



EMERALD POINTS

RESILIENT LEADERSHIP

School Leaders Thriving in
Adversity and Crisis

CHEN SCHECHTER
LIOR HALEVI



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School Leaders Thriving in Adversity
and Crisis

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To my wife Ayelet and my twin daughters Eileil and Daria.
You are my source of strength and resilience.
You are my lighthouse of hope and love.*

*To Shlomit, my dear wife, and to my beloved daughters
Noya, Mor and Shirley with love and gratitude for
the warm nest you built for me.*

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PREFACE

“I want my life back!” – Noah’s story.¹

Until my first anxiety attack, I was sure that anxiety is a synonym for fear, ordinary fear that comes and then goes away. No one had ever told me that anxiety is a sort of beast, an octopus whose tentacles surround you and embrace you. And then tighten their embrace. Anxiety squeezes the air out of your lungs, sucks your blood out of your arteries, and freezes you to death. It’s not out to kill you, it really isn’t. It just wants you to wish you were dead.

I had my first anxiety attack when I was 38, the night after I was notified that I’d been appointed principal of a prestigious high school. When I came home and told my wife, she rushed over and gave me a joyous hug, “That’s what you’ve always wanted,” she said happily, “Wow, fantastic, I’m sure you’ll do great.” But I wasn’t happy. Quite the opposite. The choking sensation in my throat grew tighter, and the tightness was accompanied by huge regrets. All of this took me by surprise, because I’d been planning this move for years.

The next day, I met the school principal for a few days of transition. She’d run the school for two years, and the staff made her life miserable. “It’s a vipers’ nest,” she said. “Be careful, especially beware of the quiet ones – they’re the most venomous.” As if this weren’t enough, she continued, “You have to be super strong against parents’ leadership, there are some parents there who want to ruin the school, and use you to gather political clout.” “Pay attention to the school administrator. Mind the petty cash. I can’t be certain but there are irregularities there. It’s possible that he ‘borrows’ money. . . . Don’t go to jail for him.”

I came home devastated. I didn’t sleep a wink. And then she pounced on me, Lady Anxiety. She kept me company for months, showing up in daylight and at night, when I knew she was coming and when I least expected her. She was ubiquitous. She came armed with cold sweat, suffocation, tingling hands, and her most lethal weapon, two short, innocuous words – *What if? What if? WHAT IF?*

¹ All names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

I soon discovered that Lady Anxiety is always accompanied by Sir Obsession, with the devoted Mr Depression forever on their heels.

Then came the first day of school. Everything was difficult. Well, very difficult. I felt like everything was way beyond my reach. I went to the bathroom several times a day to breathe and relax. Those around me didn't notice my crazy inner turmoil. I felt like a radio set to the Distress Signal Station. A month went by, and I could no longer stand it. The nagging thoughts of possible failure, the workload, responsibility, confusion, the strangers who kept on casting their examining eyes on me, the suspicions that "they'll find me out any minute," and other such obsessive ideas made me sick. I spent two days in bed. I told my wife, "I'm not going back. I'm a failure. *I want my life back!* I'll drive a tractor, I'll be a farmer, grow corn, sell furniture, I really don't care what I do – but I won't go back to the principal's office!" My wife panicked and called my friend Jeremy, who told me to just switch from the Horrors Channel to the Natural Tranquility Channel. He also reminded me that I only have nine months to go, and I can deliver myself out of the situation at the end of the school year. I got up and washed my face.

I stayed on until the end of the year. And then, for another six years. There were good times and bad, difficulties and challenges that I overcame with the help of an accompanying principal who guided me and helped me get a better idea of who I am, and a wonderful supervisor who provided endless help. I saw a psychologist to relieve the anxiety and gain a better perspective. I began practicing mindfulness and swam regularly, both of which helped reduce anxiety and build resilience. During my time as principal, the school won awards, and I led it to excellence, created a high-quality school climate, and increased registration. When I look back, I realize how grateful I am to the anxiety. It taught me so much about courage and effort, about facing fear and paralysis, and about being able to embrace the moment and splinters of joy and satisfaction. Anxiety opened up paths into the human soul, and out of it. It transformed me into a sensitive, considerate, and humane educational leader. It is thanks to my anxiety that I'm less fearful, and much less self-judgmental. After all, I climbed up from the lowest emotional point possible, from the darkness of despair to the sunlight of achievement.

