into English for analysis.

The English school principal: Luke is in his 50s, married with 3 children. He began his teaching career in 1987 before progressing into Headship in 2002. He holds an MA in Educational Leadership and started doctoral studies researching Education Leadership. His research interests include Distributed System Leadership and Social Justice Leadership in schools. Luke was interviewed individually for approximately 2 hours.

Tools and analysis

Each principal received a copy of the transcript of their interviews, and each was asked to validate the transcripts by confirming the accuracy of what had been recorded. The data underwent four stages of analysis suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2012): 'organising the data', 'generating categories, themes and patterns', 'testing any emergent hypothesis' and 'searching for alternative explanations'. This analysis was employed to organise the data and identify recurrent perceptions which we categorised (Cowen & Kazamias, 2010). These units of information were then collected into central themes that addressed the research questions. The analysis was conducted by each author, and then each author cross-checked and critiqued the analysis of the other, reinforcing the analytical structure at the different stages of analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2012).

There are obvious limitations in applying the findings to other social and educational arenas, even when considering the wider research project of 14 case studies with large data sets.

The reader is invited to examine the relevance of the evidence here presented to their individual experience of the issues investigated in this article with which policy-makers, and professional educators are grappling (Author & Other, 2008; Stuart Wells, 2018).

Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, and confidentiality and allocated pseudonyms, and had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Respondents completed and signed informed consent forms with these guarantees in their first language. We now detail the findings as they emerged from the narrative interviews with the principals.

Findings

The principals' reflections relate to a three-year action research project in each of their schools that sought to empower staff and students through co-constructed evidence and informed strategies of change to increase participation. The comparative education approach revealed that the two principals had different experiences of leading the full three-year action research project that resulted in a shift from hierarchical structures to distributed leadership. Three main categories emerged, around which the central themes of the study were consolidated in line with the research questions and level of analysis: (1) Developing partnerships in communities of practice was important in delivering school improvement; (2) Distributing leadership through whole school inquiry using action research to implement intervention strategies underpinned school improvement and improved student outcomes;

Partnership and communities of practice

The principals of both the English high school in the UK (EHS) and the Arab high school in Israel (AHSI) valued the partnerships that were developed between the professional academic researchers and the school. They also valued the partnerships between community members that were facilitated by the whole school approach of inquiry-based action research.

The EHS principal Luke, identified that building partnerships between the school and scholarly research led to capacity building using inquiry-based action research. The impact was increased participation in whole school processes and practices facilitated by the partnership inquiry-based action research. The impact of the increased participation was improved pedagogical relationships underpinned by trust and a shift in power from hierarchical top-down relationships to more distributed leadership as autonomous professional educators shared the leadership of inquiry-based action research to optimise learning. Distributing leadership through the inquiry process facilitated a shift in power from top-down descriptive curriculum knowledge, to co-created, contextual, and culturally aware knowledge, facilitated by the evidence-informed change strategies. Luke stated:

> We do our own research, so we were not doing what we are doing now. The way we give other people 'power' reflects a lack of ego in the school leadership team. My doctoral reading enabled me to dig into (Stephen) Ball talking about Foucault and elements of power, and the work of many managers, and Philip Woods' work on leadership that is distributed. We look to intellectual scholarly research, that is evidence-informed leadership…. Many of the staff conduct their own research through postgraduate research

studies supported by higher education institutions. These different research studies influence each other to build capacity so that strategies work.

The principal's views affirm that the school-academy partnership facilitated evidence-informed leadership and decision-making, and pedagogical partnerships driven by a whole school approach to inquiry, processes which were empowering. The impact on the school community was to build capacity so that strategies worked (Author, 2012). Luke valued the fact that building partnerships facilitated distributed leadership, helping to empower staff and students to explore different forms of knowledge and develop critical thinking skills (Author, 2012; Harris, 2007; Woods et al., 2004). In addition, he noted that the school was very interested in participation in processes and practices, and giving voice to teachers and students. Luke stated:

> We were interested in how autonomy might be distributed through leadership. People having a voice led us to be more confident and we had an appetite for that. The feedback is   that the appetite is there, and we needed to develop a structure and ways of working that allow people to contribute to what we are.

Luke identified that teachers and students were empowered as leadership was distributed through the inquiry, and he had enough confidence in the education system to participate in dialogues that respected their contribution. In contrast, a different level of academy-school partnership was found in the AHSI as Yousif, the school principal explained:

> Generally speaking, academics approach us like inspectors when they conduct research in school. This raises the school's fear of role conflict, as they think researchers are loyal to

the system more than to the school. Furthermore, these are Jewish researchers, who are strangers to our culture.

