Promoting school autonomy in centralized structures: Some implications for Policy borrowing

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Global Themes in Educational policy

1. The need for change;

2. The initiation of Educational change policies often takes place in a context of large-scale criticism on schools;

3. Large scale change initiatives are usually not accompanied by substantial financial commitment;

4. public schooling is often treated as market commodity;

5. Emphasis on standards, indicators, accountability and testing;

Global themes in Educational policy   3

Similar policy themes may be found internationally as different countries seem to be doing similar things.

However, educational policies implemented by different countries are not as similar as initially appears.

Context matters!!

Buying in a shop - benefits:

* Quicker

* Cheaper

* Easier to get

Buying in a shop - costs:

* Not necessarily the right color or material;

* Measures and fit are reasonable but not

   perfect;

* Not unique;

* Requires some compromise;

Going to the tailor - **costs**:

* It takes more time;

* It is more expensive;

* The process is more complicated and difficult;

Going to the tailor - **benefits:**

* You are more likely to get what you paid for;

* It will fit you perfectly;

* It is more likely to be unique

What is policy borrowing?

A policy borrowing approach searches the international experience for examples of a unique, transferable "best practice".

Why policies are borrowed?

1. They were found effective and successful in other contexts;

2. They Save time;

3. They Save money;

4. They enable better clarity regarding their final result.

Stage 1

- **Cross national attraction:**

Internal dissatisfaction

Systematic failure

Political change

Economic change

Global tendencies

Stage 2

Decision: the decision to adopt a certain policy may follow various rationales:

theoretical rationale

practical rationale

phony rationale

quick-fix decisions rationale

The policy borrowing process
Stage 3

- **Implementation**

Degree of implementation will depend on:

- The compatibility of measures a particular borrowed policy offers to the contextual circumstances and features of the borrowing system;

- The scope of the proposed change

Stage 4

- **Internalization** – the process through which a policy becomes part of the educational system of the borrowing country.

Potential discrepancies:

Structural

Political

Ideological

*Norms and values*

History and habits

Economic

Legal

Professional

An example: School autonomy

- School autonomy is assumed to improve school effectiveness and relevancy
- This assumption is supported by a vast number of empirical findings
- Consequently, many educational systems around the world introduced school autonomy policies

