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School Management in the Light of Implementation of the European Foundation for Quality Management

Long Abstract

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Abstract

This study addresses the management of Israeli schools according to the excellence approach of the European Foundation of Quality Management (E.F.Q.M) as part of the changes that have occurred in education systems around the world and in Israel in particular. The study deals with the processes of assimilating the EFQM approach in Israeli schools in the hope that it will serve as a basis for thinking and working efficiently and correctly to expand the process to all schools in the district. The Research aimed to identify the parameters entailing success or failure in the process of implementing the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools.

The study used a mixed methods research. The quantitative part included diagnostic questionnaire of management styles, diagnostic questionnaire of self-efficacy and conceptual knowledge questionnaire. The qualitative part includes semi-structured interviews, telephone survey and observations, and a self-study report.

The results of the study show that 87% of the schools abandoned the quality and excellence approach EFQM due to various reasons, some of which focus on the level of the Ministry of Education, which manages the framework of change and some of which focus on schools as organizations and managers as leaders of change. The findings show that the assimilation process of the EFQM approach was not done on the basis of an organized work plan. Additionally, the selection of the change agents, i.e., the school principals, was not conducted in a systematic manner. The management of the changed by the school principals was unplanned and disorganized both on the individual and the organization levels.

The corporate excellence approach EFQM can lead the education system to good results over time and this can be learned from the two schools that succeeded in assimilating of the innovative approach. The conclusion that emerges from the study regards the need for careful preparation of the change in both the level of the Ministry of Education's headquarters and the level of selection of principals and educational institutions that are suitable for the implementation of this approach.

Thus this study offers two models of work according to which it is possible to manage the change to success, both at the level of the Ministry of Education headquarters and at the level of the school principal.

Key words: Management styles, Organizational life styles, Quality and excellence, Self-efficacy, Change management.

1. Introduction

This study engages in the management of Israeli schools based on the European excellence approach of the European Foundation of Quality Management (E.F.Q.M) as part of the transformations that have transpired in education systems around the world and in Israel in particular (Simchon & Grienberg, 2017). The process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach constitutes another step in the adoption of innovativeness, in an attempt of organizations in general and the education system in particular to improve their performance (Gibson & Tesone, 2001), The E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach was developed by the European Union in 1989 with the aim of assisting economic organizations to compete in the global market by improving their performance and their work and management methods. The E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach is the framework of business excellence prevalent in Europe and more than 50,000 organizations are operating according to this approach. The E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach has developed over the years and today it is adapted to every organization regardless of its size, sector and areas of engagement. This approach constitutes a master plan for the development of excellence, approach of effective working methods, promotion of innovativeness and improvement of results. In 2001, the excellence approach was embraced by the Civil Service Commission and in 2007 it was adopted by the northern district of the Israeli Ministry of Education. Starting in 2011, this approach has been introduced to schools, firstly in 15 schools chosen in this district as pioneers for assimilating the approach and experiencing it in practice. The excellence approach constitutes one of the landmarks for leading the education system to excellence in view of the changing reality in which the education system finds itself.

Education systems worldwide are the cornerstone of modern society and the strategic-developmental basis of every nation, particularly in the western world (Simchon & Grienberg, 2017). The education system functioning in a changing reality (Cameron & Green, 2015) and in a reality with singularity of innovativeness (innovativeness and change at a very high pace in exponential dimensions) is at a meaningful junction of choosing the directions of management and teaching processes that should match this reality. The transpiring processes are highly dynamic, constantly changing and less predictable than before. The goals of the education system are numerous, diversified

and frequently contradictory and cannot always be predicted or assessed. As mentioned, principals operate in a turbulent and dynamic environment that is constantly changing (Adler, 2008). They have the responsibility for solving dozens of problems on a daily basis, balancing between the different demands of different interest groups within the school and outside it. They have to present initiatives and innovations for the promotion of the school, find ways of expressing their educational vision as educators, leading their organization in this direction (Sergiovanni, 2002). In this reality, the demands from education institution managers are increasingly becoming more complex and require a high level of management and leadership skills. The basis for meeting these demands is recognition and self-examination of the management style of the principals and of those around them, an examination of and adjustment to the general and organizational reality (Berma & Friedman, 2007; Sergiovanni, 2002). In order to comply with this complexity and lead the school, its teachers and students to the actualization of the goals, schools in general and principals in particular should adopt a managerial approach based on quality and excellence (Simchon & Grienberg, 2017).

This study is grounded in the acknowledgement that schools are perceived today as organizations for all intents and purposes. As such, they are expected to be innovative and adjust themselves to the changing reality (Harpaz, 2012) as is the case in the business sector. The survival ability of schools as an organization greatly depends on the managerial and strategic flexibility that they can develop (Hitt, Keats & De Marie, 1999) and on the way of managing the change (Kotter, 1995, 2003).

According to the empirical literature, schools are inclined to adopt innovativeness from the world of business. For example, the TQM - Total Quality Management, or its version in education systems TQE – Total Quality Education (Detert, Schroeder & Cudeck, 2003). Many schools have embraced and assimilated the requirements of ISO – International Organization for Standardization, have passed quality examinations and were recognized by the international organization (Fullan & Watson, 2000; Van Den Bergh, 1998).

This study explores ways of assimilating the approach of the European Foundation Quality Management (E.F.Q.M) in 15 schools chosen by the Israeli Ministry of Education, aiming to lead the entire education system to excellence and adjustment to the complex and incessantly changing reality.

The study described here examines the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach. It focuses on the principals' management style, their self-efficacy, the change processes that they have led in their school as well as the successes and inhibitions of this process. Finally, this study presents the results of the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools chosen to be the spearhead of this process.

1.1 Gap in knowledge

The E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in many organizational systems, mainly in industrial and economic organizations, has been studied around the world. The scope of the studies of the E.F.Q.M. approach in the education system and in school frameworks is limited and the studies mostly focus on the usefulness of introducing the quality and excellence method into education system. The literature review did not find studies of the way of assimilating in practice the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in schools. There are no studies that review the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach, the implementation of the change in school or the practical measures including objections, failures and results.

This study investigates the process by which the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach was implemented in Israeli schools. It presents the factors, reasons and circumstances that promoted or inhibited the implementation process and the results of the process in the schools that succeeded to assimilate the innovative approach.

1.2 The research problem

The education system in Israel has been criticized by many and varied bodies, both by educational intra-organizational bodies and by educational outside systemic bodies such as: State Comptroller Office, parents, academicians and so on. In view of the failures in the PISA exams, low achievements in national comparative tests, problematic educational climate and so on, the main argument is whether the education system educates and shapes the future generation towards the 21st century? Or perhaps it is still conservative and is stuck in the previous century? The education system did not manage to adjust itself to the learners' changing academic needs of this century. Thus, an education system that is not progressing and is not changing is in

fact in a state of stagnation. Consequently, the management of the northern district of the Israeli Ministry of Education has decided to invest extensive resources in introducing the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach. In light of this vast investment, a decision has been made to examine the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools, the effectiveness of the process as well as the impact of the innovative approach on the school organizational results.

1.3 The research aims

This research aims to identify the parameters entailing success or failure in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools from the following aspects:

- ❖ Management styles of the principals and of the quality coordinators and the principals' self-efficacy.
- ❖ Processes of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools.

Moreover, this study aims to create a platform for educational institutions managers with the purpose of teaching them to lead their organization in the lanes of organizational excellence.

1.4 The research question

What are the characteristics that promote and inhibit the assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools?

