An insight into elementary principalship in Cyprus: the teachers’ perspective

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Abstract
Explores the perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding their principals and their leadership styles. The underlying (and guiding) assumption for this project was that the effectiveness of a leader is mainly dependent on how others view him/her as a leader. As indicated in the results, teachers have a positive attitude towards their principals in general, but there are some areas where principals need to improve, such as, personnel management and professional growth and development. Furthermore, the bureaucratic and highly centralized structure of the Cyprus educational system proved to be ineffective and should be abandoned. Principals must be given motives for self-improvement.

Introduction
This piece of research was undertaken with the main purpose of finding out about the perceptions of elementary school teachers regarding their principals and their leadership styles. The underlying (and guiding) assumption for this project was that the effectiveness of a leader is mainly dependent on how others view him/her as a leader. This effectiveness also depends on how the principals themselves perceive their leadership style. Principals may have some ideas about themselves and the way they lead their schools. They also act and perform their duties based on these ideas and also based on their perceptions of themselves as leaders. However, if their staff perceive them in different ways, then it is almost certain that leaders will have problems in performing their duties since their staff will almost certainly behave towards the principal in the way they (the staff) perceive the principal. Moreover, it could be argued that whether we like it or not, what is perceived as reality is what we base our actions on. Therefore, perception is, indeed, reality.

This paper is part of the first phase of a research project undertaken in both elementary and secondary schools. What is reported in this paper are the results from the questionnaire handed to elementary school teachers about their perceptions of their principals. In the next phases of this research project, the perceptions of the principals will be discussed and, at a later stage, the perceptions of the teachers will be contrasted with the perceptions of the principals about themselves.

Research methodology
questionnaire
In March 1997, a questionnaire was constructed and pilot-tested regarding a principal’s duties and style of leadership in the elementary and secondary schools of Cyprus. The questionnaire items were constructed mainly from a review of the literature on effective schools and effective principalship (Duke, 1982; Duttwiecher and Hord, 1987; Hoy and Miskel, 1996; Imants et al., 1995; Goldhammer et al., 1971; Pashiardis, 1998; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1998; Sessions, 1996). The specific circumstances of elementary and secondary school education in Cyprus were also taken into consideration during the construction of the questionnaire and this is why two instruments were developed, one for elementary and one for secondary education, thus accommodating their differences. The questionnaire contained 57 statements in total which were organized in nine different areas which are regarded as part of the main functions of school leadership and management, namely: school climate, school leadership and management, curriculum development, personnel management, administration and fiscal management, student management, professional development and in-service, relations with parents and the community, problem-solving and decision-making. Teachers could also write additional comments on any issue they felt was important. The complete questionnaire can be seen in its entirety in Appendix I. The questionnaire was considered as very reliable since its reliability coefficient is: $r = 0.94$ (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.94$). It is also valid since a panel of experts judged it as such; therefore, face validity is assured as well. The scale used is an interval Likert-type scale from 1 to 4, where 4 indicates that the principal “always” behaves in the way described by a certain questionnaire item, 3 indicates “often”, 2 indicates “sometimes”, and 1 indicates “never”. The participants were asked to rate their principals by selecting the number that more accurately reflected their principal’s image as was perceived by the teachers responding.
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Participants in this research

A total of 115 elementary school teachers voluntarily offered their perception of their principals, by responding to the questions contained in the questionnaire. The majority of them (88 per cent) were women, and this fact comes as no surprise considering that most of the teachers in the Cyprus educational system are women (Ministry of Finance, 1998). The participants were primarily in the age range between 24 and 39 years old (80 per cent) while the rest of the teachers were over 39 years old. Another characteristic of the sample worth mentioning is that at least half of them had nine years of teaching experience in the educational system, which enabled them to form a more accurate picture of what was taking place at schools and, therefore, lent more credibility to their responses. To be more specific, 51 per cent of the respondents had up to nine years of teaching experience, 19 per cent had been teachers for at least ten years and a significant portion (21 per cent) had more than 20 years of teaching experience. Only five participants were holders of a Master’s Degree and this is odd to some extent, taking into consideration that in the recent years the number of postgraduate students in the field of education is skyrocketing in Cyprus. On the other hand, this could be explained if we bear in mind that these teachers were participating in an in-service course in educational administration organized by the University of Cyprus which would lead to their being awarded a Bachelor’s degree from the university since they were all graduates of the old system which only required that teachers had a Teacher’s Diploma from the Teacher Training Institute of Cyprus.

