

Abstract

School management is a complex and challenging role that includes many arenas of handling and decision making. The principal has to function in a technological, dynamic and uncertain environment, sometimes while experiencing resistance to their activities and a constant challenge to their authority. When dealing with principals at the stage of entering the position, and especially in the first year - this is even truer. The new principals come with limited managerial experience from their previous roles and with a sense of capability that is not stable enough. This intense reality produces considerable mental and emotional stress on the newly-appointed principal and leads to negative feelings, such as loneliness, physical exhaustion, nervousness, constant worry, and in extreme cases, even depression.

In such a reality, strengthening the dimensions of resilience among the principals entering the position seems to be an essential necessity. Resilience is the ability to adapt to difficult situations and crisis, to "bounce back" to a pre-crisis state, to recover and overcome negative experiences to the extent that one achieves a feeling of well-being and satisfaction, and even to prosper. This research shows that principals with high coefficients of resilience have a high ability to recover from situations of stress and crisis, and are more effective leaders, who demonstrate proven success in the arenas they are entrusted with.

Although there has recently been a growing awareness of the emotional aspects of management work in general and of school management in particular, there seems to be no long-term, systematic research that deals with beginning school principals and their coping with the challenges the new role presents in resilience contexts. It also seems that studies that deal with the principal's personal coping with the various challenges throughout the career stages are relatively limited, and career studies that

delve into the personal experiences of employees in general and principals in particular are less common. Moreover, although school principals experience at the stage of entering the role an overflowing of emotions such as: loneliness, stress, uncertainty and more, research in this area is not sufficiently developed. Therefore, it is necessary and imperative to deepen the research on resilience among principals in the phase of entering the position, i.e. in the Induction phase.

The aim of the study is therefore to examine dimensions and practices of resilience when entering the position of school management. The questions that the study will try to answer are: How do the new principals perceive their role in the face of those job challenges upon entering management? What promotes and what hinders the development of resilience among school principals in their first year? And what are the characteristics and practices of resilience of principals in their first year?

The present study will be based on the qualitative methodology of Case Study. This method covers a wide range of research methods: from a single case, through pairs of cases to the study of multiple cases - Multiple Cases Study. The "Multiple Cases Study" strategy is a collective version of the Single Case Study and aims to compare cases and present distinctive or similar characteristics among them. The study examined the Multiple Case Study of resilience among school principals as an approach in which two processes take place simultaneously: the process of learning the case and the process of searching for patterns of human behavior (overt and covert) as a product of case learning. Namely, the method included a detailed analysis of each case (within case analysis), accompanied by a cross-sectional analysis (cross case analysis) of all cases and interpretation.

For the purpose of conducting the study twenty-one new school principals (first managerial position) were recruited in the early induction phase, i.e. their first year in

the position. Principals came from schools with a different demographic nature, a different nurturing index, and different stages of education (elementary, middle and high school). As mentioned, the research made use of qualitative research tools: interviews, focus groups and managing a personal reflective diary. The data collection was spread over the 2020-2021 school-year in order to provide information through the interviewees about the characteristics and patterns of resilience among school principals at the time of entering the position. There were three in-depth interviews held with each principal at the beginning, half and end of the year. There were also two focus meetings with principals as a group in the second and last quarter of the year. Data analysis was performed continuously throughout the data collection to reveal categories arising from the principals' input. The sampling in the study was a convenience sampling, which was selected on the basis of the researcher's acquaintance with some of the school principals and of recommendations of supervisors, directors of education departments, etc.

The study's findings show that principals perceive their role as leaders keeping away from traditional authoritarian leadership. Many of them have defined themselves as leaders or democratic managers, who strive for leadership and a role perception characterized by the participation of group members in the planning and determination of the course of action. Many of them have also seen themselves as "guiding" leaders who work to achieve their goals through the use of a cohesive and coherent set of values and who work to improve the functioning of the teacher or group of teachers by emphasizing those values. It is important to note that some principals reported that they take such a line of entry in order to "recruit staff and prevent possible conflicts" that may impair their sense of resilience as well as their mental well-being upon entering the position.

