School-NGO Interaction: Case Studies of Israel and Germany
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This study examines the interaction between schools and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Israeli and German education systems from the perspective of the stakeholders involved: school principals, the NGOs’ leadership, and regulatory authorities in each country. The study documents the process by which the interactions between schools and NGOs emerge, the motivations and strategies of each of the entities involved in these interactions, how stakeholders perceive the interaction, the power relations between stakeholders and the nature of the interaction. The findings reveal the entrepreneurial nature of such interaction and the importance of contextual education settings in each of the examined cases. An understanding of conflicts of interests and power relations within such interactions provides an important input into the fieldwork of educational policy.

Introduction

The increasing involvement of third sector organizations in the public education system is a global phenomenon. In recent decades, such organizations have become a major source of social influence in developed as well as in developing nations. The increase in the numbers and involvement of these voluntary and philanthropic organizations demarcates the development and expansion of neo-liberal policies in the education system. Such policies include contradictory trends. On one hand, through decentralization and privatization, school principals are increasing their independence and control of internal matters and decision-making processes in the schools, while on the other hand they are facing growing pressures to improve student achievements and meet government-mandated standards (Lubiensky, 2003). In addition, over the past two decades,
education is perceived as major factor in ensuring national economic growth and competitiveness in a globalized world. These trends have exposed school staff to a complicated array of pressures that impact their work methods and ability to function, but have also provided school leaderships with opportunities to act autonomously, to encourage some amount of innovation and to lead changes in their schools—including the opportunity for new players (mainly commercial entities and NGOs) to take active part in formal education systems.

In this study, we examine the interaction between NGOs and schools in two countries: Israel and Germany. We conducted the study similarly in the two countries and combined the findings from both school systems. The rationale for a comparative international study stems from the theory of “policy borrowing”, which emphasizes the importance of learning experiences internationally in improving our understanding of local education systems, identifying different policy options, and comprehending processes of change (Bingold & Gayton, 2009; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Yet in addition, a “local” analysis is essential for a thorough and balanced consideration of the inherent complexities in global processes (Monkman & Baird, 2002). The rationale for comparing between the Israeli and the German education systems, lies in the gap between the public perception of the education system as a high quality system, in both countries, and the poor results of the students in each of the countries in PISA, which rose an intense public debate of the need to transform the current education system in several means including attraction of new actors to this arena. In addition, the differences between the structure of the education systems in both countries enables an examination of the impact of the structure of the education system on the nature and character of the interaction, therefore a comparison between these countries provides a deep understanding of the phenomenon.
We proceed by offering a theory-based survey of education systems in the twenty-first century, description of the involvement of NGOs in schools, and presentation of the particular characteristics of the Israeli and German education systems. Subsequently, we explain the methodology employed in the study. Finally, we present the study’s findings and discuss them, followed by a discussion of the main conclusions that emerge from the study.
Theoretical Framework

Schools in the Twenty-First Century

Presently, schools are exposed to complex and contradictory pressures that affect their operations and practices. Scholars following the institutional perspective traditionally regarded schools as influenced by strong institutional constraints (Meyer, Scott, & Deal 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995) and compelled to conform to practices and norms imposed by the formal central authorities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Ogawa, Sandholtz, Martinez-Flores, & Scribner, 2003; Scott, 1995). Furthermore, the decentralization policy that gained momentum in recent years has repositioned the decision-making sphere from the central government to the local authorities and, gradually, to the schools themselves. The expanded authority delegated to schools was based primarily on theoretical arguments pointing to the importance of empowering schools’ autonomy as a prerequisite to improve their effectiveness (Nir, 2006). Decentralization policy encourages schools to amass power and autonomy (Nir, 2009), to vary the ways schools are administered (Gibton, 2011; Goldring & Schuermann, 2009) and to root schools’ connections in their local surroundings (Addi-Raccah, 2006).

Another process that affects how contemporary schools function is the recent expansion of neo-liberal privatization policy, which has forced schools to operate in a semi-competitive marketplace (Apple, 2004) with particular emphasis on accountability, achievements and strong performance (Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002; Goldring & Schuermann, 2009). Educational privatization can be pictured on a scale, where at the low end of the spectrum lies the outsourcing of “non-core” school activities, such as cleaning and maintenance, transportation, meals, library operations and similar services; core school activities (such as development and implementation
of curricular elements and teacher training) provided by external agencies comprise mid-range privatization; and full privatization of schools is located at the spectrum’s other pole, with schools transformed into for-profit operations. In general, the clear result of public services’ privatization process is that these services are supplied by different organizations, external to the public sector (Katan & Lowenstein, 2009; Yonah, Dahan, & Markovich, 2008).

Alongside the aforementioned processes, the expansion of globalization also influences how schools function, as individuals demand the capability to integrate globally. Evidently, globalization is having crucial effects on education, therefore it is becoming difficult to understand education without reference to globalization (Welch, 2001). Neo-institutional theorists view globalization as the proliferation of cultural processes (Hartley, 2003). According to this notion, the spread of educational ideas is not a response to the political, economic or social characteristics of a country’s individual nationhood, but rather stems from characteristics of the “global system” that affects all countries concurrently (Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012), whereby countries more connected to the global system, face greater pressure to follow global standards (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985).