Another feature which warrants attention is that a high portion of the participants (almost 80 per cent) had been teaching at their current school for at least four years which enabled them to form a better and more accurate picture of their principal. Finally, it should be stated that this was not a random sample. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, these teachers were participants in an in-service course in educational administration. However, their demographic characteristics are quite representative of and similar to elementary school teachers in Cyprus in general.

Procedures

The questionnaire was given to the teachers in a period from January 1998 to March 1998. For the statistical analysis of the collected data the “SPSS for Windows 8.0” was used. Statistical analyses were conducted using primarily descriptive statistics such as means, medians, standard deviations and frequencies.

Results and discussion

As was mentioned earlier, teachers were asked to rate their principals in the nine functions of school leadership and management as described in the instrument used. Table I, which follows, depicts a general description of the principals’ abilities and effectiveness in their leadership role, as perceived by the teachers responding.

As the table indicates, the major strengths of principals in Cyprus (as perceived by their teachers) lie in the areas of: financial management; problem solving and decision-making; and school climate.

On the other hand, there are perceived weaknesses in that principals do not seem to master the necessary skills for providing leadership and personnel management; in other words teachers regard their principals as average leaders in the general area of dealing with personnel issues which received their lowest rating. Also, teachers who participated in the research seemed to believe that their principals do not really worry about their (the principals’) personal and professional growth and development.

Furthermore, principals were perceived as functioning at a level above average in the areas of curriculum development and in their relationships with students, parents and the community at large. In the discussion which follows, a closer investigation of these general results will be undertaken in an effort to examine any underlying reasons why these particular results occurred. The discussion is structured around the main areas of principal functions.

Table I

Cyprus elementary school principals’ effectiveness in school leadership as perceived by their teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School climate</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership and management</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel management</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and fiscal management</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student management</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development and in-service</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with parents and the community</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving and decision-making</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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sections of the questionnaire where important findings were identified.

Administration and fiscal management

The principals’ perceived major asset is their ability for fiscal and financial management. The lowest rating given by a teacher was 2.29 which is by far the highest lower grade given in any of the nine areas of the instrument. It seems that elementary school principals care a lot about financial affairs and try to succeed in their endeavors to keep within the school budget.

The reasons why they are so diligent and meticulous about economic issues are many: first, the Ministry of Education (MOE) subjects all principals to intense scrutiny. A principal carries the burden to report every single financial act to the hierarchy of the Ministry of Education. As a result, their capacity to handle economic affairs is highly developed.

Furthermore, the bureaucratic structure of the educational system in Cyprus can be “blamed” for the development of these financial abilities. School principals are caught in the precarious position of always trying harder to please the bureaucrats than to satisfy the needs of students and parents (Yoshida, 1994). Everything must be done in a certain, pre-determined way, which hardly leaves any space for errors or any leeway for deviation from mainstream. The vast majority of the participants in this research (96 per cent), declared that principals comply with the edicts given by the Ministry and that they are always trying to be “bureaucratically” correct in the performance of their duties. To be successful in their dealings with the Ministry, principals must keep themselves updated with “orders” given from above and they tend to do this in the most detailed way, as the majority of respondents indicated (95 per cent).

Another reason which deters principals from being careless concerning financial matters, is the fact that the available discretionary funds are limited. Most of the teachers (75 per cent) answered that principals are making good use of the funds through careful programming. Principals, according to teachers (90 per cent), supervise their school’s premises and know exactly where the funds should go, and most of the principals (97 per cent) are perceived as having the potential to put together an appropriate school budget.

Finally, the main financial source for public schools consists of funds given by the Government and subsidies made by the local community through the Parents’ Association. As a result, principals do not have a large amount of resources to deal with, and, therefore, financial handling of the school is not an arduous task.

School climate

As the results indicated, principals seem to show ample interest in establishing a positive educational and pedagogical milieu at their schools. Teachers asserted that their principals promote an effective school climate which is one of the vital factors for successful educational outcomes (Campo, 1993; Hoy and Miskel, 1996; Putman and Burke, 1992; Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992). The reason for this is that teachers in Cyprus are often appointed principals a few years before retirement, that is after having been teaching for 25 or even 30 years. Therefore they possess a solid and rich foundation about what is essential to be done in order to promote an effective educational climate within the school boundaries.