The principal fears those coming into his school, a finding which confirms the findings of Ishii et al. (2007) that there is a lack of pedagogical relationships between the Arab-Israeli principal, and inspectors and researchers coming into the school. Yousef's perception of the authoritarian approach of the inspectors prevents the chance to explore the collision of different worldviews of different community members through inquiry that could stimulate dialogue (Dewey, 1909). Rather, there is no discussion and Yousef identified the inspector/researcher as someone external to the school with hierarchical control. The fear Yousef experienced in these hierarchical top-down relationships was disempowering.

Yet, after the initial fear, the Arab principal, Yousif, felt that he was empowered by the partnership with the university and by the research. He found that the partnership put the principal, his staff, and students in control of the inquiry-based action research, the development and implementation of the intervention strategies, and their response to the impact findings. Yousif identified that being empowered in the research, helped to build trust between himself and the researcher, and stated:

> I find myself in favour of this research as it starts in the school and ends in the school. It began with a grassroots search for students' and teachers' participation, followed by discussion, aiming to influence the participation of different stakeholders and widen engagement with different participatory processes in the school. The involvement of an education researcher in the school's daily work, which is especially important in a school

serving disadvantaged students, has enabled the school to attain high quality and excellence, even when located in Israel's periphery. Partnerships between the school/college, the academy and policy makers have the potential to make important links between research, policy and practice. These links are not sufficiently exploited for the benefit of school practice.

Yousif's attitude demonstrates that he feels understood on a deep level in relation to the other, a professional researcher from the academy and the first author. This resembles what Harris (2007) calls mutual understanding, something that has led Yousif to feel empowered by the first author. As he added in his interview:

> Our discussion about teachers' and students' participation following the action research cycles, and my awareness of the power of a professional community encourages me as a principal to constantly think about how I can increase involvement, caring and responsibility for school students and teachers, creating a supportive professional community of students learning and being in the school arena and in society at general.

The empowerment was experienced at all levels with a focus on the disadvantaged students' optimisation of learning and learning outcomes, while also creating a professional community of teachers who support the students' learning and participation.

Despite the socio-cultural difference between the launching point of the intervention in the two studied schools, both principals identified that the research had been empowering (Woods et al., 2004), and had enabled them to develop partnerships between the researcher from academia and the school to underpin the development of professional participatory communities of practice

(Harris, 2007; Author, 2012). The two researchers started from two different points in building common discourse, aims and trust in their institutions, and they had different initial perceptions of the role of researcher to inform school's dynamics. These differences stem from different cultural and socio-political backgrounds and contexts (Ball, 1994). Both school communities are developing more confidence as communities of practice as a result of the research partnership between the schools and the higher education institutions. The research partnerships empowered the school community members to control their participation in the action research, which underpinned their co-creation of evidence-informed context-specific knowledge that informed their change strategies. Their co-created knowledge was further distributed through the community, if successful, rather than being controlled by others in hierarchical standardised structures, or simply becoming research reported in a book (Lewin, 1946; Misfud, 2017). As stressed by Yousif: 'Nowadays and following this process I tend to adopt an experimental approach of understanding, collaborating and then seeking change and dissemination'. This therefore prompts us to explore the source of distribution strategies and the way they are expressed in the principals' schools.

Distribution of leadership enacted through the implementation of the intervention

Both principals understood that implementing the intervention strategies of the inquiry-based action research process required distributed collaborative leadership within the education system.

Luke acknowledged that a person wanting to implement distributed leadership needed to have spent time getting to know their self and working through their own personal issues and insecurities concerning power (Socrates, in Brown, 2006). Luke stated:

With regard to ego, you learn to move from proving to improving learning, to being more confident. It is about the achievement of others and not yourself. This is about a serving leadership and empowering us and learning how to cope. It is hard to do some of what you are doing when you are scared that you could lose your job, and it is important not to be financially dependent on keeping your job. You need security to counter the insecurity and fear that is promoted within the system. So, if you are liberated from all this, it enables you to pick up on and let others achieve.

The principal understands the need for self-awareness in relation to his ego, and the need to avoid focussing on the self, reflecting the concept of "quiet ego" mentioned by Kesebir (2014). The principal identifies his anxiety in relationship to his own job security, his fear that he believes is built into the system, who needs to subdue his ego in order to provide a service, and who can then empower others (Stenhouse, 1975). Luke has developed his worldview that seeks to empower others, but identifies that some leaders are self-focused and form hierarchical leadership structures to control others, and in so doing, control their own fear:

Not every school has effective systems' leaders and Hopkins talks about some leaders building an empire. Collaborative leaders prove through building relationships that collaborative strategies enable collaborative systems.