Noah's story is the story of many principals at the helm of pedagogical leadership. It is a story of fear and anxiety that are typical of entering a new role or dealing with management crises down the road. It is the story of emotional erosion and insecurity, doubt of one's ability to meet the challenges of the role and at the same time a story of resilience and rising from the crises that engulf school principals at various stages of their career.

Being a Principal: The Challenges and Complexities

Being a school principal is a rough, complex, and challenging role. Countless words have been written about the image of the ultimate principal – the paragon who defines the path or encourages acting in accordance with an inspirational vision. The person who enables their environment to blossom and grow, who sees the teaching staff's strengths, and has an authentic view of the individual. This principal exhibits outstanding people skills, and in turn receives their reverence and loyalty. Indeed, many principals work around the clock to succeed. Their professional objectives, and the optimal professional identity to which they aspire, often fill their internal world, blending with their personality.

However, alongside the challenge, satisfaction, sense of meaning, and the potential for personal and professional growth, there are crises, pressure, loneliness, personal and familial prices to pay, and public criticism. For the most part, it is a package deal. Principals are the axis at the heart of intense activity, a reality that can lead to mental stress, emotional overload, burnout, and even leaving the profession. Therefore, principals must draw on their arsenal of personal resilience.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after an experience of hardship and distress. Resilience is a shock absorber of sorts. Imagine sitting in a car without a mechanism to absorb the shock – a ride that should have been quiet and enjoyable turns into a rattling experience in which every small pothole is noticed and unnerving. We stumble into potholes in real life, and, sometimes, in extreme conditions, even into large breaches caused by emotional situations that life places along our way. How we experience them, how we react to them, and whether we will grow from them – these are the questions that are the foundation of this book.

Anyone who has ever managed a school will attest to the difficulty and complexity of the job. Indeed, there is a sense of satisfaction and meaning; at times, there is even a sense of mission. But there are also many stressors that threaten the principal's mental and emotional welfare. Overload, responsibility, time pressure, a multitude of details requiring attention, work that invades private life, dealing with the team's lack of support and cooperation, demands on the part of various stakeholders, lack of qualified personnel, funding, or equipment are all the lot of a person who chooses to be a school principal. The principal works within a dynamic reality and is committed to many, varied – and sometimes contradictory – tasks. At times, principals find themselves situated between polarized loyalties to teachers, parents, students, the Ministry of Education, the municipality, superintendents, and other

stakeholders. The situation is fraught with tension, stress, and even anxiety, all playing out under the watchful eye of all stakeholders involved.

The principal's behavior, expression of feelings, and even resilience are visible for everyone to see and examine. People attempt to discern whether the principal's actions are based on seeking honor, or, conversely, from a desire to include the staff in achievements, out of sincere partnership. Does the principal's behavior express faith in the staff, even at the price of losing popularity? Do others feel trusted, that the principal hopes that they are headed to better places, not because of the principal's authority but rather because of his or her personality, manifest professionalism, and interpersonal skills that cause people to believe that things will get better – even much better.

At the same time, it is important to remember that stress and tension are not necessarily negative, because “Stress is the natural reward of a meaningful life” (Jennifer, a high school principal). According to Jennifer, if you want to climb Mount Everest you know it will not be easy, that you'll be on your own, and that there will be difficult nights, rife with cold, fear, and uncertainty. Our ability to take on “scary” challenges, fail, and try again depends, to a great extent, on our level of resilience.

About This Book

Schools are among society's most established and significant foci of knowledge, and play a major role in preparing students for the challenges of adult life. In a school, the principal is one of the most significant and influential figures, perhaps even the person with the most impact on the quality of education (Coelli & Green, 2012). It is the principal who shapes the composition of the school team, fosters the teachers and school climate, and enhances teaching methods, school achievements, and school values (Slater et al., 2018). The principal also affects the teachers' sense of professional belonging, and, by extension, their decision to remain in the profession. Effective school leadership is essential for school development, which is why Sutton and Gong (2021) refer to the principal as a “superhero.”