Regarding resilience factors or inhibitors, it should be said that despite the fact that each principal faces the unique reality of their school, there are generic issues dealing with resilience aspects that are common to a large percentage of principals, as the vast majority of principals noted several factors that prominently and tangibly challenge their resilience, such as heavy workload that creates a feeling of stress, difficulty facing stakeholders, such as parents, authority, supervision etc., lack of administrative knowledge and lack of proficiency in administrative systems, feeling helpless due to dealing with a new reality, and accepting or rejecting staff which is very significant to the well-being of the principal at the stage of entering the position. It is important to note that often the reality of "entering the job" also affects the physiological aspects of new principals, such as impaired sleep quality, itching, abdominal pain, a feeling of stress etc. On the other hand, there were also growth factors that had a positive effect on the principals' perception of resilience and ability, such as short and quick successes as a nourishing factor for a sense of resilience, growth from biographical events as a basis for resilience and social support.

Regarding the resilience characteristics, a number of characteristics and practices have arisen, with the dynamic between the characteristics and practices being the following one: resilience characteristics, unlike resilience practices, are inherent components of the principals. They are not external to the principals and are part of their inner world to some extent or another. The resilience characteristics often represent character traits, inner abilities, beliefs and inner core values. In contrast, the resilience practices are active physical or mental actions that assist the principal in aspects of building resilience. Resilience practices are practical initiatives that stem from the inside out. That is, it is an active act or a deliberate avoidance of a particular act. Some of the distinctive resilience characteristics are the following: a confident and

cohesive professional educational identity, a sense of mission and meaning, a delay of response, optimism, adopting the right perspective towards stressful events, and physical training. We have noticed that as the principal has more resilience characteristics and practices they will enjoy more outlets, which will help them and promote their mental and emotional well-being. Therefore, it seems that a principal who possesses more resilience components has more opportunities to adapt to the reality and its challenges.

After analyzing and generalizing the factors, five core categories were found that served as the basis for constructing the conceptual model that explains the dimensions of resilience both in terms of characteristics and in terms of practices that principals use to strengthen and build their resilience. The resilience dimensions revolve around the emotional dimension, the mental dimension, the social dimension, the physiological dimension and the moral dimension.

Moreover, studies have shown that the existence of one resilience type does not automatically indicate the existence of another resilience type. In this study we have seen that the range of events and performances that the principal encounters is large and diverse and includes many areas that constitute a significant leverage of pressure on the principal. We have also seen that each principal responds differently to different types of stress. For example, some principals lose their composure when facing parents' demands, while dealing with issues that the team creates does not deter them at all, and vice versa, principals who facing staff's demands weaken them but who show resilience when dealing with parent's demands. This led to the coining of the concept "Contingency Resilience" (CR) which describes this reality, i.e. resilience which is dependent on situation and encounter with resilience factors and inhibitors.

This research, therefore, has a theoretical and applied contribution. The theoretical contribution is through expanding the knowledge regarding the identification of the factors that are directly related to strengthening the principal's personal and mental resilience as a factor that may be paramount to the principal's success in their position and even reducing burnout and early departure. In addition, it offers a clear and coherent multidimensional model that aids in a holistic understanding of the concept and its practical affiliations. The results of the proposed study may also provide theoretical information on resilience that will not only support school leadership, but will influence the training and mentoring process and advance the managerial skills required of school principals in a time of complexity and change. The information obtained in the study may help principals, professionals and researchers understand and improve the processes that encourage and promote optimal resilience, expose the processes that inhibit it, and serve as a basis for theoretical development and new and renewed thinking regarding school resilience dimensions in training, mentoring and professional development. It may even help professionals, such as supervisors, education departments and divisions directors, locating frameworks, guidance training and professional development, understand the importance of strengthening resilience dimensions among new principals so that they can help them thrive in their role.