In a similar vein, Yousif the Arab principal stated:

I work to mobilise school culture and organize routines for institutional participation, especially in the light of the fact that this is a minority society that must look after itself. Working in partnership strengthens collective commitments towards our students and

future generations. This experience enriched my understanding of the power of a professional community that is fully involved and committed to the school's processes and practices.

Both principals indicated that the participatory inquiry-based action research contributed to a shift from hierarchical leadership to distributed leadership (Gunter & Forrester, 2008). The distributed leadership in the school empowered community members to share their worldviews, as indicated by Rubin and Peplau (1975). Both leaders identify that community participants had previously operated within hierarchical structures led by those who consider they are more entitled to make decisions than others lower in the hierarchy (Kesebir, 2014). The principals noted that regimes that demand accountability do not support the schools' organisational effectiveness, improvement and transformation and they felt that the inspectors were loyal to a system rather than to the schools, the staff, the students, and the community.

The principals noted that the school community members had experienced hierarchical leaders who had controlled them and tried to think for them to such an extent that this behaviour had become normalised. In both cases the disempowerment principals experience within the system was reaffirmed by the system's constant policy reforms (Authors, forthcoming) that distract school leaders from implementing an evidence-informed and robust strategic plan for school improvement, effectiveness and transformation. In partnership with the higher education institutions the principals were able to mobilise the community through the implementation of this distinctive mark of distributed leadership using whole school inquiry. This distinctive mark of distributed leadership includes the development of authentic intercultural awareness, which has

allowed the principals to focus on evidence-informed and participatory change strategies. The participatory change strategies have improved student outcomes by 17% - 27% enabling their social mobility.

Both principals recognised that encouraging communities to move out of their comfort zone to share power, and to be empowered through this distinctive mark of distributed leadership using whole school inquiry was met with resistance. Initially, communities were fearful that the principals were weak (Kesebir, 2014). The English principal explained:

> Problems are created when leaders tell others to collaborate but do not collaborate themselves. I am an extravert and I can play the pompous Alpha Male and at times people want you to be that way, for example in a meeting about a student not getting it, you need to teach them a lesson for their own good because if I don't, the judge will. There is also contingent leadership and part of the leadership expectation can also relate to that. Not surprisingly the powerful can forget to be humble, and it is humbleness that is important to facilitate others' development and to be reflective of the ego.

Luke finds that communities want hierarchical leadership and want others to tell them what to do, but this is due to the fact that they have been programmed to this type or grammar of thinking, and what they need is to be empowered to think for themselves. Luke identifies that the education system appears reluctant to embrace this as its policy. Dealing with political marginality and hierarchical social structures, the Arab principal is also mindful of these same internal contradictions between Arab culture and the school context, Yousif stated:

In our culture, hierarchy still controls the tone, which means that the school is expected to be run hierarchically with an amount of distance between different levels of authorities. The hierarchy starts from the school principals progressing downwards towards inferior people in the school including students. These are the cultural norms and expectations. Opening these (education system) structures to some levels of discussion sometimes badly affects the teachers' perceptions of their role, and their commitments because they perceive the attempt of the senior leadership team to share power as expressing their weakness, both inside the school and outside it.

When asked about his stance, and how he was expected to act, he explained:

I believe in freedom as a strong frame or structure. However, the prevalence of present practices, shaped largely by traditional Arab culture with its hierarchical structures, along with the hierarchical control of the system's structure, means that inviting them to be active participants challenges their expectations.

It seems that the identified significant sociocultural differences between the two principals' contexts and schools create a wide gap between potential levels of distribution in the school communities due to basic cultural and structural differences (Author, 2015), especially when dealing with the mechanism of centralized control in the case of Arab education in Israel (Author & Other, 2016). At the same time, both principals see that staff and students may expect leaders to be hierarchical, and may view sharing power or empowerment of subordinates as a sign of weak education system leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Hierarchical traditions stand as a strong barrier that obstructs cultural change for more collaborative communities that wish to implement

a distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry. The distinctive mark of distributed leadership that involves whole school inquiry needs to include developing inter-cultural awareness of the intersectionality of cultures and the politics of cultural marginalisation. The development of intercultural awareness of the intersectionality of different cultures, and their political narratives starts with the collection of thick descriptions within the communities. As community members begin to trust the inquiry process, and the sharing of leadership, they begin to critically analyse the collected descriptions and co-create contextualised knowledge, offering the chance to share worldviews.