Taking a closer look at what teachers have answered in the individual items in the area of school climate, some interesting conclusions can be drawn. A large portion of the research participants (40 per cent) mentioned that “their principal fails to deliver the school’s mission”. Two possibilities are likely to be the reason for this failure:

1. Perhaps the principal has not even formed the school’s mission for this particular school;
2. Principals may not have the capacity to state and clarify the school’s mission.

As indicated by another finding, principals seem to be short of communication skills.

About 49 per cent of the teachers responding mentioned that their principals could not operationalize to the school community their performance expectation levels for both staff and students. Then, the question arises: “if the principal has not internalized the school’s mission, how can pupils and teachers be expected to reach a higher level of performance?” (Porter and Roberts, 1976).

Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, principals can probably serve in their positions for a short time, knowing that their retirement is not far away (since they are promoted when they have only two to six years for retirement). This situation normally deprives someone of the excitement of getting involved in order to produce satisfying and visible outcomes. As one of the teachers wrote about his principal:
I think that his late promotion in administrative positions and his earlier teaching years seem to have reduced his enthusiasm and desire to work efficiently.

The above comments were quite representative of most teachers’ written comments. In addition, no rewards are given to schools which show remarkable educational gains, and, therefore, principals do not have any incentive to promote excellence unless they can motivate themselves on their own. In a way, the promotional system which is in existence now gives so much credit to the age of a teacher that no one seems to recognize and praise excellence and highly rated achievements. Teachers, through their answers, expressed their bitterness for this phenomenon which not only discourages teachers from reaching for higher performance but, more importantly, raises a wall between the principal and the staff, thus creating an unsuitable climate within the school unit.

In another questionnaire item dealing with the teachers’ perceived autonomy to do their work, the vast majority (87 per cent) gives credit to their principals for being *laissez-faire* in their leadership style and for allowing each teacher to act freely and independently. However, it should be mentioned that, had the present survey taken place about ten years ago, maybe this percentage would have been significantly lower; but nowadays all teachers in primary education have taken additional courses scheduled by the Ministry of Education in order to enhance their academic background and overall performance. Also, a large portion of newer teachers have graduated from universities which makes them sufficiently armed and in a way better qualified for autonomous teaching and at the same time less inclined to accept any limitations in their classroom autonomy (Stimson and Appelbaum, 1988).

A principal must be prepared and encouraged to exert leadership on issues that are of importance to the operation of the school (Pashiardis, 1995). As derived from the analysis, it seems quite obvious that principals are reluctant to enact the role of adjudicator in cases of disputes between teachers. One out of two teachers (50 per cent) stated that their principals do not get involved in misunderstandings and arguments between the staff, and they prefer to hold a neutral position, waiting for things to be smoothed out by themselves. Their *modus operandi* is not to reconcile the situation but to have teachers solve the problems on their own. A teacher wrote:

Coming to relationships matters or any other problem that may occur at school, he holds an irritating neutral attitude, and he mainly cares for his cachet not to be spoiled, rather than being accused as the cause of the problem. He keeps saying: “What can I do? Stop arguing until things settle down”.

This attitude could be interpreted in three different ways:

1. either principals believe that teachers are professionals who have the capacity and good will to solve the problem, and, therefore, being neutral helps a lot more than taking sides against or in favor of a teacher or an argument;
2. the principal is not capable of solving the problem, and if the latter is the case, then we are dealing with major administrative handicaps; or
3. the principal does not want to act.

In essence, being so close to becoming a pensioner, reinforces the desire to be remembered as a good-hearted principal, who never caused grievances among the staff.

Even though principals have been chastised by their staff for being proponents of the theory of “neutrality”, they receive credit (67 per cent of those responding) for attaching importance to the development of collaboration between all sorts of teams in the school; further, they seem to be open to new ideas, which will inevitably evolve from teamwork. At this point a contradiction seems to be in place. Innovations may be the result of such teamwork, and therefore one would expect principals to accept or even promote those innovative ideas. However, this is hardly the case. Teachers seemed to be undecided on this issue since 48 per cent stated that their principals do not support innovations or initiatives set by them. As mentioned earlier, principals willingly give autonomy to their teachers to act. The question then arises: Why are principals not open to new ideas?