Accordingly, neo-institutional theorists argue that the strongest forces affecting the formulation of national education policy are international organizations and global models (Dale, 2005; Dale & Robertson, 2002; Robertson, 2005; Ramirez & Christensen, 2013; Verger, 2009). Indeed, in recent years, the role of international organizations in shaping national education policies has grown, resulting in pressure on leaders of educational organizations (including schools) to conform to one another (Hayden, 2011). This phenomenon of “isomorphism” (Ramirez, 2012) relates to the process whereby educational organizations with different resources ultimately end up with identical goals, policies and curricula.
The situations described above have dramatically altered the role of the school principal. In the past, school principals primarily focused on pedagogy. Recently, however, school principals are faced with multiple calls for improvement, change, and reform (Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008), they need to consider the forces that surround them (Brooks & Normore, 2009) and are expected to demonstrate professional and ethical leadership in their schools, while managing their schools in an efficient and business-oriented manner (Eyal & Berkovich, 2010). Moreover, school principals today operate within social networks and greater involvement of government agencies than in the period preceding the decentralization processes. These changing conditions and new pressures lead them to seek partnerships with a variety of agencies, organizations and stakeholders within the broader community—local authorities, parents, the business sector and NGOs (Bradshaw, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Mcelheron-Hopkins, 2006; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Smith, & Hentschke, 2004).

**NGO Involvement in Schools**

As discussed above, changing conditions have enabled the entry of business and non-profit entities into the formal education arena (Zimmer, Krop, & Brewer, 2003). Over the past few decades, NGOs have become a major social force in western countries, as many operate in the educational sphere (Berkovich & Foldes, 2012; Patrinos, Osorio, & Guaqueta, 2009) and, recently, they have become major players in public education systems (Bulkley & Burch, 2011). Yet, definitions of what type of organization falls under the “NGO” rubric vary in the literature.\(^1\) Parsons and Hailes (2004) define NGOs as self-managed organizations that do not depend on the government, operate with no profit motivation, and raise at least a portion of their revenues from

\(^1\) The literature on external involvement in schools applies a number of different terms for these associations, including NGOs, voluntary organizations, non-profit organizations and third-sector organizations.
donations. Ichilov (2012) notes that the term represents a network of interest groups that lack formal representation, often connected with philanthropic and not-for-profit goals. Nevertheless, some of the largest business entities operate in the public sphere, including in education, through NGOs; hence, the motivations underlying NGOs’ activities are not always exclusively philanthropic, but may also be financial (Rose, 2009). NGOs take on a variety of roles designed to support the delivery of educational services. Some pressure governments to fulfill their commitment to provide education for everyone. Others work to improve the quality of public education through the various programs they operate. NGOs may also be directly involved in the education system itself, for example by providing educational opportunities for students who drop out of the public school system (Rose, 2009).

The advantage of NGOs’ involvement in the education system lies in their capacity to better understand organizational structures and work practices, as well as their abilities to generate competition in the education marketplace. In addition, NGOs tend to be seen as less hierarchical and more flexible, efficient and democratic than government service providers, as well as more aware of communities’ needs (Callet, 2010; DeStefano & Moore, 2010; Patrinos et al., 2009). Generally, advocates for the involvement of private entities in the public school system hope this involvement will modernize school management, as schools adopt principles from the private and non-profit sectors (Kowalski, 2010).

Along with the aforementioned benefits, the increasing involvement and provision of public services by NGOs has disadvantages. For example, scholars have argued that this involvement leads to uncontrolled privatization of education and, therefore, may reduce the government’s supervision of and responsibility over public education and increase student inequality (e.g., Patrinos et al., 2009). What complicates the debate is the lack of empirical data
exists on the implications of NGOs’ involvement in educational outcomes and the impact of this involvement on the education systems (Callet, 2010).

The Israeli Education System

The State of Israel was founded on a welfare state model, committed to the provision of public services to its citizens (Berkovich & Foldes, 2012). After several decades during which the Israeli education system was administered as a uniform, centralized one, Israel gradually abandoned the idea of public education (Gibton, 2011). Israel adopted neo-liberalism in the mid-1970s, shortly after the model of the neo-liberal state appeared in the United States and England as an alternative to the welfare state (Berkovich & Foldes, 2012). Just like many European countries in recent decades, Israel also faced mounting pressure to decentralize the management of the public school system and allow local communities and schools greater autonomy in all matters related to education (Gibton, 2011).

In 2002, the first Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was conducted in Israel. The poor performance of the Israeli students in all parameters measured in the test and the strong correlation that was found between students’ results and their socio-economic background shocked the public in Israel and led to the appointment of Dovrat committee to examine ways for improving the Israeli education system.

The entities involved in Israel’s education system include the Knesset (Parliamentary) Education Committee, which discusses legislative proposals regarding educational issues; the Ministry of Education (MOE); and local authorities. Since Israel’s establishment, the Ministry of Education has maintained overall responsibility for the compulsory education system, managing its pedagogy (establishing and supervising curricula), administration (appointing school
principals and teachers), operations and finance (including financing the construction of physical grounds for educational institutions). Local authorities (including local education authorities [LEAs] and other municipal agencies), in contrast, are primarily responsible for construction and maintenance of educational institutions, student registration, and the ongoing operation of the school system in their jurisdiction.