The centralized bureaucratic control of the Israeli educational system.
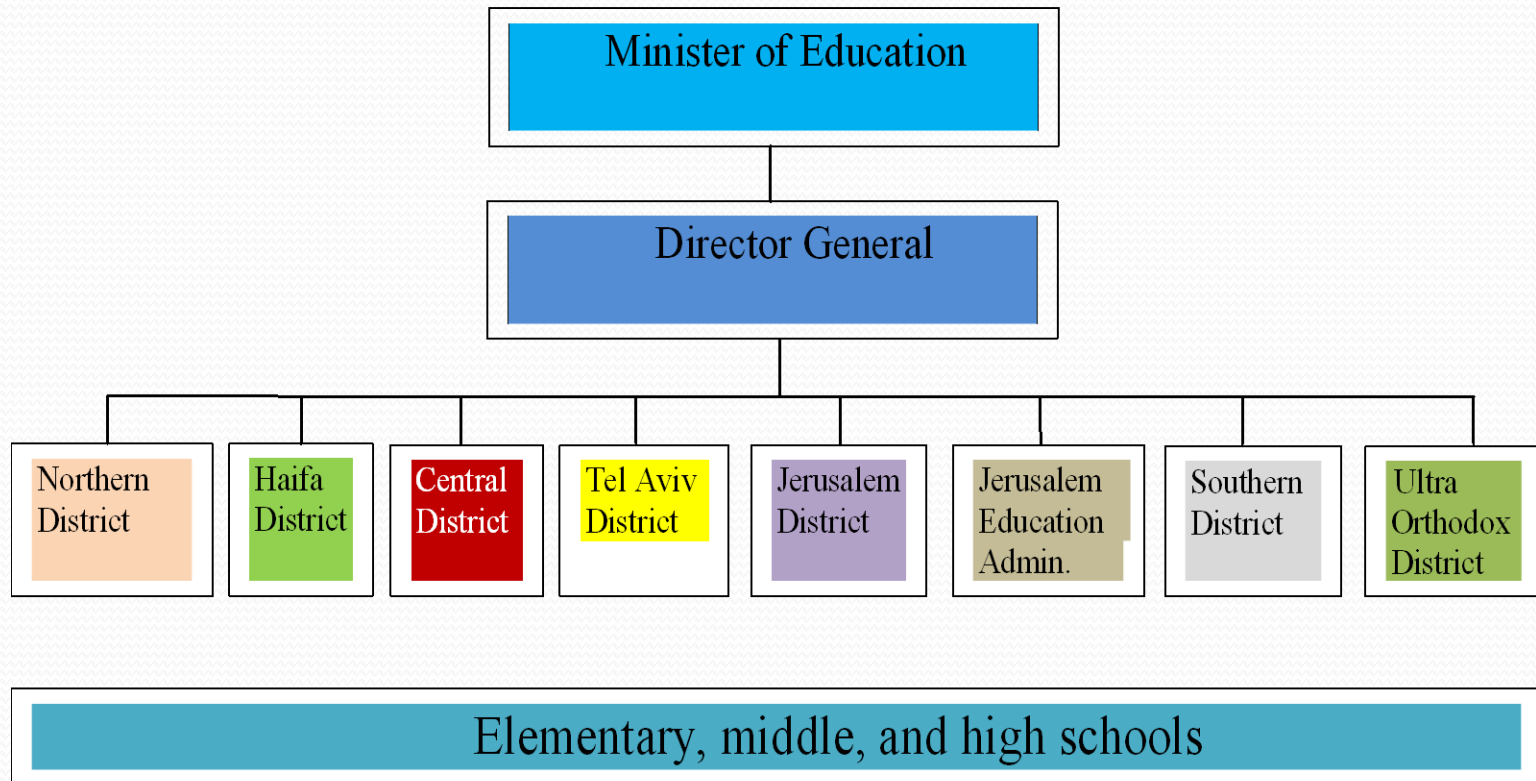
School-Based Management (SBM) in the Israeli educational system

- **1996-2004: SBM is centrally implemented;**
- **Since 2004: random implementation with little involvement of the central office;**
- **In 2010: reenactment of the SBM policy.**

Method

- A nationwide study sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Education.

- *Sample:* 2,565 teachers from 153 elementary schools coming from six districts;

The research group: 44 schools involved with SBM at least three years;

The comparison group: 109 schools that introduced SBM during the academic year in which the study was conducted;

Method (continued)

- *Research tool*: **a 24 items questionnaire originally developed by Friedman, Brama & Toren (2001) containing six distinct factors: organizational vision, feedback-based management, managerial emphasis, student participation, financial autonomy and teacher authority.**

Alpha coefficient of each subset ranged between 0.66 and 0.90, and for the entire scale = .87.

Students' scores were obtained from the Ministry of Education.

A comparison of SBM dimensions: Means and standard deviations

Variable	Research group N=44	Comparison group N=109	F
Vision	3.39 .24	3.31 .31	2.23
Managerial emphasis	3.08 .24	3.13 .27	.88
Feedback-based management	2.70 .38	2.60 .36	2.17
Teacher authority	1.80 .25	1.92 .26	6.70**
Student participation	2.94 .48	2.95 .44	.00
Financial autonomy	2.44 .40	2.21 .35	12.44**
**P<.001			

Predictor	Canonical Discriminant function	Wilk's λ
Financial autonomy	.70	.92**
Teacher authority	-.35	.95*
Vision	.29	.98
Feedback-based management	.26	.98
Managerial emphasis	-.18	.99
Student participation	.06	1.0