Documenting this shift from hierarchical to distributed leadership and the associated development of a new grammar of thinking, over the three-year project revealed how these principals experienced the influence of a distinctive mark of distributed leadership using whole school inquiry, which facilitated community cohesion. Such a position moves close to political pluralism (Rawls, 2005). The principals' courageous commitment to a distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry empowered citizens and created a cultural awareness whereby community members move closer to the conditions of a free political state (Author, 2015; Rawls, 2005).

The impact of distributed leadership uusing whole school inquiry to empower young societal innovators for equity and renewal

The findings reveal that both principals are committed to empowering young people and educational professionals so that they can become active members of a community and have the

chance to explore where different worldviews collide, and to become more autonomous. Luke, the English principal stated that the trust that was formed through whole school inquiry has made:

people confident to discuss issues and ideas and engage in a robust discourse where voices are equal in discussions and they gain credibility and respect.

The Arab principal felt that trust must be developed to improve students' participation in school processes and practices (Copland, 2003; Mascall et al., 2008):

In my view, first we have to take care of the values dimension, which can be developed by building a culture of trust in the school as an institution. The Arab minority perceive institutions as entities that marginalize and suppress them. Developing a culture of trust that would support democratic expression of opinions and enable the voices of both students and teachers to be actively heard, would help to develop skills for meaningful reciprocal discourse. This can begin with teachers' care and students' tutoring programs.

The English principal identified the kinds of abuse of power that shut down constructive inter-cultural discussions and impede the building of care and trust:

What irritates me is when people pull rank in a discussion because that disrespects the other person, and they are unable to engage in an argument and it becomes personal. A worthy learning organisation helps to develop confident people who are honest and open and are able to say what they think and explore their ideas without unfair judgement - which is a Socratic approach. This involves being respectful and thinking about new structures (through whole school inquiry) and mechanisms for a voice to express a conscience, to be virtuous. We try to talk to all staff; teachers and support staff about that. So that anyone

can hold the school to account for something that matters as in a democracy; so that in the school everyone knows you as a voice that matters in the organisation. It is not about diminishing hierarchy because there are still different functions. Schools need to be orderly places where young people feel safe in an orderly organisation, and they can learn social responsibility. It is a mistake to describe being virtuous as anti-structural. Everyone has a right to be heard, but with that comes the responsibility of having a voice and of being part of the society: rights, responsibility and respect - restorative justice to modify behaviour. We bring different cultures and faiths together and arrive at a right and wrong moral code. We are flexible with expectations when there are transgressions. There is a paradox because every community is shaped by human behaviour and I believe it is post-modernism that has allowed that to be illuminated.

Luke indicates that it is important to have a moral code or moral compass. It is important to apply moral inquiry to ethical rules (Pring, 2000) to ensure the prevalence of an ethical framework. Such inquiry is important when seeking to align different cultures within an overarching system of rights and responsibilities. Cultural alignment was facilitated by a distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry into evolving intercultural awareness moving towards equity and renewal.

Yousif agreed with Luke regarding the importance of values and engagement with the moral fabric of society, which can help to ensure that moral inquiry develops into an ethical framework. He also agrees with the importance of developing intercultural awareness through the development of a shared inclusionary and participatory worldview. Yousif particularly identified

the role of the school in preparing young children for the future. He felt that the school was the only social agent system in Arab society operating in a context of cultural discrimination and disadvantage:

> I think that it is crucial to motivate and increase students' willingness to be involved in giving, and charitable projects in their community, and to support students in other schools who need their support. Thus, I see our role as discussing different values of commitment to the other and social participation, and to group students with various skills together to support and help others. The most important value is the feeling of belonging to my school. This value motivates me to become involved even beyond my function's responsibilities.

Despite the two systems' differences, the evidence reveals that both school principals believe their role is to empower community members by enabling them to participate in decision-making opportunities at the classroom and whole school levels and to practice certain universal values (Kozleski et al., 2012). These findings are in line with the findings of Arthur et al (2017) that young people engaging with social action such as charitable projects by the age of 10 years old, are twice as likely to sustain social action activities as a habit for life, as those who start social action at the ages of between 16-18. What is distinctive about this research is this has been performed by introducing a distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry. This was achieved in partnership with higher education institutions enabling individuals to become connected with their communities and builds habits of service that will continue beyond the school walls.