1.5 Research boundaries

The study was conducted in Israel and it is based on the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach between the years 2011-2017. As mentioned above, the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach and its assimilation in the education system was a pioneering venture in Israel and encompassed 15 schools from the age of elementary school and up to high school. These schools belonged to different and varied sectors – Jewish, Arab, Druze, religious and secular. The assimilation process was implemented in the northern district of the Ministry of Education and included Ministry of Education district

officials who led the assimilation process vis-à-vis the school. Also participated in the process a Ministry of Education external consultant who had specialized in this innovative approach as well as the Standard Institution of Israel that is the formal representative of the E.F.Q.M in Israel.

1.6 Importance of the study

This study discussed an innovative and pioneering process in the Israeli education system. This process is a breakthrough in a conservative education system trying to launch a new and creative course that will result in its teachers and learners' adjustment to a changing world.

Education systems around the globe are wondering what is the proper way that will qualify and prepare the next generations for the world of the future. These systems are mostly conservative and have remained unchanged for hundreds of years while the world has been changing beyond recognition. Moreover, changes and reforms that have transpired over the years throughout the world, were not accomplished or assimilated in organizations (Abrahamson, 1991; Clark & Salaman, 1998; Eisner, 2007; Fishbein, 2009; Fuchs, 2007; Fullan, 1993; Harpaz, 2007; Reichel, 2009; Rosenberg, 2007). This study discusses an innovative approach of the education system conduct, attempting to trace a new path. Consequently, this study constitutes an important information source for the systems that try identifying ways of educational innovation. It engages in schools, some of which failed and some succeeded in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach and serves as a meaningful source of information for structuring education systems interested in motivating to and achieving organizational excellence as well as obtaining essential results for themselves.

1.7 The thesis structure

The thesis consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 includes review of the empirical literature and presents three main topics: the first – quality and excellence; the second – organizational change processes in general and in schools in particular; and the third – management and leadership. Chapter 2 is the Methodology chapter, describing the research procedure. This chapter comprises all the processes and

research tools that served the researcher for conducting his study and for drawing reliable and valid conclusions. The chapter describes the way the study was conducted, namely the mixed methods research and the self-case report method which oriented the researcher in the depths of the data analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the findings obtained from the interviews, questionnaires and self-case report, based on the designed themes and criteria tree.

Chapter 4 presents the discussion of the research findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework that underlies this study. Chapter 5 is the closing chapter of this study and it describes the conclusions drawn from the discussion of the research findings and the contribution to knowledge both theoretical and practical. This chapter suggests a thinking innovativeness for the optimal assimilation of innovations in education systems.

Keywords: quality, excellence, managing an organizational change, management, leadership, self-efficacy, management styles, Organizational life cycle.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study explores the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach for the first time in the northern district of the Israeli education system. The participants were 14 principals who constituted the pioneering group in the assimilation of this innovative approach in the school that they manage. The research aim was to identify the parameters entailing success or failure in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools from the following aspects:

- ❖ Management styles of the principals and quality coordinators and principals' self-efficacy.
- ❖ Processes of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools.

Moreover, this study aims to create a learning platform of leading schools in the lanes of organizational excellence, designed for the Ministry of Education district officials and for educational institutions managers.

The research question underpinning this study is: What are the characteristics that facilitate and inhibit the assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools?

The main theories on which this study is based are the following:

- ❖ E.F.Q.M organizational quality and excellence (European Foundation for Quality Management, 2018).
- ❖ Innovativeness and change leading (Kotter, 2003).
- ❖ Management styles (Adizes, 1980).

From the main theories, the following terms were chosen for building the conceptual framework: management and leadership, management styles, quality and excellence, self-efficacy, organizational life cycle, change management. These key terms constitute a context fabric that affect each other and the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the school, as illustrated in

Figure 1.

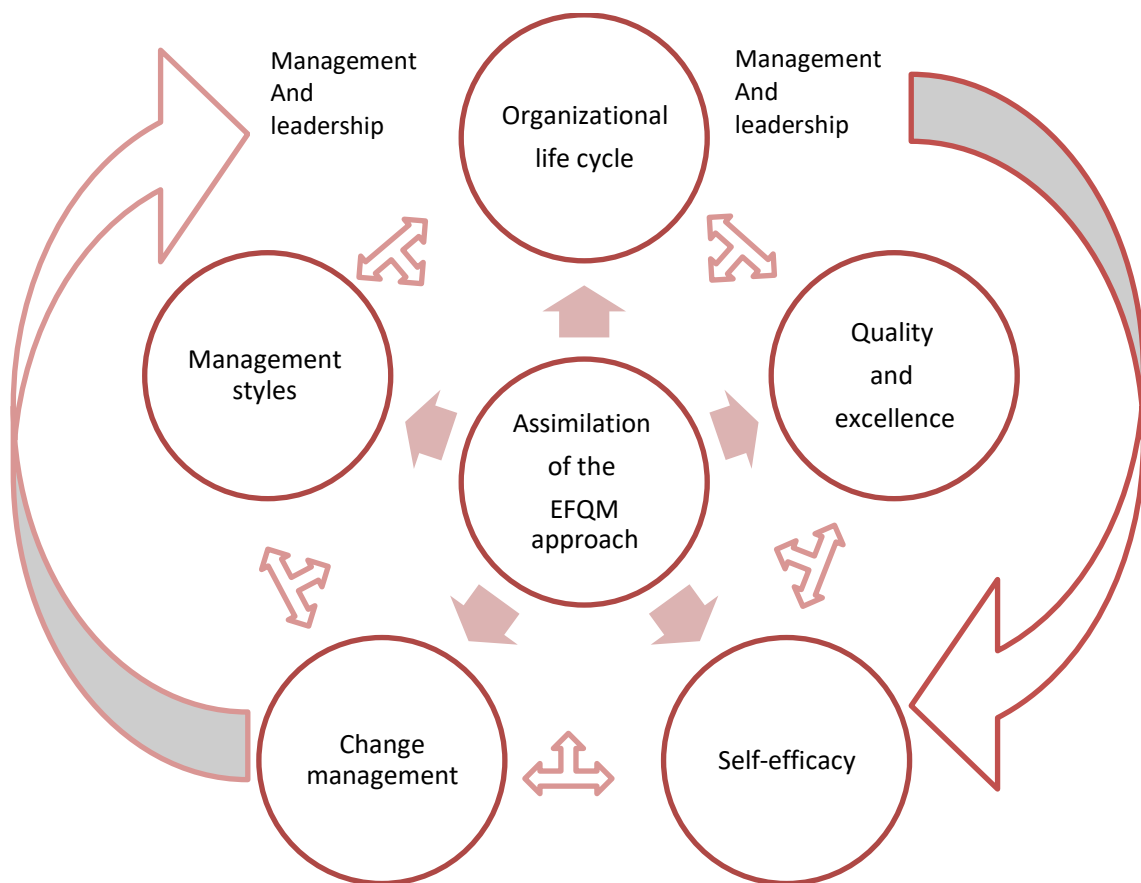


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Quality

One of the interpretations of this term is satisfying the customer's demands. This term underlies theories dealing with quality and constitutes a key topic of this study, namely E.F.Q.M organizational quality and excellence (Simchon & Grienberg, 2017).

Excellence

A relative process of extensive exhaustion of the personal potential in the space of management in order to achieve excellent results. This term complements the term quality which both form the basis for quality and excellence (Crosby, 1996).