Research has shown that good school leadership has substantial influence on school effectiveness, second only to quality teaching in its impact on learning and learners' achievements. Effective principals can improve the quality of teaching, and consequently the quality of learning, while strengthening motivation, commitment, and teaching–learning conditions (Leithwood et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the role is very challenging, and includes a multitude of administrative, pedagogical, and leadership areas that require daily attention. The principal must control all these arenas and exhibit high performance skills upon assuming the role (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). This

intense reality generates considerable mental and emotional stress for the new principal, which can lead to negative outcomes and even to emotional and personal harm (Stephenson & Bauer, 2010), explaining the high rate of quick quitting – up to 30% of new principals (Bayar, 2016; Goldring & Taie, 2018). At the same time, the number of principals has been declining (Bartanen et al., 2019), which clearly has negative organizational and pedagogical effects on schools (Béteille et al., 2012). First and foremost, resigning after a short time harms the principals themselves – their self-image, professional image, and status in the eyes of others – and also harms the educational institution and could be detrimental to students' achievement. Because of the many details that make up principal's work, and the stress they entail, it is imperative that principals have the *personal resilience* to face challenges (Wells & Klocko, 2018). Thus, the goal of this book is to examine the attributes of resilience, leadership practices, and practices of educational management. We will seek answers to questions raised by the reality we described. For example, how do principals perceive their role with the challenges they face? What are the common forces that undermine principals and therefore require resilience, and which reinforce resilience? What are the attributes of principals' resilience?

This book, based on an extensive study we conducted, is important because it provides new knowledge about the attributes and patterns of resilience in school principals' *emotional practice*. Our findings provide theoretical and practical information about resilience, which will support school leadership, affect training and accompanying, and enhance the managerial abilities required of the sensitive period when they first enter the role, as well as establishing resilience among veteran principals. This information could help principals, professionals, and researchers understand and improve processes that enhance and encourage optimal resilience and uncover processes that hinder it. Furthermore, the results illuminate the reasons for principals' early retirement, or quick quitting, and help identify the causal factors that damage resilience – including pressure, helplessness, a low sense of self-efficacy, and imposter syndrome– and help construct support systems for entry-level principals.

The present research contributes to constructing a model for developing personal resilience among school principals and serves as a basis for formulating an applicable theory of resilience development. It is also a bedrock upon which theoretical thinking about innovative ways for developing school principals' resilience during their training, accompanying, and professional development throughout their years on the job could arise. This study also offers a conceptual and theoretical characterization of the dimensions of resilience, which could

help superintendents and other stakeholders understand the importance of strengthening these dimensions among new and veteran principals.

In the course of our research, we met with 30 new and veteran principals. We held long discussions with them about educational management in an effort to understand the uniqueness of the role, and the challenges and opportunities it offers. It wasn't long before we understood that principals' acquaintance with the emotional aspects of their work and their management of these aspects are the X Force, the most important force for their welfare and level of functioning. We thus learned that all roads lead to emotion. There was not a single conversation in which the emotional aspect did not surface immediately, with barely any prompting. *Joy, anger, hope, fear, disappointment, frustration*, and many other emotions were mentioned frequently, and were part of every discussion about educational and managerial issues. The emotional aspect of work soon became the core of our discourse. The main questions we address include: What are the issues that disturb principals emotionally? How do they manage their emotions? Who helps them maintain equilibrium and emotional well-being? How do they engage emotional issues to improve their effectiveness in school? And perhaps the most important question: How can principals develop emotional resilience and thrive in the complex reality of educational management?

This study emerged from our discourse with principals. In these conversations, we began forming insights that things could be different. We are convinced that principals can change how they deal with complex emotional issues, and that we can build resilience to meet the challenges described below. At the end of each relevant chapter, we raise questions that facilitate a deeper look into the topic and generate self-examination. Although our subject is managers working in education, we maintain that this book could be useful for any curious manager, whether in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors. Most of the issues that interface with the world of resilience are generic, of the types that all managers face. We attempt to provide possible pathways for dealing with the complexity of the job more effectively. Furthermore, most of the emotional phenomena – such as fear, anxiety, confusion, a sense of worthlessness, and more – are also characteristics of teachers, especially at the entry-level, and our recommendations might be beneficial for them, too. We hope that reading this book and understanding the insights presented, will answer the questions outlined here, and help principals gain better control of the complex – and important – reality of their role, which many believe to be the most significant position in the educational system.

NEEDED: RESILIENT LEADERS

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PRINCIPAL SNEEZES?

The principal may be the most important and significant figure in school. It seems that no other role has such a large impact on the quality of education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). Principals can influence the composition of the staff, cultivate teachers, enhance the school climate, improve teaching methods, school achievements, and values, as well as the teachers' sense of belonging to the profession and consequently, their decision to remain in the profession (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Hence the adage, "When the principal sneezes, the school is sick."