Introducing distributed leadership through whole school inquiry developed opportunities for different groups in the community to come together and discuss values, behaviours, and social aspects of the school (Rawls, 2005) and to balance this with evolving inter-cultural awareness of the specific characteristics of the Arab and the English contexts. It seems clear that the shift that took place from hierarchical structures to distributed leadership through whole school inquiry empowered community members and moved them closer to political pluralism so that they develop intercultural awareness, and share worldviews. Community members developed shared worldviews by provisionally agreeing on what is morally right, and what is morally wrong, albeit within a wider national context of inequity. Developing distributed leadership through whole community inquiry may empower and connect community members to: live and work together; respect, or tolerate different groups with different interests, languages and dialects, different knowledge bases, metaphysical knowledge, and different or no religions; develop provisional agreement that creates a sense of belonging and solidarity. Both principals' statements on this theme show how developing a participative culture can structure empowerment patterns at school on a personal and collective social level, and can contribute to the school's and the community's social, and cultural associations.

Partnership values and circles of support and empowerment help the school community to overcome hindrances such as centralized and standardized hierarchical school systems. The empirical research findings are now discussed in the light of previous research and theory, to enable several conclusions to be drawn.

Concluding Remarks

Both principals identified that the action research, which employed a whole school inquiry in partnership with higher education institutions improved community members' participation in communities of practice, so that they moved closer to inter-cultural awareness, and improved both student outcomes by circa 17%- 27% and other student achievements. Rapid school reforms can distract leaders from implementing their evidence-informed strategic plans for school improvement, effectiveness, and transformation. Higher education institutions provided support as critical friends who determined evaluative milestones and gave structure to the implementation of a distinctive mark of distributed leadership using whole school inquiry for intercultural awareness, and improved student outcomes.

We recognise there is a plethora of research that indicates that participatory communities of practice can work, and enable diverse groups to share their knowledge of 'what is' and bridge between different 'tribes'. The present research offers contributes to this corpus of knowledge by showing how these theories of participatory communities of practice have been realised in two different cases employing a distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry. All members were able to document the steps of this approach, to hold each other to account, and to provide evidence to external accountability regimes on the development of moral codes of behaviour, and improved student outcomes.

The authors, who are researchers in higher education institutions worked in partnership with the school principals and together co-created a larger boundary-crossing international network of 14 nation states that developed intercultural shared worldviews, and these worldviews informed all steps of the three-year project. The network provided consistent professional support

from intercultural evidence-informed knowledge generation and exchange shared at the European Conference for Educational Research, The American Educational Research Association Annual Conference and the British Educational Leadership, Management, and Administrative Society Annual Conferences over the three-year period of the project. The international network, made possible through these international conferences optimised the professional researchers' support of the principals by providing: intercultural professional learning, opportunities for reciprocal accountability regarding the warrants for the claims made, and structures for quality assurance (Oancea & Furlong, 2007).

The principals recognised that they needed to be humble if they were to empower others, and they had to be secure in their desire to serve others, and not fear losing their jobs. Both principals identified that external inspection regimes as loyal to the system and not to their school, their staff, their communities, or their innovative participatory change strategies.

Yet, the principals recognised that empowering others was challenging because initially community members wanted to be told what to do and considered that the principals' willingness to share leadership was a sign of weakness. Principals reported that by focusing on the whole school inquiry, community members began to value their participation in school processes and practices, and felt confident that their religious faith, or lack of religious faith, and their metaphysical worldviews would be recognised and respected. The community members also appreciated the improved educational outcomes with the English School moving from 56% average A*-C in GCSE results to achieving the best outcomes to date: 83% of students achieving A*-C grades in GCSE English exams and 74% of students achieving A*-C grades in GCSE

mathematics exams. The Arab-Israeli high school increased its students' achievements in matriculation exams from average success grade of 56 % to an average success grade of 73% for all graduates.

The case study findings offer three new practical social knowledge contributions that can inform future action. Firstly, the study reveals the positive impact of partnerships and collaboration in change processes between academia and schools. In the case of the present study the universities served as the hub of national networks that created an international network. The international network helped to develop capacity through knowledge generation and knowledge exchange between all partners using the same whole school inquiry-based action research design.

Secondly, the study shows that distributed leadership has been understood in different ways in the literature, but introducing a mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry as evolved in this study through action research facilitated knowledge exchange, mobilisation, and dissemination activities that empowered the staff and young people to become societal innovators for equity and renewal and this in turn also improved student outcomes.

Thirdly, the research reveals that introducing a mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry enabled the community to share aims, themes and methods. They developed new understandings built respect, trust, and local research priorities and practices and members of the community of praxis were able to hold each other to account.

The research demonstrates that developing inter-cultural awareness in diverse communities through distributed leadership that develops through whole school inquiry raised student outcomes and student achievements. This process also addressed status gaps through education by

collectively empowering the school communities for equity, and renewal. Further research and capacity building for this distinctive mark of distributed leadership through whole school inquiry to assist the development of intercultural awareness is recommended.

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