

**BAR- ILAN UNIVERSITY**

**The Autonomy of Middle Managers in Schools:**

**Case Study-Year Group Coordinators**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study wishes to answer the following questions: Does midlevel leadership, in particular a year group coordinator, have true autonomy? Is this jobholder authorized to make policy and decisions in his field, or does he merely carry out policy? Does the school principal's management style affect the latitude afforded to subordinates? What is the nature of the year group coordinator's reporting requirements to the school principal, and what is the year group coordinator's authority in relation to adjacent jobholders, such as field trip coordinator or social education coordinator? Do conflicts sometimes arise among those jobholders?

In order to meet these questions, the study examines the issues of midlevel leadership autonomy and distributed leadership in schools, with a focus on school year group coordinators.

In addition to classroom teaching, teaching staff in schools take on additional responsibilities and tasks. This creates middle echelons that receive some of the powers previously vested in the principal. Until recently, the year group coordinator was appointed by the principal without any preparation or detailed job description. The job profile was created, to a large extent, on the ground - according to each school's particular character and its principal's discretion. Nowadays, several coordinator prep courses have begun operating. For example, the Year Group Coordinator Development course, as part of Seminar Oranim's *Oz Letmura* program.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology, including semi-structured interviews with 12 principals and 12 year group coordinators from middle and high schools.

The study's findings show that, in regard to the coordinator's latitude in setting policy, there's no consensus among principals: most see the coordinator's role as administrative-technical, while a minority believes that he also shares in the school's educational policymaking. This determines the level of the coordinator's autonomy and of the principal's delegation to him. Among coordinators, the view is unanimous that a coordinator is a senior member of the school's distributed midlevel leadership, and that

he must be given autonomy. In their view, the autonomy afforded to them varies from school to school, and hinges on the principal's personality and leadership style. It can generally be said that there is a duality in the way principals regard decentralization and autonomy - which thus casts a doubt on whether deep decentralization indeed exists, and on whether autonomy exists for midlevel leadership, including the coordinator.

The study shows that the year group coordinator forms part of the pedagogic staff hierarchy headed by the principal, with the principal and the coordinator not seeing eye-to-eye in regard to the coordinator's job definition. While principals view the coordinator as more of an administrative figure, coordinators emphasize the pedagogic aspect of their job.