According to Friedman (1995), being the main axis of school activity is fraught with stress and fatigue, resulting from *workload and responsibilities* (time pressure, long working hours, too many issues requiring attention, time-management difficulties, work-life imbalance, paperwork, meeting deadlines, and managing daily crises); *problems with support and cooperation* (intra-staff conflict resolution, lack of appreciation by the staff, dissatisfied staff, dealing with problematic adults, and sense of isolation); *parents' demands* (lack of support and cooperation, threats to the principal's authority, need to resolve conflicts within the parent community); *difficulties with the teachers and the administration* (evaluating nonfunctional staff members, supporting a nonfunctional staff); *work conditions and role responsibility* (insufficient conditions, such as salary incommensurate with the job, responsibility for maintaining school discipline and providing services for the students), and *insufficient resources* (shortage of equipment or funding, personnel shortages, insufficient support from the Ministry of Education or the local authorities). These stressors were found in almost every school in every country where such studies have been conducted. They can lead to principals

burning out, which manifests itself in physical and mental fatigue, withdrawal, and dissatisfaction with others.

CONDUCTING AN ORCHESTRA OF CONTRADICTIONS AND CONFLICTS

“I conduct a large orchestra of contradictions and conflict,” said Ezra, the principal of a large high school. His words resonate with the truth of reality. In addition to being the main axis, often surrounded by a variety of stakeholders, principals are frequently called upon to resolve built-in ethical tensions, such as the tension between perceiving the school as an organization and perceiving it as a community. There are also tensions between school values and organizational values, for example, humane behavior versus task orientation, equality versus hierarchy, initiative versus stability, self-direction versus conformity, trust versus control, solidarity versus individuality, as we will see later. Additionally, the principal must deal with conflicts between goals, the difficulty of measuring educational outputs, untried or unproven work regulations, and authorities whose mandate is unclear, if not contradictory. All this is supposed to happen while operating in a changing reality, one devoid of certainty and stability. At times, principals are required to fulfill contradictory roles, reacting to ongoing events while proactively promoting initiatives and changes that reflect their personal interests, and which should meet the specific needs of their school (Yemini et al., 2015).

Although some changes are initiated by the principals, there are constraints, changes, and reforms that come from above, without prior consultation and without recognizing each school’s uniqueness. These could be adopting and assimilating reforms, leading processes of pedagogical innovation, including students with special needs in mainstream classes, and dealing with multiple learning programmes, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational reforms have expanded the principals’ range of roles and made their job extremely complex and demanding (Mestry, 2017; Schechter et al., 2022).

Beyond the expectation that they carry out this complex role, principals are also expected to be involved in career-long development, growth, and learning, in order to adapt themselves to the ongoing changes in the world and the educational framework. These many demands call upon principals to espouse modes of action that are appropriate and effective, to be adaptive, successful leaders who can carry out many initiatives and manage change.

For a newly inducted principal, the complexity can be manifold. There is no grace period for new principals, and they assume full responsibility upon setting foot in their office (Spillane & Lee, 2014). How they cope with the challenges of entering their role can determine the degree to which they succeed in establishing leadership and securing their place in the organization and the new environment being created. Therefore, entering the position is a significant event affecting the school's continuity and change (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011). The literature views the school principal as undergoing stages of adjustment to the role that begin even before they start working and continuing throughout their first years in office (Murphy, 2023).

Principals are called upon to be a mediating force between external forces – the Ministry of Education, local authorities or parents, and internal ones – students, teachers, and administrative personnel – to ensure an ongoing flow of resources from outside inward. The external and the internal forces pull in opposite directions, which exerts pressure on the principals, perhaps damaging their well-being and sense of efficacy (Well & Klocko, 2018).

TIGHTROPE WALKER

One of the principals we interviewed said that the image that accompanies him always is that of a tightrope walker, who is also juggling five balls. “Each ball represents another stakeholder,” he said before continuing with concern, “And I can’t let any one of them fall – not the one representing the students, nor the ones representing teachers, parents, the Ministry of Education, or the municipality. If I fall, or, Heavens forbid, if one of the balls falls, all the others will come tumbling down.” This image of the tightrope walker with hands full is typical of many principals whose daily work requires them to juggle complex issues, including interpersonal relationships, managing staff, instilling teaching procedures, developing school culture, pedagogical-monetary management, and financial management.

Thus, principals work in a dynamic reality and are committed to many varied tasks that are, at times, contradictory. They operate within a network of conflicting loyalties involving many players including, but not limited to, teachers, parents, students, superintendents, and local authorities. These dialectics oblige principals to deal with many emotional events that can, at times, be accompanied by tension, stress, and even anxiety.