Are teachers merely left autonomous just so that the principals have an easier, non-problematic day at work? The answer seems to be evident: principals have been in education for a quarter of a century or more and as a result are rather conservative in their views. Age seems to be the catalyst once again. Another possibility is that innovations and new ideas, in most cases, need additional funds to be implemented and, as stated earlier, funds are extremely rare and limited and therefore the money issue is holding principals back.

### Problem-solving and decision making

Decision making is a fundamental process in any organization. The importance of decision
making in educational organizations has been recognized as a key function required by administrators (Dawson, 1984; Pashiardis, 1993).

As illustrated in Table I, according to the teachers responding the majority of the principals in Cyprus are aware of the necessity and the benefits that go along with collaborative decision making. There are also principals who do not see the benefits, and, as a consequence, establish a dogmatic or even despotic school climate when it comes to decision-making procedures. Table II indicates how teachers rated their principal’s ability to establish a collaborative decision-making procedure.

The percentages on this table are quite illuminating. Almost half of the principals seem to prefer an old-fashioned, sometimes ineffective way of decision making with only one person making the decision. The school’s ambiance as it is depicted by the analysis of the data seems rather blurred. As shown previously, principals prefer to give their staff some room for autonomy, without any stringent restrictions as to the way they think and work. Why then would principals seem as if they are not paying attention to what teachers have to say? Is independence just an excuse to show that schools work in an open-minded, free of restraints environment?

One reason for this counter-intuitive result could lie in the fact that the Cyprus educational system is such a centralized and hierarchical system and it has been in place for years. Today’s principals were matured as teachers in a climate of light despotism and predetermined governmental educational policy which teachers were simply implementing. Teachers were never invited to participate in the formulation of educational policy. Therefore, this situation is now firmly embedded in their behavior and “guides” their actions and way of thinking as principals.

### Professional development and in-service

As indicated in Table I, one of the areas where principals need to improve is the area of professional development and in-service. The answers given by teachers on the items included in this section of the questionnaire further clarify the perceived shortcomings of principals in this particular area.

The main conclusions are that principals do not seem to care much about self-improvement, or enhancing their leadership skills. At the same time, they do not try to evaluate their teachers’ performance through the use of any assessment instruments; furthermore, supervisors provide no feedback to the teachers involved. The picture one gets from further analysis is quite illuminating.

About 66 per cent of the responding teachers stated that their principals do not try to enhance their leadership skills, and only 9 per cent believe that their principal is always eager to improve on their leadership skills. Moreover, about 60 per cent stated that their principals do not use informative materials given to them during in-service seminars or other sources in order to communicate new ideas to their staff. Also, with regard to the item stating that the principal “Disseminates ideas and information to other professionals; provides leadership in addressing the challenges facing the profession”, again about 66 per cent stated that principals seem reluctant to present new ideas, new material, and new methods to the staff, in order to enhance the school’s overall performance. The reasons for these results could be explained by the following.

Principals, as mentioned before, are promoted into an administrative position at a rather old age and as a result, they lack the zeal and energy for professional growth. In some cases, principals may have been promoted merely a year before retirement. The motivation for these principals to extend their academic background through research and through new sources of knowledge is, understandably, limited.

Another factor which deters principals from embarking into other ways of in-service activities is the fact that they do not have any motivation by the Ministry of Education to do so. Since the promotion system exalts the

### Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire statement</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers answering “never” or “rarely” (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is discussion, a method accepted by your principal?</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are decisions taken in a collaborative way?</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your principal show open-mindedness in various ways of thinking?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your principal accessible to adverse points of view?</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are your procedures of decision making, collaborative rather than dogmatic?</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
age of a candidate and not their qualifications, principals don’t feel the need to improve; on the contrary, they patiently wait to get a bit older and therefore raise their chances of being promoted to a supervisor position. Age is the factor that really matters and not the individual charisma or qualifications.

This promotion system has been reigning for decades now and a great number of teachers feel contempt towards it, since age is the decisive factor. As a consequence, principals are deprived of any intrinsic zeal to improve, a long time before promotion and definitely are not given any other chance to change even after being promoted.