Change management

Anything that considerably changes the management principles and their implementation or that essential changes an organizational structure. Assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach is an organizational innovativeness (Kotter, 1993).

Management

Heading an institution and determining its operation methods; activating other people in the organization. This term characterizes the conduct of the investigated principals – what is the degree of management versus the degree of leadership during the assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach (Sergiovanni, 2002).

Leadership

Controlling people and guiding them. Influencing the actions of others in order to accomplish desirable goals. This term also characterizes the principals' conduct during the assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in their school (Sergiovanni, 2002).

Self-efficacy

The belief in one's ability to perform a certain task or a certain challenge and coping with them. This term constitutes one of the facilitators or inhibitors of the principals in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in their school (Bandura, 1986).

Management styles

Management styles is a term which encompasses managers' way of conduct in the management of their organization. There are different and varied management styles, and each of them has the features the style that impacts the organization conduct and the results thereof. This term helped to characterize the management styles of the principals investigated in this study in order to examine the management styles and

their influence on the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools Adizes, 2004a, 2004b).

Organizational life cycle

This term describes the evolution of an organization, taken figuratively from the human life cycle – from birth until death. It facilitated the investigation of the effect of the school position in the organizational life cycle in relation to the principal's management style and the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach (Adizes, 1980).

This study analyzes the process of assimilation in the schools in the context of any theory and term. By means of a methodological layout a research setup was built and its results will be the cornerstones for re-thinking about the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in education systems.

3. Research Methodology and Approach

3.1 Research aims

This research aims to identify the parameters entailing success or failure in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools from the following aspects:

- ❖ Management styles of the principals and of the quality coordinators and the principals' self-efficacy.
- ❖ Processes of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools.

Moreover, this study aims to create a platform for educational institutions managers with the purpose of teaching them to lead their organization in the lanes of organizational excellence.

3.2 Research question

What are the characteristics that promote and inhibit the assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools?

3.3 Research assumptions

- a. A successful assimilation of the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach depends on the following dimensions:
 - 1) Management styles.
 - 2) Principals' self-efficacy.
 - 3) Way of assimilating the change.
- b. The hindering factors stem from the organization age and its position in the organization lifecycle as well as from the following dimensions:
 - 1) Management styles.
 - 2) Principals' self-efficacy.
 - 3) Way of assimilating the change.

Moreover, the hindering factors are external bodies such as: Ministry of Education district officials, local authority, educational network, that affect the school and its practice.

3.4 Research variables and time frame

3.4.1 Independent variables

The independent variable is the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach. This approach is structured, fixed and encompasses procedural processes of assessment and measurement determined by the European Foundation of Quality Management.

3.4.2 Dependent variables

The dependent variables are investigated and analyzed in relation to an independent variable and they are specified below:

- ✓ Management styles.
- ✓ Principals' self-efficacy.
- ✓ Way of assimilating the change.

3.4.3 Research time frame

October 2015 - June 2018.

3.5 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview, general and broad perspective about occurrences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The concept of the research paradigm illustrates interconnected ample assumptions about the investigated reality (Shkedi, 2003). This study is a pioneering (first) research in the Israeli education system, being the first attempt of assimilating in it a new approach of organizational excellence based on the excellence approach of the European Foundation of Quality Management. Assimilation of the organizational excellence approach transpires in 15 schools under the leadership of the principals and with the support of officials from the northern district of the Israeli education system. The approach is assimilated within the school and includes interaction with school officials, teachers, students and parents, as well as additional officials from the local authority, Ministry of Education, educational network and more. This study is based on the research field and on the managerial experience (18 years) as a principal of the researcher who participates in this study. Hence, the researcher has chosen the constructivist paradigm arguing that it is not possible to separate the researcher from the object of the investigation and adopt an objective attitude towards an occurrence (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). The constructivist attitude views individuals and their world as interdependent (Shkedi, 2003) and the reality as being formed by structuring. Moreover, it stipulates that one's experience is the basis on which we construct a meaning that is closely dependent on our ability to establish relations with the world in which we are living (Simons, 1996, cited in Shkedi, 2003). Constructivist-qualitative researchers strive to comprehend the investigated occurrences as they are understood by those involved in them (Shkedi, 2003). The information in this study is obtained on the basis of both a constructivist-qualitative research method and a positivist-quantitative methodology.

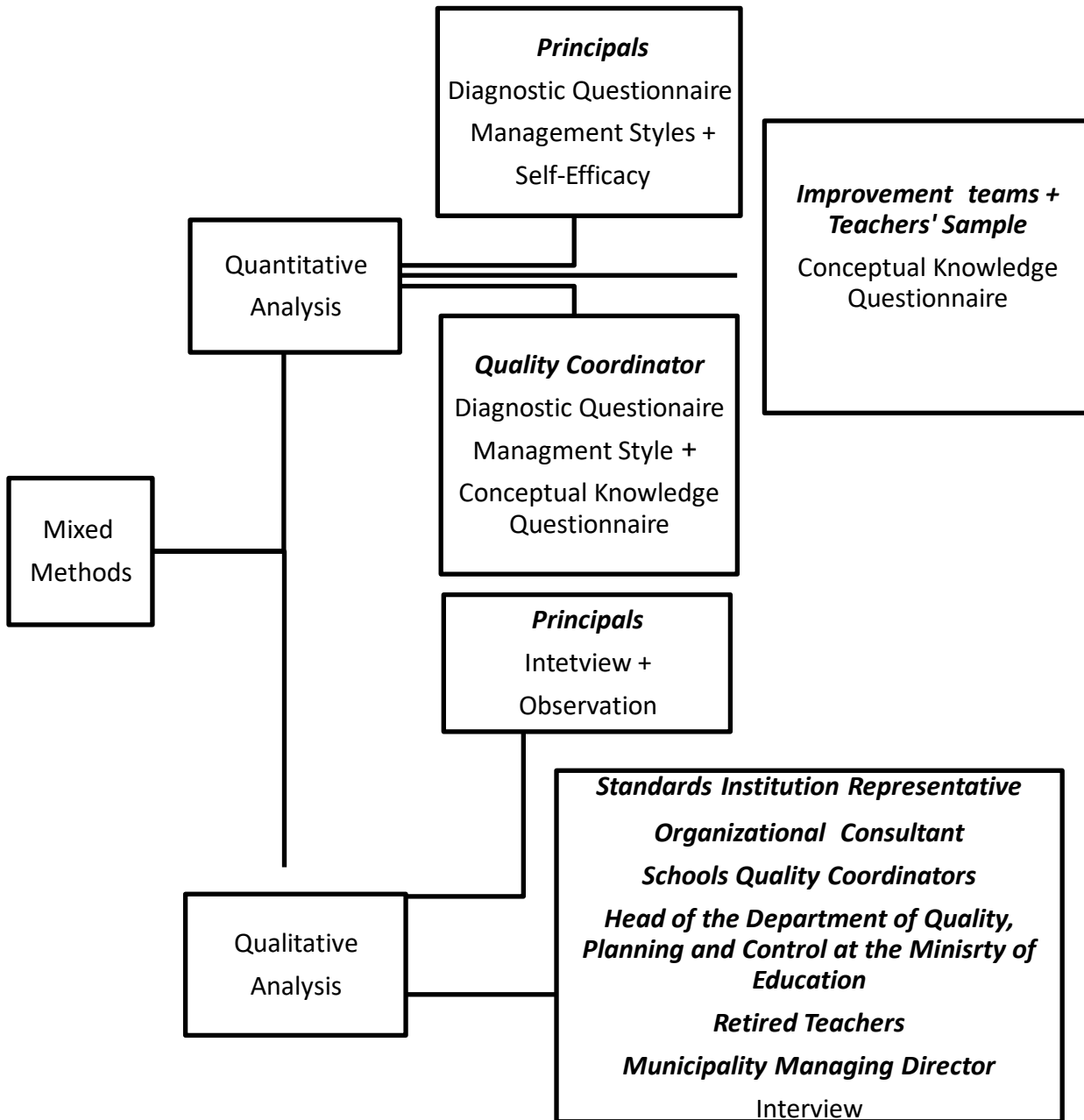
3.5.1 Mixed methods research

This study is based on a mixed methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative tools. A mixed methods research integrates two paradigms (both quantitative and qualitative research) within the framework of one study. Thus, researchers aim to neutralize the shortcomings of each research paradigm and exploit their advantages. For example, researchers can go out to the research field with a theory that constitutes a basis for the hypotheses (namely a quantitative research), use

