



EMERALD POINTS

THE POWER OF TEAM-BASED SIMULATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Toward Mid-Leaders' Mentoring in
Periods of Routine and Crises

ORLY SHAPIRA-LISHCHINSKY



THE POWER OF TEAM-BASED SIMULATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

This page intentionally left blank

THE POWER OF TEAM-BASED SIMULATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Toward Mid-Leaders' Mentoring in
Periods of Routine and Crises

BY

ORLY SHAPIRA-LISHCHINSKY
Bar-Ilan University, Israel



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India
Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2023

Copyright © 2023 Orly Shapira-Lishchinsky.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80262-190-7 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80262-189-1 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80262-191-4 (Epub)



ISOQAR
REGISTERED

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001

ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>About the Author</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1. Introduction	1
2. Mentoring Midlevel Educational Leaders During the Pandemic and Postpandemic Eras	7
3. Simulations in the Context of Midlevel Educational Leadership	17
4. Midlevel Leaders as Authentic Leaders in the Context of the Socioecological Model	33
5. Aspects of Equality, Equity, and Justice in Education Systems During the Pandemic and in the Postpandemic Era	41
6. Promoting Entrepreneurship Education and Climate Justice Through Team-based Simulations	61
7. Summary and Conclusions	73
<i>References</i>	77
<i>Index</i>	97

This page intentionally left blank

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 2

Figure 1.	The Model for Resilience Mentoring (MRM).	12
-----------	---	----

Chapter 4

Figure 1.	The Socioecological Model in the Context of Midlevel Leadership.	36
-----------	--	----

Chapter 5

Figure 1.	A Demonstration of Equality.	44
Figure 2.	A Demonstration of Equity.	45
Figure 3.	A Demonstration of Justice.	46

Chapter 6

Figure 1.	The Model for Midlevel Leaders' Entrepreneurial Mentoring.	66
-----------	--	----

This page intentionally left blank

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prof. Orly Shapira-Lishchinsky is the Head of the Department of Educational Administration and Leadership in the Faculty of Education at Bar-Ilan University. She is also the Head of the Institute for Social Integration at Bar-Ilan University. Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky was a visiting scholar and instructor at different universities outside of Israel in the United States, such as Michigan State University, Columbia University, Fordham University, the University of Missouri-Columbia, and the University of Alabama, and was also a research scholar at the State University of New York, in Albany, New York. Prof. Shapira-Lishchinsky has also participated in different professional delegations and committees at Kent University in the United Kingdom, Zurich University in Switzerland, and in the Open University of Cyprus.

She began her career in the educational system as a high school chemistry teacher and homeroom teacher, and continued as a mentor for science and technology teachers. Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky headed a project for the integration of science and technology in the Ort educational network in Israel.

Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky's research focuses on the relationships between perceptions of organizational ethics and teachers' retention and their withdrawal behaviors, such as tardiness, absences, turnover, and attrition. Her work explores the development of ethical codes in educational systems throughout the world through strategies of leadership and expertise and facilitation of group simulations. Her recent studies compare different educational systems in the world.

Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky's research has been published in leading academic journals that focus on educational administration, including: *Educational Administration Quarterly*; *Journal of Educational Administration*; and *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. She has lectured at prestigious conferences, such as the AERA, CIES, ECER, and the UCEA. In addition, Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky is on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Educational Management*. Her research has been funded by different foundations, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie

Foundation, the Shalem Foundation, and the Israeli Ministry of Education. Professor Shapira-Lishchinsky also serves as an expert for research services for the MSCA-IF evaluator (European Commission) and for the Head Scientist at the Israeli Ministry of Education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my colleagues in Israel and outside of Israel: researchers, school principals, vice principals, educational coordinators, midlevel educational leaders, and teachers in different formal and informal educational systems, working in different school levels – elementary, middle schools, and high schools. Their curiosity about the research on midlevel leaders, their drive to understand how to deal with pandemics, possible future pandemics, and post-COVID periods, and their real desire to increase resilience among educators in different roles, including midlevel leaders, encouraged me to write this book on mentoring, based on different styles of team simulations.

I wish to also thank all of my mentees, who were studying for their Master and doctoral degrees, for the learning process that we experienced together. I extend my thanks to the midlevel leaders in educational systems, throughout the world, who have a real desire to offer solutions for increasing teachers' resilience.