SUPER-ROLE

It is indisputable that the principal's complex and challenging role is central and very significant for the school (Parylo & Zepeda, 2014). It was for good reason that Copland (2001) dubbed it "super principal." His description:

Qualifications: Wisdom of a sage, vision of a Chief Executive Officer, intellect of a scholar, leadership of a point guard, compassion of a counselor, moral strength of a nun, courage of a firefighter, craft knowledge of a surgeon, political savvy of a senator, toughness of a soldier, listening skills of a blind man, humility of a saint, collaborative skills of an entrepreneur, certitude of a civil rights activist, charisma of a stage performer, and patience of Job. Salary: lower than you might expect. (p. 528)

Copland used this arsenal of images because the principal faces an almost dizzying array of tasks related to managing a highly complex organization (Schechter, 2015).

SERIOUSLY? EVEN PURCHASING DESKS IS LEADERSHIP?

There are times when principles and areas of responsibility overlap, as in the seemingly administrative decision to purchase desks. What could be simpler? You order the desks from a furniture supplier, set them up in the classroom, and call it a day. A deeper look reveals that this is also a pedagogical decision; the principal must decide which desks to purchase – regular rectangular desks that serve frontal learning, desks for two, for one, or perhaps for group study? Modular desks? Computer desks? The list goes on. Moreover, purchasing desks is not only administrative or pedagogical; it also includes leadership functions, because what use are modular desks that can be taken apart and reassembled for group work if teachers only teach using the classical method, where they stand by the board and lecture? In other words, principals and their teams must motivate the teachers to use the desks appropriately.

Another example is that of a principal who wants to use digital books for teaching and learning, replacing conventional books, and is now at a crossroads of administrative decisions such as purchasing computers, setting up infrastructure and outlets, contacting and contracting for supplies, etc. There are also pedagogical decisions about the style of teaching and learning, the teacher's role in a digital environment, and disciplinary control of the class

space. Moreover, there are leadership decisions that involve cooperation on the part of staff and parents, removing obstacles and prejudices, and meeting emotional objections. Thus, we can clearly state that almost every decision a principal makes is three-fold, involving *administrative, pedagogical, and leadership* considerations, rolled up in one.

Research has revealed that both veteran and/or novice principals' leadership is constantly challenged by many stress factors (Caruso, 2013), with everyday stressors becoming stronger when implementing change (Limon et al., 2021). Educational leaders must learn to cope with a wide range of personal, social, cultural, financial, technological, bureaucratic, and political situations (Bolman & Deal, 2010) that surface, especially when the principal leads or integrates change, and even more so – when a new principal takes the helm.

Neither time nor transformations in the area of educational management make the principal's work and role definition any easier. It seems that the principal's work is becoming increasingly complex and challenging in recent decades. Besides having to function optimally in many arenas, principals must also enter a new and evolving technological, dynamic, and uncertain environment, at times facing resistance, all the while under scrutiny by supervisors and under a barrage of demands from the ministry or local authorities (Lee, 2015).

Furthermore, principals face considerable, constant cognitive pressure. They are expected to make dozens of decisions daily. At times, they are the only recipients of confidential information. They are charged with executing government policy that could undermine their sense of social justice and are sometimes required to do so without sufficient resources, while ensuring the physical and social–emotional safety of the children and adults in their school. Ultimately, many principals experience cognitive overload and begin working on “automatic pilot” both emotionally and physically (Sutton & Gong, 2021).

Therefore, we find principals asking themselves every day: Did I make the right decision? When these decisions are routine or marginal, the degree of emotional pressure on the principal is relatively small. However, when the questions address professional dilemmas, ethical or moral conflicts, or a conflict between contradictory values, the degree of emotional pressure increases with the level of tension, conflict, or contradiction. It is not for naught that this reality threatens principals' mental and emotional well-being, and brings them to situations of stress, anxiety, emotional fatigue, and in extreme cases – even depression (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010).

In his article “Motivating values in school,” Friedman (2002) listed several worthy and common “values” embedded in the daily managerial work of the

principal, and how the tension and dialectics they embody often generate an ethical conflict that provokes emotional conflict. These value conflicts include, but are not limited to, *task orientation versus humane action*, *hierarchy versus equality*, *initiative versus conservatism*, and *self-direction versus conformity*.

We will now explore how the tension between values is expressed in the principal's daily life.