interviews and perform observations or semi-structured open-ended interviews (i.e. qualitative research). The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the quantitative research data will establish a connection to the existing theoretical world or even to conceptualization or new insight as a basis for the field theory (inductive perception). In order to validate these connections or the insight/conceptualization, the quantitative research method (structured questionnaires) is also applied.

In this study, the integration of the two paradigms (qualitative and quantitative) enables drawing more valid, credible and reliable conclusions (Sabar-Ben-Yehoshua, 1995; Shkedi, 2003; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008):

- a. Complex occurrences that include processes transpiring among people and with people. These processes are mainly based on emotions, thoughts, wishes and aspirations and were all investigated by means of qualitative tools
- b. For the purpose of support and validation of the qualitative findings, a quantitative data analysis is performed, both from the aspect of using statistical measurable tools (such as analyzing a structured Management Styles Questionnaire, analyzing a structured Self-Efficacy Questionnaire) and from the aspect of a large number of participants about chosen designated topics (Teachers' Knowledge Questionnaire) (Creswell, 2013).



3.5.2 Self-case report

As indicated above, the researcher is one of the 15 principals who have started the process of assimilating the European Foundation Quality Management (E.F.Q.M) organizational excellence approach. The school managed by the researcher has functioned and assimilated the organizational excellence approach for a period of six years. The assimilation included processes, activities, discussions, interactions, deliberations, hesitations, successes and failures. These varied topics are a ‘fertile soil’ of information for making analyses and comparisons of additional sources – principals who have also assimilated this organizational excellence approach. For that purpose, the researcher applied the self-case report research method.

A self-case report is grounded in researchers’ reference and first-hand explanations, written and documented reports about their activities and actions as well as their personal interpretations, being the ‘main players’ of the narrative (Shkedi, 2003). In a self-case report, researchers themselves serve simultaneously as researchers and source of information. The materials accumulated in this type of research comprise observation minutes, descriptions and explanations of processes, actions and thoughts of the researcher/source of information. The analysis process in this research is self-reflective consisting of three stages:

- a. Initial analysis: characterized by the categorization of occurrences and the naming of categories through meticulous examination of the data. Each category represents a theme. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the first stage of data analysis as the beginning of a puzzle. The researcher starts accumulating vast information, leading to a process of integration until a complete picture is obtained. The objective of this stage is to develop the investigation. The categories are still initial and they are being interpreted only to small extent.
- b. The mapping analysis: this stage is based on the first stage and consists mainly of identification of categories that are overlapping among the participants. In the mapping analysis, researchers try integrating the categories formed by their inter-connections (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996), focusing on the relations between one category to the other ones (Shkedi, 2003).
- c. The focused analysis: a process whereby researchers assemble the information details into a coherent explanation revolving around central categories. These

categories are rich with descriptions and information and respond to the research aims and research questions (Shkedi, 2003).

3.5.3 Research Design and Research Population

| Stage | Aim | Research tool | Population | Data analysis |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Stage 1: | To identify the management style | Closed-ended questionnaire | 14 principals (including the researcher) + 16 quality coordinators | Structured analysis |
| | | Semi-structured interview | 13 principals (not including the researcher) + 16 quality coordinators | Content analysis |
| | To identify the self-efficacy | Closed-ended questionnaire | 14 principals (including the researcher) | Structured analysis |
| | | Semi-structured interview | 13 principals (not including the researcher) | Content analysis |
| Stage 2: | To identify the implementation process of the E.F.Q.M approach in the schools | Semi-structured interview | 13 principals + 16 quality coordinators + Head of the Department of Organizational Excellence at the Standards Institution of Israel + an organizational consultant + Head of the Department of Quality, Planning and Control at the Ministry of Education. | Content analysis |
| | | Knowledge test | 50 teachers | Quantitative analysis |
| | | Telephone survey | 6 new principals | Content analysis |
| Stage 3: | To identify the | Semi-structured | 10 retired teachers + District Manager of the school | Content analysis |

| Stage | Aim | Research tool | Population | Data analysis |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | researcher's management style | interview | + Head of the Technology Unit on behalf of the educational network + Municipality managing director | |
| Stage 4: | To identify the implementation process in the researcher's school | Semi-structured interview | 10 retired teachers + District Manager of the school + Head of the Technology Unit on behalf of the educational network + Municipality managing director | Content analysis |
| | | Self-Case report | School documents + reports of the Qualification Committees | Content analysis |
| | | Knowledge test | 150 teachers from the researcher's school | Content analysis |