Further thanks go to Iris Gat for her designs of the figures, and to Dr. Julia Chaitin for her help in editing this book. And finally, I would like to thank my mother, Dalya, and my core family, Alon, Yaarit, Aharon, Shani, Arad, Renana, and Yogev for your support. I love you!

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on midlevel educational leaders who are not only teachers but also have a significant role of leadership in their schools. Without these midlevel leaders, schools cannot function, including their administrations. Times of routine and times of crises, such as pandemics, have taught us about the important role these midlevel leaders play: they promote effectiveness in teaching and learning in school, and they are the mediators for their students, teachers, and school principals.

However, it seems that midlevel leaders do not usually receive the appreciation they deserve, and the main focus is still on the school principals. This phenomenon appears not only in practice but also in research. Therefore, the main goal of this book is to raise the awareness of all stakeholders about the important role of midlevel educational leaders. In order to increase awareness, I focus here on mentoring midlevel leaders in order to improve their abilities to deal with educational challenges and increase their resilience, through a different style of team-based simulations.

It is also important to remember the background to the writing of this book: the COVID-19 pandemic caused leaders, in different professions all over the world, to reconsider their perceptions, attitudes, and professions. Moreover, the education world, on all levels (e.g., kindergarten, elementary schools, higher education, etc.), in all of its roles (e.g., principals, coordinators, educators), and in all of its styles (formal or informal), was severely shaken up. All people who were engaged in education had to reevaluate their learning, teaching, and mentoring processes.

Today, on the one hand, as the pandemic winds down, midlevel leaders, after experiencing repeated periods of isolation, need to practice their social learning and face-to-face interactions, such as in cases of negotiation with school management, with superintendents, or dealing with student disciplines.

On the other hand, during the pandemic, midlevel leaders did succeed in learning how to learn, teach, and lead by distance. Although they are aware that, at times, the quality of distance learning is not as good as face-to-face learning, many midlevel leaders now prefer to teach and train from home, since it reduces the bother of having to leave home to get to work. Since I – as do others – believe that quality learning, especially learning that takes place in teams, should be face-to-face learning, in order to prepare a new generation of quality educational leaders, mentors must have the skills and knowledge to successfully deal with the huge challenges they face. They need to be attractive and convince midlevel leaders to leave their comfort zones, that is – their homes, to make an effort and meet colleagues, face-to-face, during routine times.

The main goal of this book is to propose a relevant and useful mentoring model that uses team-based simulations. By employing this model, we may convince midlevel educational leaders to meet face-to-face, if possible, in order to experience a quality mentoring process. This quality process has the potential to develop midlevel leaders' morality, resilience, entrepreneurship, or activities geared toward climate justice during routine times and during future crises, such as outbreaks of pandemics. My argument is that face-to-face team simulations have a unique contribution to make, as they can also promote interpersonal knowledge and skills. However, when there are limitations that make face-to-face meetings very difficult or impossible, such as pandemics, inclement weather, or severe traffic and transportation problems, I suggest using online or hybrid platforms, which can also help promote midlevel leaders' roles and activities.

In general, midlevel educational leaders work in a complex environment, as was extremely clear during the last pandemic. Furthermore, the pandemic taught us about what we might face in future crises. Therefore, in this book, I have chosen to focus on Bronfenbrenner's (2005) socioecological model, since it considers the variety of levels, such as the interpersonal, the organizational, the community, and the public policy, which are relevant for midlevel leaders. More information about the socioecological model will be detailed in Chapter 4.

By understanding the need for improved, engaging mentoring processes, this, in turn, can help guide present and future educational policymakers toward finding better solutions for mentoring midlevel educational leaders. The approach that I propose is to focus on employing team-based simulations for midlevel leaders as a key strategy for mentoring and for improving practice. This approach is particularly relevant for contexts of educational challenges, including crises. Furthermore, in my research and experience in the field, I have learned that there is a lacuna in the literature – one that needs to be

addressed. The approach for mentoring that I propose joins together the socioecological model and additional factors that have not yet been conceptualized as being of relevance for successful mentoring, such as resilience, authentic leadership, ethics, entrepreneurship, mentoring, educational policy, and climate justice. It is my hope that the theoretical and concrete ideas presented in this book will help mentors of midlevel educational leaders improve their work. Furthermore, it aims to aid the development of new educational policies that relate to topics for simulations, such as the promotion of equality and trust in educational systems, by the mentoring of midlevel leaders.