Moreover, various external entities operate in the Israeli education system, including non-profit organizations, business entities operating either for profit or voluntarily, and independent volunteers (State Comptroller’s Report, 2011). The number of civil society initiatives cooperating with Israeli schools has increased in the last decade (Berkovich & Foldes, 2012). Indeed, their participation in educational provision and their direct impact on schools is reshaping the Ministry of Education’s character and operational methods (Shiffer et al., 2010).

**The German Education System**

One of the Federal Republic of Germany’s basic principles is the principle of federalism. The Federal Republic of Germany is comprised of 16 states (known as “Länder”), each with its own independent education system, educational-political goals and administrative traditions. The Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the various German states are the highest authority responsible for education in their particular state, and the entire state school system falls under their supervision. Their range of responsibilities include, inter alia, the state’s educational policy development, legislation regarding school activities and the state’s educational goals, cooperation with Germany’s federal authorities, and the supervision of their subordinated authorities engaged in education in the state.
The Federal Republic of Germany established the Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)—the Conference of State Ministers of Education—to address the differences between the states’ different education systems (Knodel, Martens, & Niemann, 2013; Phillips, 2000). The KMK’s purpose is to formulate basic principles agreed to by all the states and to cooperate in order to formulate common worldviews and interests in education (Weiler, 1989). While the responsibility for internal school matters rests with each state, the cities and villages in every state (through the Kommunen, i.e. the local authorities) are responsible for external school matters, including managing school grounds, establishing new schools, and shutting down schools as necessary. The federal government’s responsibility regarding education relates primarily to legislation concerning student financial aid, child welfare and technological development.

On the level of each individual school, principals are responsible for their schools’ educational and pedagogical activities. In recent years, principals’ responsibilities have expanded, as schools became increasingly independent. Hence, principals are now responsible for developing lessons, teachers’ professional development, management of school budgets and monitoring standards. In addition to the school principal, each school has a Teachers’ Conference (Lehrerkonferenz) that makes certain decisions, including curricular and pedagogical choices about learning materials and classroom approaches. Another entity involved in German schools is the School Conference (Schulkonferenz), which is mainly responsible for ensuring cooperation between the school principal, teachers, students, parents and external entities that operate in the school.²

In the past decade, Germany’s education system underwent deep and fundamental changes. In 2001, the first PISA was conducted in Germany, with students in Germany’s education system scoring lower than the OECD average in all parameters measured. The PISA results caused a stir in Germany and challenged the nation’s fundamental self-perception as the industrial world leader in knowledge and education (Knodel et al., 2013; Martens & Niemann, 2013). The public outrage caused by the PISA results was so profound that a re-evaluation process was quickly implemented regarding all aspects of Germany’s education system and in December 2001, just a few weeks after the publication of the PISA results, education reform was implemented in Germany. Under the reform, Germany abandoned its liberal curriculum (which gave teachers the freedom to choose and adopt their methods of instruction according to the needs of each specific class) in favor of set standards that could be monitored (Bank, 2012). The reform favored macroeconomic dimensions of education, measurable outcomes, and principles of economic efficiency (Martens & Niemann, 2013).

Partnerships between schools and a variety of NGOs are common in the German school system, particularly in projects involving connecting students to professional and employment possibilities, cultural activities, social and community responsibility, environmental endeavors, and initiatives encouraging innovation. Despite these organizations’ high level of involvement, however, very little research has been spurred to examine such partnerships in Germany.
Research Methodology

This study’s main objective is to document the initiation process, formation and development of the interaction between schools and NGOs in the Israeli and German education systems. We aimed to reveal the motivations and the power relations between relevant stakeholders in the process of interaction formation. Using case studies, we examine how the relationships between the formal education system and the external entity are formed, reveal the motivations and strategies of the stakeholders involved in the interaction (school principals, regulatory agents, and the non-profit organizations’ leadership), and investigate the partnerships’ development process in the two different educational systems studied. Such exploration enables us to present the establishment and maintenance of the interaction pathway between the external entity and schools.

The study was conducted using the qualitative ‘grounded theory’ methodology, which we applied to develop a concept that is anchored in data collected through the research and systematically analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). We decided to investigate the matter qualitatively to enable the study of this phenomenon through a variety of data sources (Yin, 2003) and thus to reference a wide range of aspects and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participants—participants told their stories and provided their perspectives, enabling us to better understand their actions. The study was conducted as a case study, in which the researcher chooses a particular case and investigates its attributes and implications.

Data for this study were collected between December 2012 and May 2014.
Background on the NGOs selected for the study, the interviewees selection process, and data collection

Israel

The NGO “Champions” was selected for the Israeli component of the research due to its extensive involvement in Israel’s education system in recent years and high visibility. Champions is a relatively young organization that has been highly active in the Israeli education system over the past three years. Its program was approved by the MOE through a semiformal process and has been offered at more than 30 schools in 10 LEAs. The non-profit organization applies a group training method it has developed to inspire and motivate youth (between the ages of 12 and 17) to succeed. Champions conducts workshops consisting of ten sessions led by its own tutors and counselors, operated on the school premises during regular school days. The Champions program aims to teach its participants to know themselves, set their own goals and personal visions, and create work-plans regarding how to achieve their objectives. We followed the lead of the Champions CEO and started our snowball-based procedure by contacting the school principals recommended by the CEO (Creswell, 2009). In addition, a number of stakeholders (the Chairman of the Knesset Education Committee and the director of one local education authority) were interviewed independently, given their involvement in educational decision-making processes in Israel. The interviews were arranged separately with each of the stakeholders. As detailed in Table 1, the six stakeholders interviewed are Champions’ CEO, two school principals, a Ministry of Education representative, a director of the local authority’s Education Division, and a former Chairman of the Knesset Education Committee. In light of the
great diversity among the group of parents and group of teachers involved, it was doubtful whether individual interviews with parents and teachers would shed more light on the study’s subject matter, so teachers and parents were excluded from this study.