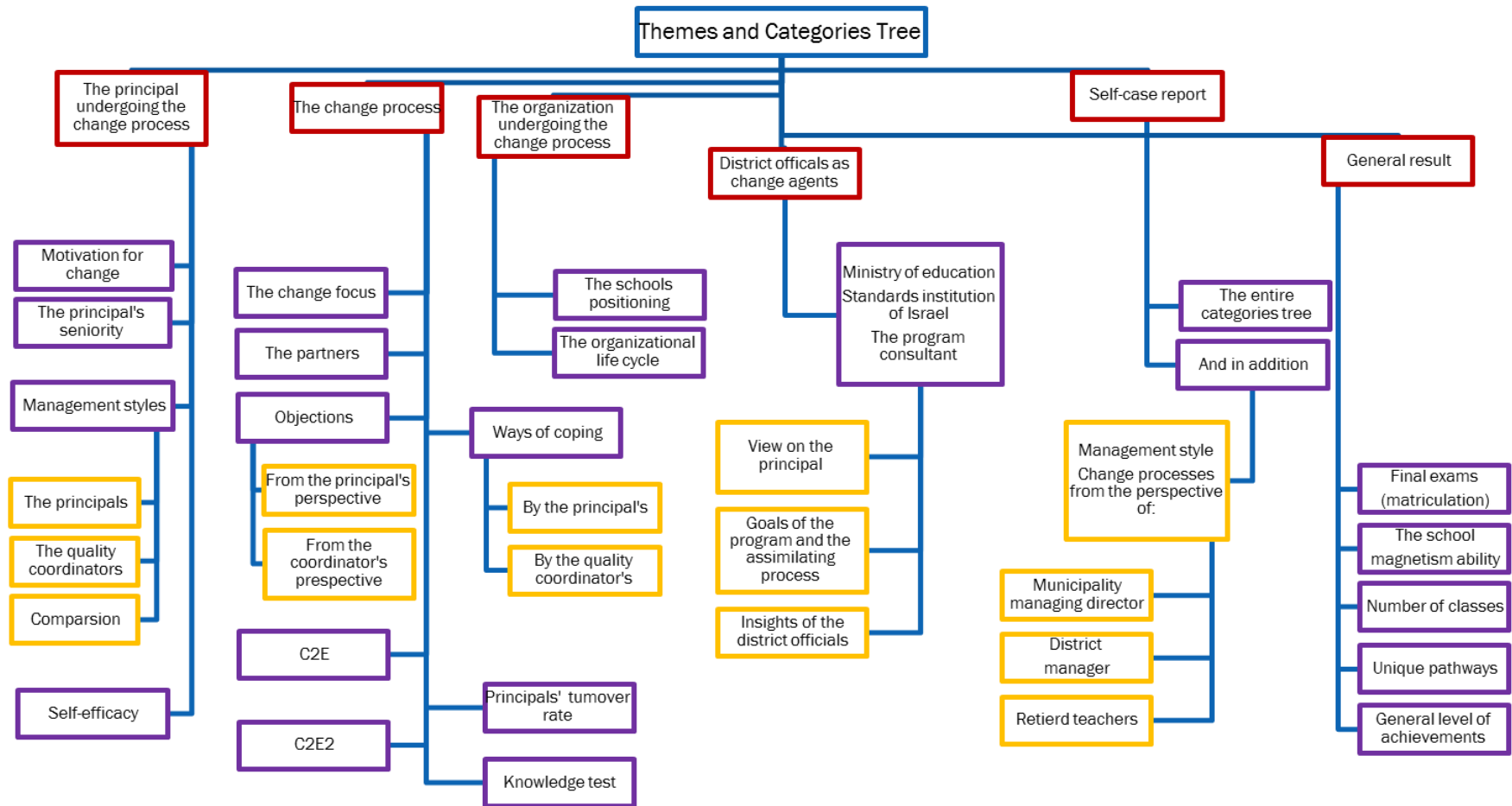
4. Findings

This study explores school management that focuses on the European Foundation for Quality Management (E.F.Q.M) approach. It characterizes the parameters which entail success or failure in the process of assimilating organizational excellence from two aspects:

- Management styles, the ways principals make decisions and the principals' self-efficacy.
- Processes of assimilating organizational excellence approach in schools.

As indicated in the Methodology chapter, interviews with 13 principals were conducted and transcribed. Based on this information, content analysis was performed by themes and categories specified below. Principal No. 14 is the researcher of this study and findings of the process at his school are described in the Self-Case Report section. The findings are presented on the basis of the research questions and research assumptions related to them.

Themes and Categories Emerging from the Content Analysis



4.1 Integrative findings

4.5.1 School-based integrative findings

- i. The reasons for choosing the organizational excellence approach by the principals originate from external motivation and internal motivation.
- ii. Most of the principals (78%) who participated in the process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach had sufficient seniority years for in-depth acquaintance with the school and its capabilities as an organization. They were sufficiently familiar with the hindering and accelerating forces in the school, internal and external bodies as well as organizational processes in the internal and external educational framework.
- iii. Fifty-eight percent of the principals who were leading the process of the organizational excellence approach managed the process in an administrative way. As a result, they acted according to the layout of the assimilation process, following administrative instructions and procedures dictated by the Ministry of Education program tutors. Forty-two percent of the principals acted like entrepreneurs – "embraced" the new venture and introduced the process of a new and unique initiative in their school.
- iv. A significant majority of the quality coordinators (66%) acted like administrators in the process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach – they executed the processes on the basis of instructions received from the Ministry of Education district officials.
- v. The principals chose quality coordinators in their image and mainly those with a dominant management style of type "A".
- vi. The quality coordinators had more management skills of type "I" than did the principals. The absence of type "P" among the principals and quality coordinators is very prominent. Moreover, the absence of type "I" among the principals is highly obvious.
- vii. According to the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, 86% of the principals demonstrated low self-efficacy in some topics and this affected the process of assimilating the change in the school.
- viii. The schools focused on three changes, among which most of the schools focused on the school climate and on the level of a change of first degree.

- ix. Most of the principals made the decision to join the process in a personal manner without collaboration and prior preparation of the staff, neither among the management members nor among the school staff in its entirety.
- x. Most of the school staff's objections stemmed from an excess of ventures, excess of projects, multitude of change-invoking slogans issued by the Ministry of Education, numerous demands for teachers' reports, many meetings, workload and burden of reforms.
- xi. The objections which the quality coordinators faced mainly related to workload, lack of reward, work beyond the normal hours, doubt and fear of criticism as well as distrust.
- xii. The principals reduced the objections by choosing team members motivated for generating a change, granting incentives such as addition of hours designated for the assimilation and individual talks.
- xiii. Not all the quality coordinators managed to moderate the objections. Those who addressed them did it by persuasion and repayment of personal favors, focusing on optimal inter-personal relations.
- xiv. Thirteen out of the 15 schools that have started the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach received their first recognition C2E; 87% of the schools managed to complete the first stage.
- xv. Six principals who started the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach, decided to leave the school. Hence, the assimilation process was completely stopped in those schools.
- xvi. Only two out of eight schools continued on to the second stage of assimilating the organizational excellence approach - C2E2.
- xvii. The reasons for abandoning the program are varied. Below are the reasons from the principal's perspective and from the quality coordinator's perspective.

From the principal's perspective:

Multitude of reforms

Numerous projects

Teachers' objection – an argument of overburden

Lack of the principal's personal motivation

Teachers' turnover rate and unwillingness to teach from the beginning

No continued support by the district officials and putting the burden of leading the process on the principal

From the quality coordinators' perspective:

The principal's unwillingness

The principal is very busy and is not available to engage in this project.

Lack of leadership and support by the principal

A feeling of working only for the certificate – We got the certificate and that's it.

The principal's perspective is different from that of the quality coordinator. The principal's main reasons originate from external bodies while those of the quality coordinator depend on the principal – his leadership and capabilities.

- xviii. The school staff lacks knowledge about the need for change, basic knowledge about the topic of the change, the organizational excellence approach and the process itself.
- xix. The schools chosen for the program were mostly with a high positioning, and were well appreciated and successful schools.
- xx. Most of the schools were in the organizational "adolescence" stage or organizational "prime" stage. The Committee for the Identification of the Principals who would be pioneers in the assimilation of the organizational excellence approach sought principals who were leaders and managed schools with a high positioning.
- xxi. The assimilation process was a pioneering attempt aiming to change the fundamentals of conduct of a school by changing principals' role definition and vocation. The process itself was being built while the work was in progress and it was based on successes or failure - no indexes were set in advance. The quality coordinators were appointed to a central position of which the Ministry of Education is unaware and does not reward it. No infrastructure was prepared for assimilating the approach over years and no measures were planned for the likelihood that principals might leave or retire. The process was executed mostly in a mechanical and administrative way and as long as the district officials provided support to the school staff, the process continued to be implemented.
- xxii. The principals chose to join this innovative process out of prestige and personal positioning rather than out of a wish to introduce a change. The principals that can

succeed in assimilating this innovativeness must be leaders and the district officials have to plan again the leading and management of the change process vis-à-vis the schools.