Another explanation could lie in the fact that supervisors who evaluate principals do not show any real interest in evaluating the principal’s academic growth or performance. Instead they show a great interest in how books are being maintained and how obediently the principals respond to all governmental decrees. Naturally a principal’s main concern becomes the satisfaction of bureaucratic obligations. Most of the principals interviewed in an earlier piece of research mentioned that they do not have the time to be the kind of leader they want to be, because of the many bureaucratic chores they have to deal with (Pashiardis, 1998).

Teachers also criticized their principals for not taking advantage of new instructional materials, mainly provided by the use of new technology and other sources such as seminars. Various explanations could be given, i.e. principals are not in accord with the latest technological innovations and furthermore, as persons who lived and worked in a certain educational environment for years, regard new technology as out of reach.

**Personnel management**

This is the area where principals, according to teachers, need to improve most. The ratings given to the principals in this area, rarely rose above average. Teachers had to rate their principal in four statements in the area of personnel management, of which the first one was to state whether principals embark into any serious evaluation of their staff. The results shown in Figure 1 are illuminating.

These results seem to provide further evidence to previous findings. As was mentioned earlier, principals are not eager to provide teachers with material in order to enhance their teaching capacity. This finding should not be surprising any more, bearing in mind that principals do not even know what their teachers need since the evaluation process is almost non-existent. Data analysis also provided other significant findings:

- 68 per cent of the participants answered that their principals give no specialized help to them;
- 87 per cent stated that their principals do not use any specific evaluation tools. This result may be explained by the fact that most principals probably are not aware of any evaluation tools. This professional knowledge, at least in Cyprus, could not be handed out by the hierarchy of the Ministry but from specialized courses taken in a Master’s degree. Earning such a degree, however, is not regarded as essential for promoting teachers into administrative positions;
- 63 per cent stated that principals do not clearly define expectations for staff performance, regarding instructional strategies, classroom management and communication with the public.

The necessity for improvement is obvious and it comes as no surprise that teachers judge their principals as inadequate in handling personnel affairs with success.

**Relations with parents and the community**

Establishment of good relationships between school and parents is a function of school leadership that most of the principals seem to cope well with (as indicated in Table I). A closer examination though of what teachers have answered gives credence to reasonable doubts about whether this delicate matter is being handled well by the principals.

First, it must be pointed out that principals encourage and promote (or at least they try to) good relationships with the local community, as indicated by 64 per cent of the teachers who agree with this statement. However, judging from responses in other items in this area of the questionnaire, this could be a masquerade attitude on behalf of the principals if one considers that 54 per...
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cent of the teachers stated that principals do nothing towards getting the community interested in the school and the various problems it faces. Also, another interesting result is that 53 per cent of the respondents declared that principals ignore the prospects of collaboration with firms, operations and services offered by the local community. This particular result raises questions as to why principals would hold such an indifferent attitude towards the local community and its resources. Local community, if handled with care, could be transformed into a massive economic relief system for the schools and their low budgets. It would seem natural for principals to seek such kind of help. One explanation which could be given for this phenomenon is that principals do not want to feel obliged to outsiders, because in that way, principals will be more vulnerable to outside demands and suggestions. As a result, the decision-making center will change its headquarters and will be transferred to parents and the local community which is something not desired by principals.

Another result deriving from this situation is that principals are unaware about the needs of the local community in which they serve (65 per cent of teachers responding felt this way). Again, this result is no revelation. Without any contacts with local elements, this kind of lack of awareness is probably the natural outcome. The implications of this phenomenon are quite interesting because it can be inferred that principals will follow the same policies, will take the same actions, and will have the same expectations concerning results regardless of where they work. However, not all communities are the same and certainly they have diverse educational needs and face totally different problems and should, therefore, be dealt with in different ways.

However, further analysis also indicated that, despite this non-cooperative attitude towards the community, principals seemed to be successful in projecting a positive image of their school to the community at large. At the same time they are quite meticulous in not giving room for gossip and complaints from parents. The explanation for this result may lie in the following: parents, especially in Cyprus due to its small population of about 770,000 people and the small island-nation mentality, have the means to influence the higher echelons of the Ministry of Education. If they realize that their school has any trouble. One more speculation seems to be plausible here: principals form that “perfect” image for their schools because they need to have their mind free of troubles and minimize parental involvement in educational affairs. In any case, the tragic consequence is that principals do not show a genuine interest for their school’s success. Instead of dealing with any problems that may occur, they try to cover things up until their retirement age arrives. The system has already exhausted their vigor, enthusiasm and determination.