The documents collected in this part of the study are published materials on the relevant web sites (the NGO, the Ministry of Education, local authorities and schools whose principals were interviewed), as well as materials produced by the NGO to distribute to other parties.

Germany

We selected the NGO ‘Tigers International’ for the German component of the study. This international NGO operates in many countries, offering, among other programs, a program called “Tigers Way” to impart life skills to students in a similar way to the Israeli NGO. The organization runs teachers’ seminars, training teachers in its methodology and capacitating them to provide this program to students in class. Tigers International was selected due to its significant involvement in the German education system. As detailed in Table 2, for this part of the study, we interviewed eight stakeholders involved in the interaction between the NGO and the schools: the NGO’s former and current CEOs, three school principals in Germany, the former principal of an international school in Germany, a German researcher working in the sociology of education field, and a representative from one German state’s Ministry of Education.

The first interview was conducted with the NGO’s former CEO. Afterwards, the study’s third author made an appeal to several random principals at schools where the Tigers International program is implemented, to obtain consent for an interview. All the school principals who agreed to participate were interviewed. The interviews were held in English, some were conducted using the Skype software, while others were conducted by telephone.
Hence, unlike the interviews in Israel, the interviews in Germany were conducted neither in the interviewees’ native language nor face-to-face, which may skew the findings. To overcome this limitation we advised senior German academic, who also actively participated in several interviews in Germany. After the interviews with the principals of German schools in which the NGO’s program operates, we interviewed a former principal of an international school in Germany. Following the interviews with the school principals, we interviewed three experts: a German scholar of the sociology of education, who is conducting research for Tigers International and is intimately familiar with its activities in the German education system; Tigers International’s current CEO and a representative from the German Ministry of Education. Similar to the Israeli component of the study, and because of the differences within the group of parents and within the group of teachers, no teachers or parents were interviewed in the Germany component of the study.

The documents collected for analysis as part of this component of the study include mainly materials posted on the NGO’s website and on the websites of the schools whose principals were interviewed for the study.

**Data Analysis**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed afterwards. The analysis of the interviews took place concurrently with the data collection and following it. In addition to the interviews mentioned above, we also included in our analysis materials from interviews conducted by an

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3This particular NGO never operated at this international school, but this background interview was intended to shed more light on the connections between NGOs and German schools, although international schools are not part of the German public education system.
Israeli students in the second author’s graduate project course with an LEA representative and a school principal working with another NGO.

As mentioned above, the analysis was based on the grounded theory method and our aim was to characterize and better understand the school-NGO interaction in each of the educational settings. The purpose of the analysis was to identify key issues that repeated themselves during the interviews. The study was not based on any premise or preconceived theories, and no particular theory was examined during the interviews. The initial analysis phase involved the identification and categorization of the issues encountered in the raw data—a process known as “open coding” (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). In the second stage, through a process called “axial coding,” we re-examined the categories identified through open coding to determine relationships between them (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). At this stage, the categories identified in open coding were compared and integrated in new ways to present the “big picture.” In the third stage, secondary data (the publications collected) were analyzed and were coded according to the existing categories. The subsequent step is characterized by creating a hierarchy of the categories, identifying the core categories and, finally, focusing the data to tell a coherent story around the major categories (Gibton, 2001). After we analyzed the data from the stakeholder interviews in each country separately, we jointly examined and combined the data gathered from the two countries to generate a complete, broad and coherent story line regarding the two education systems examined in the study.
Results and Discussion

The following section is organized according to the main themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews with stakeholders in Israel and Germany, as well as the relevant documents reviewed. The findings reveal a complex picture, considering that the Israeli and German education systems operate in a similar manner regarding the interaction between schools and NGOs. Accordingly, the interviews with stakeholders in both countries revealed two major themes based on the interviewees’ concurring perceptions of: (1) the interaction as an entrepreneurial venture where school principals and NGOs can be regarded as “Contextual Entrepreneurs”; and (2) NGOs are perceived by all interviewed stakeholders as providers of “educational activity” that teachers cannot provide.

The following sub-sections will present and discuss the findings. Since similar categories were identified in the interviews with stakeholders in both countries, the analysis of the findings below presents the two cases jointly.

School Principals and NGOs as “Contextual Entrepreneurs”

Entrepreneurship is considered to be a driving force for change and innovation that allows people to take advantage of opportunities and achieve effective goals in both the public and private sectors. Since the early 1980s, the subject has been researched from different perspectives and disciplines (Boyett, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1988; Gartner, 1985; Kirzner, 1973; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Low & MacMillian, 1988; North, 1990; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Despite the ongoing discussion in the literature on how to define the term ‘entrepreneurship’ (e.g., Fernald, Solomon, & Tarabishy, 2005; Hentshke, 2010), in general, the research indicates that entrepreneurship is the undertaking of an activity with risks, accompanied by a high
potential for financial gain. Entrepreneurs are considered to be proactive and innovative risk takers who are ambitious and creative in their ability to produce unique goods and services (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Fernald, Solomon, & Tarabishy, 2005; Miller, 1983). Entrepreneurship as a phenomenon entered the field of education following significant global changes that affected the education system. As discussed above, schools today are required to cope with the new challenges and operate in a new reality that requires them to adapt to changes in their surroundings or risk losing their relevance and social legitimacy (Eyal, 2007). Along with the expansion of school’s autonomy, these new circumstances and challenges facing schools have introduced to school leaderships a constant pressure to change and improve, making schools attracted to entrepreneurs.