4.5.2 Integrative findings within the framework of the self-case report

- i. It seems that the reason for choosing the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach focuses on the fact that the principal was looking for a binding framework for the entire school practice based on organizational excellence. This is an external framework designed to reduce objections and consolidate processes in a professional, structured and supportive manner.
- ii. This decision was made by an inner motivation of the principal. It served the goal set by the researcher for himself – bringing the school to excellence in practice.
- iii. The principal came to the school with vast experience and with a clear objective of motivation for attaining organizational excellence and high achievements.
- iv. The researcher demonstrated a dominant management style of type "A" as well as of type "P" which was also found as dominant based on the Management Styles Questionnaire.
- v. There is an essential difference between the management type of the principal and that of the quality coordinator, impacting the motivation of the staff in the process of assimilating the change in the school. This impact related to a number of aspects: dialogue, motivation for outcomes, coherent practice and team leading.
- vi. The principal displayed an intermediate and low self-efficacy in topics associated with inter-personal relations and pedagogical management. Conversely, he manifested very high self-efficacy in issues of "self-efficacy for general management", "self-efficacy for leadership" and "self-efficacy for external relations".
- vii. The intermediate and low self-efficacy for "inter-personal relations" concerned the staff and resulted in objections to the change and objections to the process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach. The intermediate and low self-efficacy for pedagogical management was not a problematic and meaningful issue. The reason is that in the school headed by the researcher there is an official in charge of this area and from the beginning the principal was not supposed to deal with it.

- viii. The change focus related to the school climate and administration and it was chosen by an extended team of the school.
- ix. The researcher mobilized the extended management as a coalition for the process, as a motivating and assimilating force that would moderate or prevent objections.
- x. Findings obtained from the conducted interviews illustrate serious objections, organized and coordinated with experienced members of the teachers' lounge. On the one hand they suffered from the closing of the school and on the other, found it difficult to adjust to the change of working according to an innovative managerial method – the E.F.Q.M approach.
- xi. Several measures were taken in order to address the objections and motivate the entire organization to adopt working patterns of organizational excellence.
- xii. At the beginning, the school was unsuccessful, experienced extensive student dropout, very low achievements, distrust by the community, problematic school climate.
- xiii. The school was at the stage of determining a managerial strategy and fundamental principles and at this stage the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach was chosen as the school course of practice.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conceptual conclusions: From reactive to proactive – An evidence-based framework

As mentioned before, this study explored the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in 15 schools. At the end of the process and based on the research findings and conclusions, one can understand that the assimilation process has failed in most of the schools and that only two schools continued to the second stage C2E2. The collected data obtained from the examination of the assimilation process in the schools constitute an extensive database for building an evidence-based framework for an optimal assimilation of this innovative approach in the education system.

5.1.1 Assimilation on the district officials' level: a proactive process based on objectives and goals

Building a workplan on the district officials level

Building a workplan based on objectives and goals for a period of time that facilitates assimilation of the second degree and its examination in practice in the organization, including reference to the following parameters:

- (1) Designing a plan for supporting the schools, known in advance as far as its scope in relation to the assimilation period is concerned.
- (2) Building a structured feedback and control throughout the process and introducing amendments accordingly.
- (3) Making formal appointments of officials, including the budget for rewarding them.
- (4) Informing and involving the stakeholders in the process – the municipality, educational networks.
- (5) Organizing conferences, providing explanations and activities for the teachers lounge and administration employees.
- (6) Finalizing a mutual commitment contract between the management team and the district officials.

Based on these landmarks, the principals and their staff are aware in advance of the support and its scope during the change process. This support will be gradually reduced with time so that the responsibility for leading the change and assimilating it will eventually be incumbent on the principals and their staff independently of external support and assistance factors. In such a situation, the principals will not be “surprised” that the support has dwindled and the level of burden on the principals and their followers will not halt the process. During the process, a feedback and control will be performed for the purpose of identifying weak points and the district officials' resources will be allocated to the assistance and support of the principals in the implementation of the necessary revisions. In order to consolidate the assimilation process and strengthen its leaders, the district officials should define in advance the role of the school officials in leading the assimilation process. Moreover, the district officials are responsible for standardizing the roles and rewarding those fulfilling them. Unlike the process executed during the study, the district officials have to involve the key partners in the issue of the

E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach, such as the municipality or educational networks that manage the school. Thus, additional motivating forces will join the assimilation process. The main factor on which the way and depth of the assimilation depends is the school staff – the teachers. The district officials should organize conventions designed to involve and motivate the teachers for implementing the assimilation. This action will constitute then another driving force and motivational factor for establishing collaboration and reducing the forces objecting to the change. The research findings illustrated that quite a few principals left the school during the assimilation process and the new principals abandoned the excellence approach. Consequently, it is recommended adding a contract of conduct binding on the school regardless of the principals' substitution. This contract will be binding on the management team as well as for the school and its teachers and employees and will serve as an additional layer in the institutionalization of the process towards its assimilation in the organization.

Identifying the schools that are suitable for the process

One of the key parameters in the process of assimilating an organizational change is identifying the assimilating body as wanting, needing and suitable for the process. Below is an applicable model for classifying the schools that are candidates for assimilating the E.F.Q.M innovative approach.