Conclusion

As indicated in Table I, teachers have a positive attitude towards their principals in general, but definitely there are some areas where principals need to improve such as, personnel management and professional growth and development. Now that education is at the threshold of the new millennium, today’s educational needs necessitate that the principalship be re-designed and modified in a way that will reflect these new needs and guarantee further improvement in the years to come. Obviously, the bureaucratic and highly centralized structure of the Cyprus educational system has proved to be ineffective and must be abandoned. Until this takes place, principals will continue to misplace their abilities and talents (dormant, existent or not). This is by no means an easy decision for a government to take, considering that many teachers well in their 50s, are waiting patiently for their promotion. A new evaluation and promotion system will automatically erase all standing evaluations and inevitably raise grievances within these teachers and their families and the consequences for the government and the people involved might be shocking.

Principals must be given motives for self-improvement. It would seem logical if any such motivation was offered to teachers as well in order to create this self-improvement trend and attitude among all teachers, since the current teacher evaluation and promotion system does not seem to be in any imminent change. Some measures which could possibly work in that direction are the following:

• Principals must be given information about new sources of knowledge and how to retrieve them especially using today’s technology.

• The way principals are evaluated must be reformed in order to provide principals with incentives in improving themselves (Jacobson, 1995; Sessions, 1996). Qualifications such as additional studies and diplomas, Master’s degrees or even PhDs must be highly rated and not underestimated as they are under the current system.
The idea of having principals taking a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration and Management seems to be out of reach for the time being. Preparing intensive seminars and lectures will soothe the situation to some extent.

A one-year program prior to accepting promotion into an administrative position (like a makeshift Master degree) will not only equip principals with sufficient strategies and academic background, but will also deter teachers who obviously do not fit into the principal’s mold from accepting the position just for a pay-rise. One of the teachers who participated in the survey wrote:

- My principal is just one of the many principals currently serving at our schools who shouldn’t have been promoted in the first place.

- Evaluating schools and keeping them accountable according to standardized scores might motivate principals into a more enthusiastic and positive attitude towards educational outcomes. It is interesting to note that the majority of effective principals want to have such tests and be compared and ranked according to the scores they receive as indicated in a previous piece of research (Pashiardis, 1998). A meritocracy system should be established and meritorious principals should be praised and rewarded in order to motivate others. These national standards must be based on scientific data, and the tests should be constructed by professionals who possess the necessary academic knowledge and skills.

- Principals must be invited into educational and curriculum planning, and be awarded some autonomy to act in their domain at the school level. Decentralization and site-based management is a major trend nowadays and is viewed as a taken-for-granted feature of educational change in many countries (Thomas and Bullock, 1996).

Principals are very important to education and their preparation, evaluation and overall treatment must be analogous. Change in educational matters becomes manageable if there are principals who can manage change (Brody, 1972). No change in the educational scene can be successful unless, at the same time, something about principals’ work and their preparation is changed as well. Based on the results of this piece of research, it can be inferred that it is important to find out whether the teachers’ views are in congruence with those of the principal regarding the principal’s leadership and management of the daily affairs of the school, since all involved behave according to their own perceptions and not according to how things really are. One may conclude with the following, “a principal change in education is definitely changing principals”.

References
Duttweiler, P. and Hord, S. (1987), Dimensions of Effective Leadership, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Austin, TX.
Appendix 1

Questionnaire
1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always

I. School climate
1. Clearly states the school’s mission.
2. Communicates and promotes high expectation levels for staff and student performance in an enabling, supportive way.
3. Provides recognition for excellence and achievement.
4. Leaves enough autonomy to teachers in order to organize and program their teaching.
5. Offers opportunities for dialogue and planning between groups, classes and lessons.
6. Mediates and facilitates effective resolution of conflicts in a timely fashion.
7. Promotes open communication and flexibility in relations with the staff as opposed to strict adherence to bureaucratic hierarchy.
8. Initiates and supports programs and actions that facilitate a positive, caring climate for learning and an orderly, purposeful environment.