* P<.05; **p<.001; Eigenvalue=.168; Wilk's λ=.85: R²=23.17; df=3.15; p<.01; **Group Centroids:** research group= .64; comparison group = -.25
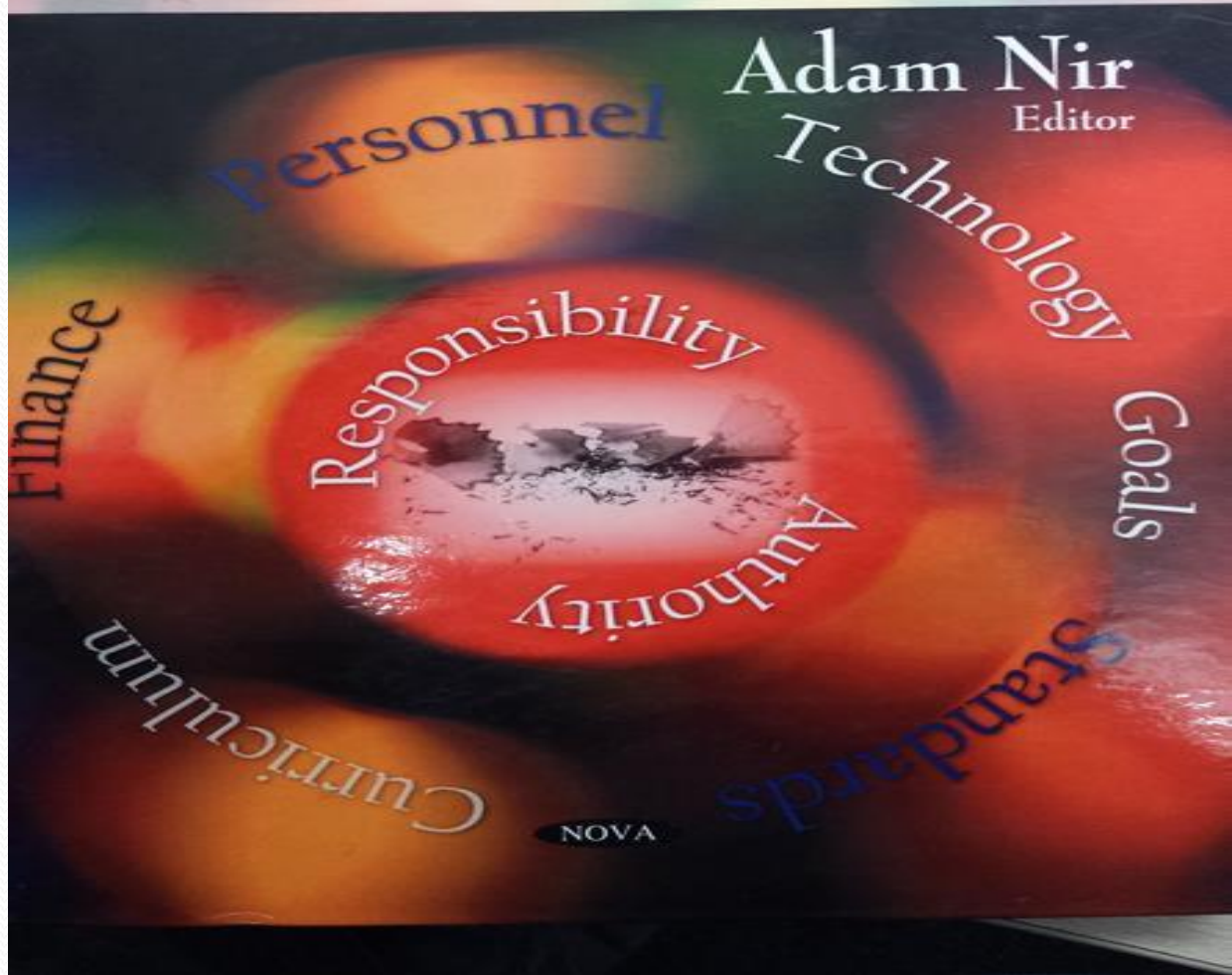
	Research group	**Comparison group**	*df*	**T**
Math	72.01 (18.81)	62.74 (25.05)	57	1.59 [(n.s.)]
Hebrew	68.94 (16.82)	66.74 (13.68)	59	.56 [(n.s.)]
Sciences	79.65 (20.83)	72.31 (21.06)	57	1.34 [(n.s.)]
English	60.12 (25.71)	59.75 (18.17)	58	.07 [(n.s.)]

Conclusions

- **The implementation of school autonomy policies in centralized structures is subjected to the "Centralization trap".**

Conclusions

- **Policy borrowing is context dependent.**
- **Expectations regarding effects should be adjusted according to the unique features of each educational system.**

Thank you
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