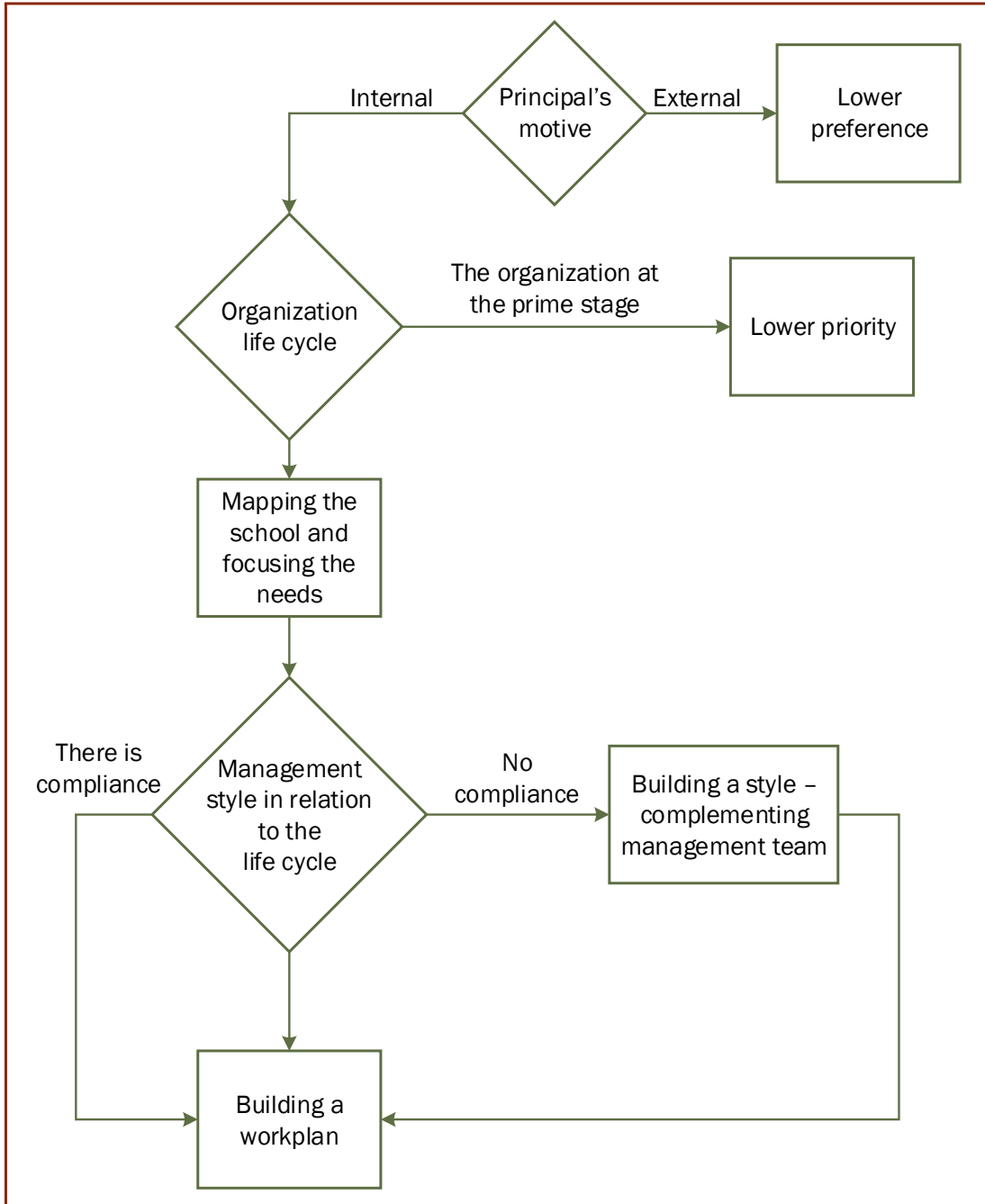


Figure 2: Process of classifying the schools that are suitable to the program

The model presented in Figure 2 describes the process of identifying the schools by the district officials as suitable for the assimilation process. The model passes through the junctions that serve as landmarks in the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach.

The research findings illustrate that the district officials have chosen the schools for the assimilation process based on the principals' interviews and impressions from their words. The research findings show that this is a superficial process that mainly depends on the principals' persuasion skills and presentation of the school to the committee, sometimes regardless of the organization and its real situation. The above model neutralizes this occurrence. It obliges both the district officials and the principals to perform an in-depth managerial and organizational examination as a preliminary stage of choosing the school and its principal as partners to the assimilation process.

First, the district officials should examine the principal's motives: Are they external and superficial or internal, ideological with deep understanding of the process? Are these motives sufficient for nurturing the principal's level of motivation and responsibility for the success of the process over the years? The next junction is the Organizational life cycle. The district officials have to understand and know the situation and position of the organization on the life cycle curve. They have to perform a structured diagnosis of the school in order to comprehend whether the level of expedience and impact of the innovative approach is appropriate for the school at its current stage. At the next stage, the district officials will check the needs of the school and whether this approach can satisfy these needs. At the next junction the district officials will check, on the basis of structured criteria, the principal's management style in relation to the school position on its life cycle. If necessary, the principal will be required to set up a team that complements the management style. At the last stage, the district officials will have to build a workplan for the principals and their staff. This plan will include the goals that principals must accomplish, timetables, points of feedback and control as well as the support framework provided to the principals and their staff.

5.1.2 Assimilation model on the school level

The research findings indicate the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach, most of the principals not having built at all a plan for assimilating the change in their school. One of the crucial reasons for failure in the assimilation of the organizational excellence approach in the schools resides in lack of preliminary planning

of the change process. Hence, a model for managing the change process is proposed for the purpose of increasing the likelihood of a successful assimilation.

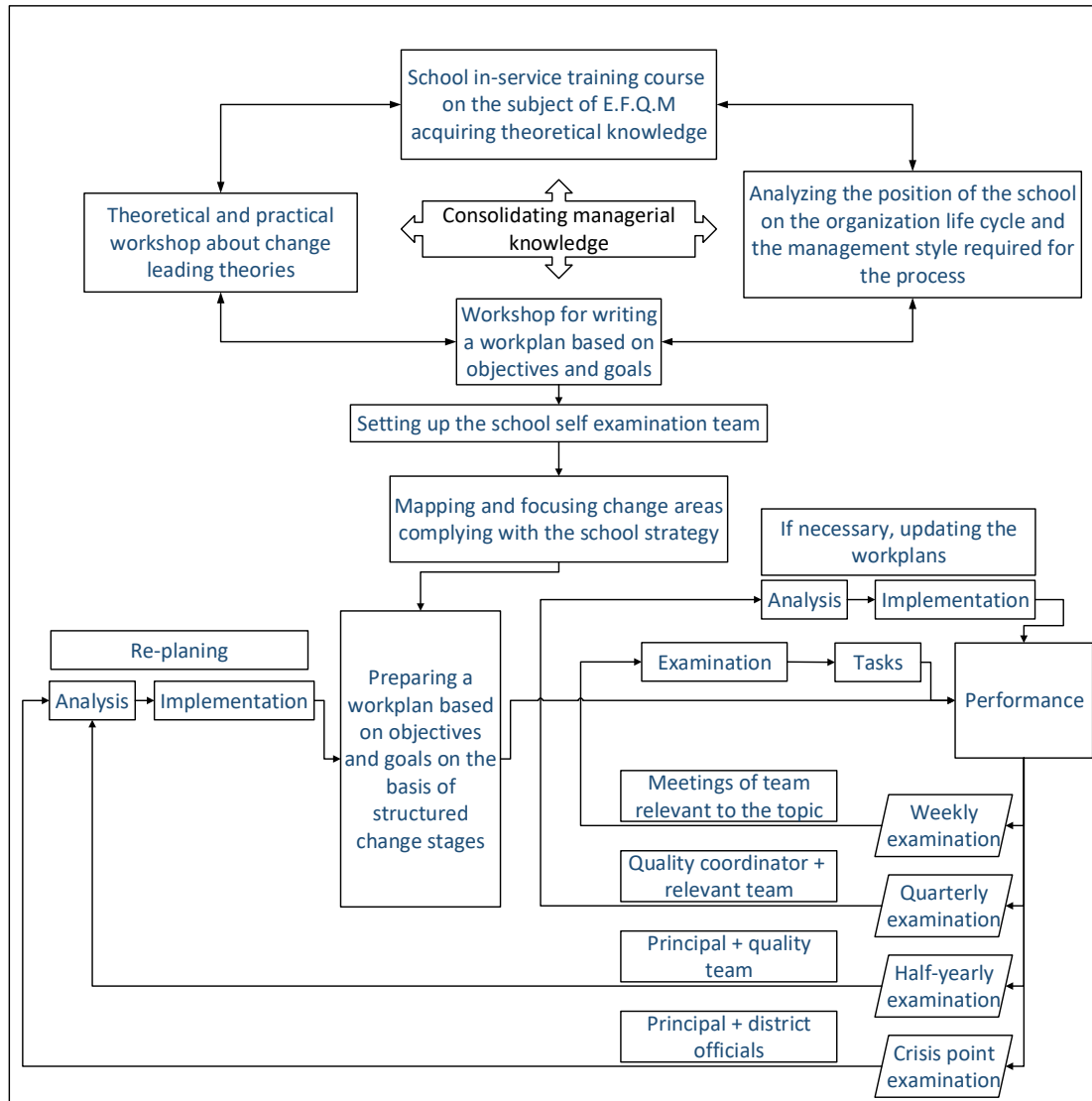


Figure 3: Process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the school

The first stage of the assimilation model consists of four preliminary issues that the principal must address before starting the process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach. They include complementing the theoretical knowledge, managerial knowledge and organizational analysis based on structured criteria provided by the district officials to the schools. These issues will constitute a basis and prerequisite for beginning the process of assimilating the organizational excellence approach. At this

stage, both the district officials and the principal will ensure that the situation of the organization matches the principal's management style. If necessary, an official whose management style complements that of the principal will be appointed for the purpose of leading the process.