HUMANE ACTION VERSUS TASK ORIENTATION

Principals must often find a middle way between being humane and empathic and the need to be task-oriented and meet pedagogical or organizational needs. In our conversation, Joshua, a principal of a middle school, raised an emotional dilemma he was facing. This was a religious school, and teachers were expected to arrive 30 minutes before the school day began to join their students in prayer. One of his finest homeroom teachers called him one morning to tell him that his wife had a broken ankle and would be using a wheelchair for at least six weeks. As a father of five young children, he was now the one bringing the children to their schools. He asked the principal's permission to miss prayer time while his wife was incapacitated.

The principal faced a dilemma, torn between empathy and the knowledge that he would be imposing on another teacher the responsibility for tending to two classes during prayer time.

From a cold, calculating point of view, I could have asked the teacher to figure this out on his own and hire a caregiver who could help his wife bring the kids to school. . . But I then realized that this can't be cold and calculating. Feelings won. I gathered all the homeroom teachers and together we thought it out. I was glad that they agreed to rotate watching his class in his absence. In the end, I was happy with the decision I made, but I felt the clashing tension between the need to show empathy and humanity, and the need to have the teacher and class pray together. This occupied me, emotionally, for a few days.

EQUALITY VERSUS HIERARCHY

Another tension is the contradiction between equality and hierarchy in the school. Many principals want, hope, and aspire to manage the school on a relatively egalitarian basis, where teachers can make their voices heard and feel that they are an inseparable part of the school team. Most of the teachers share this desire and hope to be included in significant decision-making, especially decisions about constructing a school vision, establishing school policy regulations, and other concerning school arrangements. Principals and teachers alike often talk about “community,” “teachers’ community,” “professional learning community,” or “educational learning community.” At times, the tension between perceiving the school as a “community” and perceiving it as a hierarchical “organization” confounds principals, who question when they should decide on their own and when should the decision be a collaborative one, as we learn from Darya, a high school principal:

The school I walked into was in shambles. The previous principal had left after one year. Many teachers complained that the management simply doesn't see them, that they're transparent. I decided to change that and place them in the forefront. At the beginning of the school year, I was sincerely interested in how the staff was doing, we celebrated birthdays, I sat in the teachers' room, observed lessons, and arranged priorities. I felt the school was stepping in the right direction. Because ours is a regional school and competes with other schools in the region, I had to call meetings prior to registration for tenth grade. This was right after the first trimester, around December. I assembled the teachers and presented the messages I want to impart. I spoke about my credo, and my vision for the school in the near and far future. You won't believe the cold shower I got. Some teachers were furious that I hadn't included them in what I was going to tell the parents, and why did I even bother to call them in if I'd already prepared everything. I was really frustrated. I went home crying. I'd wanted to do the right thing, lead and collaborate, and the teachers thought I'd gone around them when I actually wanted to include them.

INITIATIVE VERSUS STABILITY

Another contradiction principals experience is between initiative and stability. Ari, a high school principal, told us about the tension between these two values:

Two years ago, I hired a new teacher, a young guy, very enthusiastic and cool. He bonded with the students right from the start. I'd see him during recess having lots of heart-to-heart talks with the students. His class turned into a very strong, united group. This created some tension among the teachers because some of them found him threatening. For example, he'd have lots of 'team spirit' evenings with the class, and he paid for the activity and refreshments out of his own pocket. It really came to a head when one evening he took the class – without coordinating with me – to inner-city areas to deliver donated children's clothes to children of refugees and work migrants. This was quite the conundrum, because on the one hand, it's for a good cause, but then again, many parents objected to this irregular initiative and complained that school activities must remain within the school and not spill over to initiatives that could endanger the students. I was very undecided whether to approve his tenure. On the one hand, he is a fine educator through and through, but he sort of undermined school stability and equilibrium. I couldn't decide.

SELF-DIRECTION VERSUS CONFORMITY

Principals also face the tension between conformity and self-direction. Everyone wants teachers to be active, creative, and enterprising. Who hasn't seen teachers who are burned out, tired, stuck in their comfort zone, unable to improve and enhance themselves and set frequent goals of excellence, teachers who make it difficult for the system as a whole to progress toward excellent pedagogy? However, at times, principals encounter the opposite problem – nonconformist teachers who demand more of the system than it can actually offer. Josh, a high school principal, told us about such a teacher, a man who retrained as a physics teacher after serving in an elite military computer unit.

He was an excellent teacher. Highly motivated. He wanted to change the system from the ground up. His demands were