Stakeholders interviewed in both Israel and Germany perceived the interaction between the respective NGOs and the schools as an act of entrepreneurship within an established and a static system (Authors, 2015). In an era of decentralization and accountability, schools in most developed countries have gained a growing level of control over their internal affairs. Addi-Raccah (2014) coined the term “contextual agents” to describe those school principals who must identify the various relevant players within their schools, make note of the power and influence these players wield and, accordingly, direct their actions and decisions. Such agents not only respond to external pressures but also actively manipulate external influences to lead the process of complying with central government policy, thereby becoming active participants in the educational sphere. These contextual agents’ patterns of behavior emerged from our interviews regarding both the school principals and the non-profit organizations. Given the study’s findings about the interaction being a type of entrepreneurial action, and in light of the characteristics, responses and attitudes of the school principals and NGOs as reflected in the interviews, we will
refer to the school principals and NGOs in this study as “contextual entrepreneurs.” In the next sub-section we will present the finding regarding the perception of the schools-NGOs as an entrepreneurial venture, while afterwards we will refer to the finding regarding the school principals and the NGOs as “contextual entrepreneurs”.

*Proactivity*

Proactivity is defined as the active search for new opportunities (Eyal & Inbar, 2003) and as putting entrepreneurial ideas into practice (Morris & Sexton, 1996)—features that distinguish proactive behaviors from more passive ones, such as responding to change. All stakeholders in both Israel and Germany perceived the school principals and the NGOs as proactive agents in the process of initiating the interaction between schools and NGOs.

**Israel.** The LEA representative described NGOs as “shooting to all directions to penetrate the system. They approach the LEA, the MOE, school principals….They initiate actions whenever they can…personal relations, official proposals, anything goes.” The MOE representative noted: “We get a lot of requests from NGOs who want to operate [in schools].”

The Champions CEO also referred to the proactive nature of her organization: “We have a very systematic work plan that includes very progressive and aggressive growth… My aim is to see ‘Champions’ become one of the compulsory subjects in every school.” She also referred to the school principals’ proactive behavior in forging the interaction with the NGO:

A school principal in a city in Israel’s center heard that the program had done wonders, so a colleague of hers, a school principal from another city, now wants to introduce our program, given her administrative autonomy and a budget that she manages in-house.
The MOE representative referred to how proactive school principals must be in their interactions with NGOs: “Frequently, the NGO’s programs are offered in regular classes, and very quickly the school principal finds additional resources so that the program will be offered in other classes.” School Principal 3 expressed similar views about the need to be proactive as an integral component of his professional responsibilities: “A very central part of my work as a principal today involves recruiting additional partners.”

*Germany.* Analysis of the interviews with stakeholders in Germany revealed a similar situation regarding the proactivity of the school principals and the NGOs in their interaction. Thus, for example, the Tigers’ former CEO described how the NGO markets itself and expands its activities in schools: “We talk to teachers and we have meetings with teachers and we are trying to convince teachers...”. He described the Tigers’ proactive strategy to integrate in schools in Germany as follows: Tigers “had meetings with the MOE…and they tried to convince them [to enter the program].”

School Principal 1, in conjunction, referred to the proactive approach the schools themselves take: “We [school principals] invite them [the NGO] to events here in school that they can take part in and see what happens here.” Clearly, all sides see themselves as actively having taken initiative in this regard.

*Innovation*

Innovation is the search for creative and unique solutions, or for new solutions to existing problems or needs (Morris & Sexton, 1996). Entrepreneurship is seen as a driving force for
change and innovation, by creating options to achieve more effective performance in both the private and public sectors (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

**Israel.** Interviewees perceived both school principals and the NGO as innovative agents in their interactions, bringing new practices and resources to the “regular” school system. The Champions CEO said: “You have to be unique, to provide a solution to some problem that no one had ever thought of before…” The Champions’ website also notes among the NGO’s key aims the quest “to make the change” and create innovation.

The LEA representative stated:

I think that there are many NGOs that bring a lot of added value beyond money. They can bring with them a lot of professional knowledge, lots of experience, lots of angles and new perspectives that are fresh and challenging…I really believe in collaboration, I think it's a blessing; also in terms of resources, but not only…. It's refreshing, an entrance of new things.

School principals also justified their choice on the basis of innovation. School Principal 2 noted the following in this context: “When I see programs that I recognize as having the potential of really making a difference, I want them to continue, to keep it up.”