II. School leadership and management
9. With the staff’s cooperation creates a common vision for school improvement.
10. Encourages staff to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of this vision.
11. Presents his/her vision for the school to all educators in the school.
12. His/her values and vision are evident through the things he does, the way the principal spends his/her time and what he/she considers important.
13. Supports a culture where experiments and innovations are encouraged.
14. His/her authority is presented through his/her knowledge and abilities instead of his/her position authority.
15. Closely cooperates and contributes to the work of the Ministry of Education.
16. Identifies, analyzes, and applies research findings (e.g. effective school research correlates) to facilitate school improvement.

III. Curriculum development
17. Ensures that curriculum renewal is continuous and responsive to student needs.
18. Provides instructional resources and materials to support teaching staff in accomplishing instructional goals.

Further reading
19 Systematically and continuously monitors instructional and managerial processes to ensure that program activities are related to program outcomes; uses these findings for corrective action and improvement, as well as for recognition of success.

20 Effectively administers and integrates all special programs with the regular program.

IV. Personnel management
21 Uses developmental evaluation effectively and comprehensively with all staff by systematically observing instruction, recording observations, and regularly conducting formative and summative evaluation conferences.

22 Confers with subordinates regarding their professional growth; works jointly with them to develop and accomplish improvement goals.

23 Uses a specific teacher observation instrument and ensures that evaluations clearly and accurately represent staff performance.

24 Clearly defines expectations for staff performance regarding instructional strategies, classroom management and communication with the public.

V. Administration and fiscal management
25 Makes sure that different reports to the Ministry of Education are accurate and are timely submitted.

26 Complies with educational policies, as well as laws and regulations, in pursuing the mission of the school.

27 Is effective in scheduling activities and the use of resources needed to accomplish determined goals.

28 Develops budgets based upon documented program needs, estimated enrollment, personnel and other fiscal needs; implements programs within budget limits; maintains fiscal control; accurately reports fiscal information.

29 Monitors the use, care and replacement of capital equipment.

30 Manages all school facilities effectively; efficiently supervises their maintenance to ensure clean, orderly and safe buildings and grounds.

31 Displays respect for other people’s time by being punctual to district and committee meetings. Responds to time limits for breaks and gives attention to proceedings.

VI. Student management
32 Effectively develops and communicates to students, staff and parents school guidelines for student conduct.

33 Ensures that school rules are uniformly observed and that consequences of misbehavior are applied equitably to all students.

34 Effectively conducts conferences with parents, students and teachers concerning school and student issues, conveying both the positive aspects of student behavior as well as problem areas.

35 Protects learning time and teachers from outside and unnecessary interruptions.

36 Tries to implement such teaching methods where “higher order form of learning” is facilitated.

37 Promotes such practices so as to help implement and use knowledge in a variety of forms.

38 Promotes the interconnection of learning experiences in the school with practices which are followed outside the school.

39 Encourages and he/she is a good example of life-long learning using new ideas as well as successes and failures as examples.

40 Maintains student folders which contain the required data to document placement in a program that deviates from regular/mainstreamed education.

VII. Professional development and in-service
41 Uses information which accrues from school inspections and other teacher appraisal in order to improve personnel.

42 Strives to improve leadership skills through self-initiated professional development activities.

43 Utilizes information and insights gained in professional development programs for self-improvement.

44 Disseminates ideas and information to other professionals; provides leadership in addressing the challenges facing the profession.

VIII. Relations with parents and the community
45 Encourages relations between the school on one hand and the community and parents on the other.

46 Promotes cooperation with other organizations and businesses from the community so that students’ needs are addressed.
47 Creates such relations with the community and parents so that they are encouraged to participate in decision making within the school.

48 Demonstrates awareness of school/community needs and initiates activities to meet those identified needs.

49 Demonstrates the use of appropriate and effective techniques for community and parent involvement.

50 Emphasizes and nurtures two-way communication between the school and community.

51 Projects a positive image to the community.

9. Problem-solving and decision-making

52 Presents discussion and searching for solutions as commonly accepted practices within the school.

53 Shares information and facilitates decision-making among all personnel.

54 Solves problems in a cooperative way with teachers.

55 Is open to different approaches and solutions and does not insist in any one way of solving problems.

56 Tries to listen to many views and ideas before solving important problems.

57 Implements decision-making processes which are participative as opposed to autocratic.