

School-Based Management and 21st century pedagogies: Are they mutually related? Examination of four Israeli case studies

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**International Society for Educational Planning
Charleston, October 2018**

Outline of the presentation

- Implementing changes and reforms in educational systems
- Shifts towards school autonomy (SBM reform)
- Pedagogical reforms and 21st century skills
- The relationship between school autonomy and 21st CS
- Summary and conclusions – are school autonomy and progressive pedagogies mutually related?

Implementing changes and reforms in educational systems

- Putting ideas into practice is a far more complex process than people realize.
- There is great pressure and incentives to become innovative, resulting in many schools adopting reforms for which they do not have the capacity (individually or organizationally) to put into practice.
- Thus, innovations are adopted apparently with some of the language and structures becoming altered, but not the practice of teaching.

Implementing changes and reforms in educational systems – cont'd

- The pressure for reform has increased over the years. The society becomes increasingly complex (e.g., LLL citizens, working with diversity, locally and internationally, etc.).
- “Reform is not just putting into place the latest policy. It means changing the cultures of the classrooms, the schools, the districts, the universities, and so on. There is much more to educational reform than most people realize” (Fullan, 2001).

The nature of school autonomy in the Israeli educational system

Since the establishment of the Israeli state (1948), the educational system has featured a high degree of central control to ensure that educational services would be equally distributed to all.

The introduction of school autonomy policies in a centralized culture creates a unique challenge.

In centralized structures, significant innovations and changes are introduced top-down.

Bottom-up initiatives require the approval of the district and/or central office

- In centralized educational systems, central officials are typically reluctant to reduce their control and influence on schools.
- The limitations and the inefficiency of central control mechanisms such as the superintendency system.
- The negative pedagogical effect of strong centralization and curriculum uniformity on educational processes and outcomes.

- There are pressures, coming from school principals, teachers and parents, to increase their autonomy to allow greater correspondence of school processes to local needs.
- Most school autonomy initiatives are caught in the “*centralization trap*” evident in the contradicting tendencies to delegate authority to schools, and at the same time to maintain substantial central control in schools.

School-based management (SBM)

- The MOE initiates a SBM policy. Implementation gradually begins in 1996.
- Elementary schools receive financial autonomy and freedom to choose their teaching methods.
- However, teachers' hiring and firing, teaching goals, curriculum... are still centrally determined.
- SBM had a limited effect on the pedagogical autonomy of school educators.
- In practice, the system maintained most of its centralized features.

- Since 2004, SBM was implemented randomly by local authorities with little involvement of the central office.
- In 2010, the Ministry of Education decided to reenact the SBM policy.
- A designated administration was established in the central office, and senior officials responsible for the implementation of SBM were appointed in each educational district.
- Once again, SBM was centrally enforced on schools based on the policy plan enacted in 1996.

To summarize, indications for changes in schools' autonomy are rather scarce.

The Ministry of Education still dominates the educational system and many of the main issues shaping pedagogical processes.

Pedagogical Reforms and 21st Century Skills

Control and regulation of curricula by the MOE by means of:

- A central national curricula
- National Subjects' Supervisors with their teams of instructors
- National tests: the Mitzav (elementary) and the matriculation examinations (high school) form a mechanism by which the MOE directs and controls teaching and learning in schools.

The (potential) connection between SBM and 21st CS

- It is assumed that SBM will allow for redistribution of power that will provide leverage for pedagogical innovation and success of the school.
- Autonomy and relevance are key concepts that are common to both reforms. Autonomy refers not only to budgetary but also to openness to new ideas.
- The research question: Do autonomy and relevance, attributed to SBM, enable/create the appropriate conditions for implementing progressive pedagogies?

- Based on four in-depth case studies of Israeli elementary schools, that have been implementing SBM for a few years, and are known to apply progressive pedagogies, we concluded that:
- Self-management is highly perceived as related to intra-school budgetary autonomy that mostly offers bureaucratic relief via financial flexibility and a sense of well-being.
- The financial flexibility of SBM schools enables and encourages the development of new ideas and projects in line with the progressive pedagogy "spirit".

- Thus, the two reforms are not tightly related. Rather, school autonomy provides the fertilizers that stimulate the opportunities for developing and implementing 21st CS / progressive pedagogies.
- SBM may be perceived as a necessary condition for the presence of progressive pedagogy in school but not it is not a sufficient one.
- Other conditions are required for successful implementation of innovative pedagogy.

Summary and conclusions

- Dualism exists in implementing educational reforms in Israel (e.g., delegation of authority and accountability to schools, but concurrently the MOE maintains significant central control).
- School autonomy, which refers mainly to the school principal, is not sufficient. It should take into account teachers' and students' autonomy as well.

- Large-scale pedagogical reforms require changes in the *pedagogical* core (i.e., how to actually support a deep and sustainable changes in learning, instruction and assessment) in addition to *structural and managerial* concerns (e.g., teacher training for implementing innovative pedagogies).

Thank you