**Germany.** The interviews with stakeholders in Germany revealed that the interaction between schools and the NGO provides a unique, innovative and creative solution to an existing problem in the education system, while also introducing change to schools. School Principal 2 observed: “Because we have been doing this program for a long time already, we can see the success because here at our school a lot of things have changed…” School Principal 4 sees NGOs as entities that introduce a new specialty to the school. “These external people can bring in a level
of personal expertise that our teachers do not have.” The Tigers CEO stated in the interview that her organization distributes a book to the teachers that discusses the organization’s innovative program: “We teach the teachers for three days in our workshops, they get our book, and we teach them how they can use the book.”

In general, NGOs and school principals are perceived as innovative agents that bring new methods and efficiency to the system while initiating the interaction.

Risk taking

Risk taking implies a willingness to risk the establishment of a venture, under circumstances in which no guarantee whatsoever exists regarding the desired results (Xaba & Malindi, 2010). Risk taking requires the investment of significant resources to realize opportunities that have a reasonable chance of failing. In both countries, the stakeholders involved in the interaction saw similar risks associated with it.

Israel. All stakeholders involved in the interaction between the school and the NGO defined it as one involving risk. Champions’ CEO referred to risks inherent in the establishment of an organization based on a model that involves creating alliances with schools: “When I started to [speak of this concept], people thought that I am crazy... even my husband didn’t believe in the idea…my board of directors thought that the risk is enormous.”

The second LEA representative expressed similar concerns regarding the engagement:

The risk is, what happens when [the NGOs] suddenly leave the school. If you are prepared for this possibility in the annual plan, and you realize that [the NGO]
may actually leave at some point, then it’s fine. It’s important not to rely on [the NGO], otherwise if they leave the school can collapse.

The school principals who were interviewed considered the risk their schools had taken in the interaction with the NGOs as a significant aspect of the interaction. Notably, in their perspective, this risk did not always pay off. School Principal 1, for example, related during the interview the experience of discovering that a risk he had taken bringing in an external non-profit had ultimately backfired: only after the organization began offering its program within the school was it discovered that the organization is connected with the Church of Scientology.

Germany. The stakeholders in the German partnerships also perceived risks to be involved in partnering with non-profits within their schools. Indeed, some of the risks they mentioned are similar to those their counterparts in Israel identified, while others are different. School Principal 3 referred to the risks involved in external funding for NGO’s activities:

In one part of Germany, we had a very bad experience in the first years. A consulting company sponsored the Tigers and after a few years, we realized that they had used our ideas to make their own program targeted at schools, they merely wanted to earn money from it.

School Principal 4 stated in the interview that when he was the principal of a school in Germany, he used to check up on an NGO before it entered the school premises, to investigate “[t]he content and the credibility of the organization, where does this organization come from… [and whether it is] secretly operated by the Church of Scientology.”

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4 School Principal 3 has been a trainer of the Tigers International organization for many years, and in his interview, he spoke from the organization’s perspective many times (while also discussing the school’s perspective on the interaction with the NGO).
Tigers’ CEO referred in her interview to calls and letters that her organization receives from concerned parents of children who participated in the NGO’s program, while also noting that she doesn’t see any risk in the NGO’s activities: “Sometimes we get calls or somebody writes us and says, ‘My child is in Tigers program and I find he is now strange, what did you teach?’ and then we call the parents, we describe the situation, we invite them to come to one workshop and see for themselves what happens. Sometimes the people go to the leadership of the school… But normally, our program is not a program with high risk because it is about how to become a good human, to be open-minded for every religion, for every culture, for every language, for every sexual orientation, it doesn’t have any ideological part.”

The MOE representative noted the role that the Ministry works to neutralize the fear of NGOs’ political influence in schools: “The Ministry has to prohibit political influence… because schools have to be politically independent.”

Within this entrepreneurial act of school-NGO interaction, both school principals and the NGOs operate in an environment with multiple ‘players,’ among whom no clear division or hierarchy of authority exists. This reality, characterized by the absence of regulation regarding the process of creating the school-NGO interaction, forces the NGOs and the school principals to become active in evaluating the power and influence of each of the relevant players—to take advantage of the autonomy they have been granted by vigorously participating in the creation and formation of the interaction. Hence, as indicated earlier and will be further discussed below, through this process, school principals and non-profit organizations’ leaderships can be regarded as “contextual entrepreneurs.”
Israel. The former chairman of the Knesset Education Committee described the multiple decision-makers involved in school partnerships with non-profits: “Decisions are made at all levels, leading to chaos: at the school level, by the principal…at the municipal level, and…at the Ministry of Education.”

The school principals, however, tend to stress their own autonomy in the process. School Principal 2 explained: “It is really my decision, but time constraints were involved because they [the MOE] provide the budget and if you do not take it, the funding will go elsewhere…. [yet despite municipal and governmental funding,] when I discover something really special... it is funded by the school itself.” School Principal 3 also demonstrated an active and autonomous approach, saying: “A very central part of my job as a principal today is dedicated to recruiting additional partners.”

School principals use their own autonomy to create value. School Principal 2 mentioned: “when I see programs I identify as having real potential to make a difference, I want them to continue.” Moreover, school principals seem to have understood the autonomy of other stakeholders in the interaction and the value it generates for them. As School Principal 3 mentioned that non-profit organizations “are looking for some sort of optimism, they are looking for some place where there can be a better future, and the direction is positive because they want to be part of the success.” Through identifying and latching on to these partners’ quest for success, this principal attempts to attach his school to a partnership that is driven towards a “positive direction.”