To summarize, the novel ideas of this book are the following. Throughout the world, the pandemic period did not only ‘shake up’ people but both the professional world and education systems as well. The changes that occurred in the education system, as a result of the pandemic, make it impossible for educational leaders, midlevel leaders, and teachers to return to previously held perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, this upheaval, as well as the self-reflections and clarifications undertaken by educators and teachers, led many professionals – including midlevel educators – to leave the profession and to choose other career paths, in which they would be able to reach a higher level of self-actualization and/or receive higher salaries.

The challenges produced by COVID-19 also left their mark on the post-pandemic period: educators and teachers were forced to deal with the harm caused by the lockdowns and closures, such as the difficulties of their students to focus on their studies. This led to disciplinary problems and the difficult feeling, among the educators themselves, that the education system was inflexible concerning the educators’ and teachers’ needs to combine their educational duties with the demands of their homes and families. This led to a lack of motivation on the part of the educators and teachers to continue to invest energies in the education system and to remain in this system.

This book stresses that the pandemic forced almost all teachers in the educational system to engage in processes that were completely new for them, such as effective distance teaching for many hours, while simultaneously needing to cope with emotional, social, and economic difficulties of their students, and the students’ families, during the periods of social isolation. In essence, these aspects and challenges led the teachers to become midlevel educational leaders.

These midlevel educational leaders developed important leadership abilities and skills. As a result, it is important that the education system continue to encourage and develop these midlevel leaders and not return to the pre-COVID period, in order to improve the effectiveness of the education system. Moreover, if the education system will not understand the importance

of encouraging midlevel leaders to use their abilities and skills that they acquired during the pandemic, there are good chances that these educators will leave the system and move to other systems that appreciate what they have to offer and provide them with meaningful work.

Based on the above, this book focuses on midlevel educational leaders. It looks at how to encourage their retention in the educational system and help them greatly improve their abilities and skills that they created and began developing during the pandemic. This can help offset the harm caused by COVID-19 – not only by improving what happens today but also by helping prepare educators for the new educational challenges that may present themselves in the future, both during periods of routine and during periods of crisis.

This book offers a unique approach: it proposes that the way to lead to these processes of empowerment is via the mentoring of midlevel leaders by employing different kinds of team-based simulations – undertaken in face-to-face, online, or hybrid formats. This approach encourages the midlevel educators to engage in active learning that is based on a variety of senses, such as sight and hearing. Moreover, the simulations can help instill the learning in the midlevel leaders and, as a result, increase their resilience, both during the learning period and afterward. This book aims to encourage direct contact – that is, physical and interpersonal contact – via team-based simulations. This approach is based on the understanding that this process is effective and essential for learning. This is a serious challenge, given the fact that during the pandemic, we learned that it is also possible to teach content online. As a result, we became accustomed to physical separation and this kind of teaching and learning. However, the simulation model makes it possible for us to integrate an experiential approach to learning, which has the potential to cure at least some of the harm caused by the pandemic, which led people to become isolated and experience difficult emotional feelings.

Furthermore, this book aims to contribute to the adoption of the socioecological model, when relating to the challenges that midlevel educational leaders face. In other words, the book encourages the reader to adopt a multidimensional perspective. I present and analyze major challenges faced by midlevel leaders from different perspectives, viewpoints, and levels – the individual, the interpersonal, the school administration and leadership, the community, and the policymaker levels. In this way, the decision-making process is a balanced process. In a similar fashion, midlevel educational leaders, who participate in team-based simulations, such as those offered in this book, which are rooted in the socioecological model, learn to develop a systems approach in their decision-making, as they face ethical challenges, such as inequality. This multidimensional and multilayered perspective has the

potential, furthermore, to contribute to the development of the midlevel leaders' authentic and moral leadership abilities. It can also help empower these leaders and increase their resilience.