The second stage is part of a structured process of the organizational excellence approach, to which an additional stage is added, the main essence of which is focusing the change areas that will support the school strategy. The purpose of this stage, unlike what has transpired in the investigated schools, is to prioritize change issues that will constitute a change of the second degree and these are issues that can be easily and conveniently changed in a superficial manner.

At the following stage, the principal and the relevant teams have to build a workplan based on objectives and goals with the coordination and approval of the district officials. The next stage is a system of feedback for and control over the process, whose function is to make on-line revisions and, when necessary, change workplans. This is done in order to maximize the process to an assimilation of the second degree.

To sum up, the proposed model enables policy makers to focus their resources so that the contribution to the inputs will be greater. On the other hand, the model will serve the principals as a landmark for managing the change and its assimilation. The proposed model comprises all the parameters presented in this study, both those that promoted the assimilation process and those that inhibited it. It is an algorithm for the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach in the schools.

5.2 Practical implications and recommendations

The State of Israel, like the other western countries, allocates to the education system extensive resources since the education system constitutes the national strategic infrastructure essential for building a strong and advanced society. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance do not efficiently examine the compliance between the budget and its implementation and the goals and outputs expected from the education system. Extensive resources have been allocated to the education system and their scope has been increasing over the years. Nevertheless, the gap in academic

attainments between learners in Israel is one of the highest in the world and the ranking of their achievements in relation to the OECD countries has not been improved. The budgetary investments are associated with numerous ventures, among them the innovative E.F.Q.M organizational excellence approach, the cost of which is rather high. The research findings are a basis for revisions and improvement of the assimilation process efficiency in order to accomplish the objectives and goals and succeed in the assimilation. The models suggested in this study serve as a structured course for effective and applicable management of the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach, both on the district officials level and on the principal level.

5.3 The recommendations derived from this study focus on the following issues:

- a. The E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach should be implemented on a national level. It should be inculcated in all the schools in Israel as an approach that is binding on the entire education system with everything it implies – budgets, assimilation programs, systemic officials, in-service training courses and binding indexes. Today, the innovative approach is a local personal venture of the manager of the northern district of the Ministry of Education. Even if it remains as such, it is recommended placing the venture and the activity it involves under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, namely, recognition, budgeting and appointment of designated officials.
- b. The E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach should be embraced and integrated in courses for principals. Thus, the new generation of principals will possess the knowledge and be prepared for working on the basis of this innovative approach.
- c. Since there are hundreds of schools that are managed by educational networks, the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach should be assimilated in the educational networks both on the level of the network management and on the level of operating the schools. It is recommended appointing relevant officials for this approach. These officials will be trained and validated by the Standards Institution of Israel in order to act as an assimilating body by itself vis-à-vis the schools under their responsibility.

- d. It is recommended adopting the proposed models, developing the criteria presented in the model processes, approving the validation and reliability of the criteria and the process.
- e. It is recommended involving the local authority of the schools that join the process in order to receive support, assistance, backup and recognition of the process in general and the achievements in particular. As far the local authorities are concerned, the Head of the Education Administration should be aware even up to the point of attending in-service training courses on the issue of the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach assimilated in the schools under his or her municipal responsibility.

5.4 Contribution to knowledge

Every country aspires to establish a society of high-quality, strength and universal values, contributing to the local and even global community, leading the country to a high standard of living and economic strength. This complex efficacy is contingent on the quality of the education system and on its ability to adjust itself to a constantly changing reality. In order to face this challenge, countries around the globe and most of the western nations have invested a huge budget in education systems and in different and varied reforms aiming to actualize these goals. One of the reforms focuses on the innovation that is the object of this study – the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach. This approach is increasingly assimilated worldwide in the industrial sector in general and in education systems in particular. This study explored whether the education system can be promoted to the level of organizational excellence by implementing the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach.

Many studies have been conducted about the application of the E.F.Q.M in organizational processes, mainly in industry and general organizations. The scope of studies of the implementation of the E.F.Q.M in education in general and in schools in particular is narrower, focusing on the question whether it is worthwhile introducing a quality and excellence model into the education system. Review of the empirical literature did not yield studies that have discussed the way of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach in schools, the operational processes, objections and impact on an

educational organization or its employees. This study fills this lacuna and it will focus on the education system from the 1st – 12th grades. It characterizes the schools that have implemented the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach, a process that has been performed for the first time in Israel. Thus, this study contributes to the theoretical and practical knowledge as specified below.

5.4.1 Contribution of this study to theoretical knowledge

On the theoretical level, this study contributed to the knowledge by bridging the gap of knowledge about the process of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach in schools in the northern district of Israel. This was done by means of two evidence-based thinking frameworks that had been developed in this study. These two research frameworks contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of management, assimilation of an organizational change, quality and excellence and school management. Since there are no specific thinking frameworks for assimilation in Israeli schools, the two thinking frameworks suggested by this study are original and innovative.

5.4.2 Contribution of this study to practical knowledge

On the practical level, the research findings, conclusions and suggested thinking frameworks might serve the district officials, the principals as well as principals education frameworks in structuring the process of the change assimilation – assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach in the schools. Moreover, they will help to enhance the process effectiveness, reduce the objections, minimize the risks, economize time resources and human resources. Working according to the suggested models will motivate the district officials and mainly the principals to be proactive rather than reactive. They will inspire the principals to be leaders of their staff, building the future on the basis of an organizational vision. Furthermore, they will stimulate the principals to assimilate an innovative organizational approach that will change the way of conduct of the entire education and will lead the system to organizational excellence.

5.5 Recommendations for further studies

Additional research topics and directions emerged in the course of this study. They can complement this study and contribute to a wider picture about change processes in general and processes of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach in particular:

- Assimilation of the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach according to sectors: Jewish, Arab, Druze, religious, secular.
- Assimilation of the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach according to learning frameworks – elementary school, junior high school, high school as well as junior high and high school in the same framework.
- Definition of criteria for the models suggested in this study for the purpose of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach.
- Impact of the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach on the school organizational culture.

5.6 Importance of the study

The researcher of this study has been a principal for the past 18 years in the Israeli education system and has acted as a school official involved in what has been transpiring in the field of education. Moreover, he has been awarded dozens of Certificates of Appreciation and Certificates of Excellence and has recently won the 2017 Prime Minister Prize for Organizational Excellence in the gold category (Appendix 8), based on the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach. Upon completion of this study, the importance of this study for the education system in general and in Israel in particular can be presented.

Like in every organization, managers heading education systems and mainly principals should be and act not only as managers/principals but also as leaders. In this capacity, the principals have a heavy responsibility for leading in an informed, structured and effective manner changes that have been decided by the district officials. This study offers a fascinating view of processes of assimilating the E.F.Q.M. organizational excellence approach, some more successful and others less successful. This study suggests two models of informed thinking about the management and leadership of change processes

in general and the assimilation of the innovative approach of quality and excellence in particular. The system leaders should inculcate an approach of quality and excellence. Otherwise we cannot expect a change in the education system and its adjustment to the world that is changing in front of our eyes at a very rapid, even imaginary pace.

Quality and excellence are the fundamentals of managing organizations. This study highlights the necessity of training principals so that they become professional in managing organizations as well as in leading the pedagogy in their school. School is an organization for all intents and purposes and therefore this study recommends underscoring the principals' training for management and leadership during their training processes. I believe that with the appropriate training of the principals and a proper and structured management of the district officials, together we can stimulate the entire education system to quality and excellence as a basis for any change that might transpire.

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