In addition, our interview with Champions CEO revealed the same patterns of behavior; therefore, the NGO itself can also be considered a “contextual entrepreneur.” The Champions
CEO described her organization’s initial meeting with the Ministry of Education that led the education system to embrace their programs: “with the Ministry of Education, one of the ideas was to get a foot in the door. We introduced a pilot almost for free, we said ‘First see and be impressed by what we do.’” Moreover, the organization’s leadership clearly identified opportunity in schools’ increasing financial autonomy and self-managed budgets. The Champions CEO described the way her organization expanded its activity in schools, saying that schools “have autonomy, and budgets are managed in-house, so they can decide what to do with the funds. The good news is that it’s much easier to get your foot in the door.” Clearly, Champions acts entrepreneurially, taking opportunities from wherever they may come. As the CEO explained: “[o]ne of my tutors got a class from the Ministry of Education…another school principal approved the program from her own budget. Presently, we already have five additional classes…this means that [our program has] gone viral.”

Germany. In Germany, like in Israel, the interaction between the NGO and the school was created in a context of schools gaining increasing autonomy. In this context, German school principals must maneuver between the influence on the school from external entities and the effects caused by the entities operating within the schools (such as the Lehrerkonferenz and the Schulkonferenz).

The Tigers’ former CEO described the process leading to the engagement between the NGO and the school as follows:

They [school teachers] talk to the principal and the principal says: “Okay, I talked to others and I have talked to teachers from schools in the neighborhood and they
had a good experiences” and the head of the school says: “I will give them a ring, let’s talk about it.” That’s how it works.

Indeed, school principals play a significant role in the aforementioned process and enjoy considerable autonomy. School Principal 4 said, “A responsible principal will make connections with the real world.”

The German education specialist interviewed addressed the power relations between the school principal and the school conference regarding the decision to engage with an NGO:

He [the school principal] is not the king of the school; in practice, [however,] the school principal can decide, and if the school principal does not agree to a program…the program won’t be established in the school. On the other hand, if the school principal very much supports a program, he will make sure that the program will be established.

The former Tigers CEO explained the power relation between the schools and the MOE regarding the decision to integrate a non-profit organization in schools:

It depends on the type of ‘no.’ If the MOE says… ‘We do not accept this program and we feel that this program is anti-foreigner or it has a Communist or National Socialist bend,’ or something like that…[they will not recommend it]. If they cannot find a reason like this, they will recommend [the program. But]…if they say ‘No’, it only means ‘We don’t recommend it.”

Hence, while the MOE clearly affects the ultimate decision regarding potential interactions between non-profits and schools, the Ministry is clearly not the only decision-maker.
In Germany, like in Israel, the stakeholders involved in the interaction also described the non-profit (and not just the school principals) as making the most of its autonomy to integrate into the school system and to be an active participant in the creation of the interaction. For example, the German education specialist described how the MOE adopted Tigers:

It is always more or less a fight for [the Ministry’s support] and it’s based on really much engagement of a lot of persons from the Tigers. They held meetings with the Ministries of Education, with each of them, and they tried to convince them.

The Tigers CEO explained that “there are variety of ways that an NGO can integrate into the school.” Indeed, the MOE representative interviewed agreed that multiple partnership options exist, and that NGOs have a certain degree of autonomy in this regard.

**NGOs as providers of “educational activity” that teachers cannot deliver**

All the involved stakeholders, in both Israel and Germany, expected to gain something from the engagement between NGOs and schools that they could not attain otherwise. However, the interviews in both countries revealed a clear consensus among the involved stakeholders that schools themselves, through their teachers, cannot provide the students what they need without the assistance of external entities (through an outsourcing process).

**Israel**

School Principal 3 explained the MOE’s interest in allowing NGOs to operate in schools: “The Ministry is tremendously ambivalent about the third sector’s involvement in schools. On
the one hand, it’s [the MOE] doing its job; on the other hand, it [the MOE] sees how it [the involvement of NGOs in schools] is serving [the Ministry’s] goals.”

The MOE representative described the situation similarly:

The reason we're hiring more NGOs and professional entities is that we do not have enough training resources… Once I realized that this program deals with major processes in terms of motivating and raising self-esteem of students, I offered her [the Champions CEO] to meet the teaching staff in our district, who are responsible for all the different regions of the country, to hear about the program and together build and adapt it.

Indeed, the school principals interviewed expressed the view that they seek out interactions with organizations that bring their own unique content-matter, rather than those that might strengthen the academic subjects already being taught at the school. School Principal 2 noted that she searches for non-profits dealing with subjects that are not part of the curriculum: “NGOs that deal with subjects that are part of the curriculum like math and grammar are not attractive in my opinion. I search for NGOs that deal with values.” School Principal 1 shared her point of view: “Champions knows to do a certain thing… I would do it myself if I knew these contents.”

School Principal 3 (I) noted:

Significant [activities at my school or activities] that bring about real achievements are clearly happening as a result of supplementary events at the
school, thanks to philanthropists. I recognized the possibility that if I can recruit other partners to the school, I can give my students much more.

Notably, LEA Representative 2 also recognized in interview the important contributions to schools made by non-profits: “philanthropy is reaching the places where the state does not provide the solution.”

**Germany**

As in Israel, the German parties involved in the interaction saw similar benefits to themselves and the other parties regarding the involvement of NGOs in schools. School Principal 2 considers the non-profit’s special expertise and resources to be the main contribution it makes to schools. “Not all the work can be done by teachers… the challenges [teachers face today] increased, and I think we need support in many areas.”