One of the main challenges facing the post-COVID period is the retention of educators and teachers, in general, and of midlevel leaders, in specific. This book offers scenarios of dilemmas facing midlevel educational leaders and, it is hoped, that these scenarios can help leaders cope better with events that directly impact teacher retention, by encouraging the development of gender issues and perspectives. There is no doubt that the gender perspective is a very important perspective, in light of the fact that the teaching and educational professional is mainly a women's profession. This important approach calls for further exploration, given that by understanding and addressing issues, it can help reduce gender inequality in education systems.

Furthermore, the approach presented in this book is that the mentoring of midlevel educational leaders, via unique team-based simulations, will empower these leaders and help facilitate the development of their own educational entrepreneurship. This, in turn, can help them effectively encourage student initiatives. The book provides examples concerning how to mentor midlevel leaders in endeavors focused on climate justice among their students. Moreover, in this book, I propose a variety of strategies for policy design on different issues, discussed in detail in the following chapters.

This page intentionally left blank

MENTORING MIDDLELEVEL EDUCATIONAL LEADERS DURING THE PANDEMIC AND POSTPANDEMIC ERAS

To date, most studies have focused on school principals, vice principals, and superintendents when discussing educational leadership. This book focuses on midlevel leaders, one aspect of school leadership. These are educators who focus on teaching, but also have significant roles and responsibilities within specific areas in a school. They are likely to have titles, such as curriculum coordinator, pedagogical coordinator, subject coordinator, or year-level coordinator. The definition of midlevel leadership is problematic and complex: it depends on the educational system's regulations and policies, the size of institutions, and the titles and roles that vary across educational levels, districts, and countries (Gurr, 2023; Gurr & Drysdale, 2018). Previous research (De Nobile, 2018; Rönnerman et al., 2017) refers to "mid-level leaders" as individuals who have an acknowledged position of leadership in their educational institutions, but also have a significant teaching role. Thus, they can be seen as leaders who are positioned in the middle, between the principal and the teaching staff, who practice their leadership among their colleagues in school.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR MIDDLELEVEL LEADERS IN SCHOOLS

Midlevel leaders often face challenges, which call for solving ethical dilemmas and making moral judgments. When ethical principles come into conflict with one another, we understand that there is no perfect way to act. These are the times when we must adopt a solution that often falls short of solving the

dilemma. Hence, we often choose a path that does not completely satisfy our principles (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Midlevel leaders often confront numerous tasks that connect to ethical questions (Iftach & Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2021). For example, they often deal with problems when staff members do not behave according to ethical principles, abuse students, or deal with parents who are highly critical of the teachers and school programs (Addi-Racah & Grinshtain, 2018).

Iftach and Shapira-Lishchinsky (2023) raise a number of dilemmas that may concern midlevel leaders. For example, what is the ethical way to act: to provide more resources for the weak students or for the gifted students? When it comes to issues that have majority versus minority opinions, what side do they take? The literature points to a recurring tension between the ethical principle of caring for others (students, teachers) and the need to follow formal, standard rules (school regulations, professional standards) (Shapiro et al., 2014). Another type of difficult ethical dilemma occurs when the mid-level leader's educational agenda does not concur with the student's and his/her family's agenda (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2018). Moreover, ethical dilemmas also often appear when interested parties hold different ideas about what is "good," leading to questions of whose viewpoint should be accepted (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Gilat, 2015).

As noted in Chapter 1, since midlevel school leaders work in a complex educational environment, this book focuses on the socioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), by examining different layers (e.g., personal background, school staff, colleagues, school regulations, community and educational policy). Below, I describe how ethical scenarios have the potential to highlight ethical challenges facing midlevel school educational leaders, when they undergo learning processes that involve participation in different types of simulations. Being aware of the complex ethical challenges facing midlevel leaders in schools today, I focus on different types of simulations, using technology that has the ability to target the specific needs of midlevel leaders and to create practical experiences, which are rooted in theoretical understandings (Gilbert et al., 2018).

When midlevel leaders are mentored, while practicing ways to deal with issues through simulations, this can help them encode information and store it in long-term memory. Thus, the simulations described in this book can help midlevel educational leaders deal with ethical challenges they face both during times of routine and during times of crises, when they arise in schools. In these simulations, the midlevel leaders are offered opportunities to develop an integrative approach for dealing with ethical issues, by considering different layers noted in the socioecological model. Examples of these include parental