Regarding the LEA’s motivation to support the NGO’s activities, School principal 1 explained that the LEA is “really interested to support us in terms of making them [the students] cope with every kind of everyday activity, to prepare them… for living an independent life, and that’s why they fund” the Tigers’ activities.

The Tigers’ current CEO described the MOE’s motivation to encourage the integration of NGOs in schools:

Modern parents of today, they don’t really have time... they are looking for some activities, because they are working…they [the teachers] can’t teach the children social skills… that is not their area, their story. So then the government all the time looks for
help from other organizations which have the personnel and they are not as expensive as a teacher.

Indeed, the MOE representative confirmed this assessment, stating in the interview that when the government asked the Ministry to develop a new program for violence prevention and non-violent communication to be taught at schools, the MOE turned to “non-government organizations like the Tigers for pushing and coaching several programs at schools.”

The Tigers’ former CEO noted the pressure placed by industry on the education system “to educate the youth so they will have life skills.” An interesting result of this pressure is that schools are engaging with NGOs. He further stated that the “school and the education system want to enhance the capability of young people, and one of the major instrument in this field is the Tigers program.”
Conclusion

The present study investigates school-NGO interaction in Germany and Israel from the lens of the stakeholders involved. Two similar NGOs that offer content-matter excluded from the schools’ core curricula were selected: one operating in the Israeli school system and the other in the German school system. The study demonstrates the phenomenon of isomorphism in public education policy in globalized, neo-liberal education systems. It appears that similar broader phenomena occur in both countries, with the manifestations of these broad global phenomena varying depending on the local context in the process of ‘glocalization’.

Accordingly, three major conclusions are drawn from the study: (1) in both countries examined, all the stakeholders involved perceive the school-NGO engagement to be an entrepreneurial venture. The school principals’ and the NGOs’ entrepreneurship is defined by proactivity, striving for innovation, and risk-taking behavior. In this context, in both countries the parties directly involved in the entrepreneurial action (the schools and the NGOs) can by classified as “contextual entrepreneurs”. Thus, it appears that in the context of the interaction, the school principals and the NGOs in both countries operate as entrepreneurs who are required to assess the different players, to understand the power and influence of each, and, accordingly, to adjust their own actions and decisions. They make the most of the existing situation’s advantages, utilizing the lack of one clear model or system to integrate NGOs in schools. Moreover, they make the most of the autonomy granted to them in this situation by transforming themselves into active participants in the process of creating the partnership. (2) The entrepreneurial action that is by definition not institutionalized (in that is was created in order to break through the school system’s institutional boundaries) is becoming institutionalized in the education system in both countries. This institutionalization takes place precisely due to the
context in which this entrepreneurialism occurred, characterized by the absence of any clear division of responsibility or definition of roles of each relevant player, alongside great uncertainty regarding the partnership’s creation process. This institutionalization is reflected in the study’s findings, which show that NGOs in both countries can integrate in schools in various ways, all of which the relevant stakeholders consider to be legitimate. In bestowing such legitimacy and encouraging the integration of entrepreneurship in the education system in many ways, the interacting stakeholders contribute to the process of institutionalizing their partnerships within the system. (3) All parties to the entrepreneurial action in both countries (including the German and Israeli MOEs, which embraced the NGOs’ activities) claim that schools themselves cannot provide for all the students’ needs with the existing resources at their disposal. Moreover, stakeholders argue that teachers cannot truly ‘educate’ the students and provide them with the skills they will need throughout their lives and, to this end, they require input from external entities. The activities related to the core academic curriculum remain the responsibility of the teachers, but consensus exists that ‘education’ activities need to be reinforced by external agents.

This study presents the internal conflicts of interest and power relations within such school-NGO engagement. An understanding of these conflicts of interests and power relations within such engagements provides an important input into the fieldwork of educational policy.

Through this study, we have developed a new comparative, empirical based theory on the interaction between schools and NGOs as entrepreneurial activity. This theory emerged from the data analysis without any a-priori assumption of its existence and without guiding the interviewees in either country to discuss entrepreneurialism in particular. Those findings merit further examination in other contexts.

5 Although in Germany, the NGO trains the teachers to provide this knowledge to the students.
References


Authors (2015).


Table 1. Details of the Interviewed Stakeholders in the Present School-Nongovernmental Organization Engagement – Case Study of Israel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Type of School/organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Champions” CEO</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of LEA Education Section 1</td>
<td>LEA in south Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of LEA Education Section 2</td>
<td>LEA in north Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal 1</td>
<td>Youth village that includes a secondary school, a boarding school, and an educational farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal 2</td>
<td>Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal 3</td>
<td>Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former director of Knesset Education Committee</td>
<td>Israeli parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education official</td>
<td>MOE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* LEA = local education authority.
Table 2. Details of the Interviewed Stakeholders in the Present School- Nongovernmental Organization Engagement – Case Study of Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Type of School/organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former &quot;Tigers&quot; CEO</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current “Tigers” CEO</td>
<td>NGO</td>
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<td>Private Secondary school</td>
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<td>Secondary school</td>
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<td>School Principal 3</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>School principal 4</td>
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<td>Education Researcher</td>
<td>University in a city in south-west of Germany</td>
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