

# ***School Vision: A Stakeholder Analysis***

*Niva Matalon*

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the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the  
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Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award. This thesis contains 82,000 words.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## ABSTRACT

Vision and its role in the life of business and educational organisations has been the subject of extensive research over the past eight decades. Nonetheless, an examination of the extant research literature reveals that the bilateral relationship between educational stakeholders and their school's vision has not been given the attention it deserves.

The research reveals a growing consensus among educational researchers about the importance of the School Vision. However, most studies tend to draw solely on the testimonies of head-teachers (Stemler et al., 2011), with merely a handful including teachers and/or other stakeholders as sources of information. To address this methodological gap, and following Stemler's recommendation (Stemler et al., 2011, p. 33), this study adopted an inclusive approach, targeting head-teachers' perspectives, as well as hereto neglected stakeholder groups, in order to carry out an in-depth exploration of their diverse perspectives on, and expectations from, their School Vision.

Hence, representatives of four groups of stakeholders (head-teachers, teachers, students, and parents) from three Israeli high-schools were interviewed. This, in turn, provided a cogent and comprehensive basis for the subsequent exploration of educational stakeholders' perceptions and degree of ownership re their School Vision, as well as the extent to which the said level of ownership impacts the role played by the Vision in the school's culture and everyday life.

A thorough analysis of the stakeholders' interviews, alongside content analysis of relevant printed material (e.g. vision statements, school publications etc.), and direct observations, yielded a holistic rich description of each school's specific culture and *modus operandi*, followed by an in-depth cross-case analysis that highlights similarities and differences between the schools under investigation.

The results of the said analysis show that participants' perspectives are for the most part consistent with prior research as to the strong correspondence between the levels of stakeholders' sense of ownership of their School Vision and the latter's viability. Moreover, throughout the analysis, additional insights emerged from the plethora of stakeholders' reports, e.g. the crucial role played by head-teachers' approach in determining the viability of their School Vision. These findings address what deems to be a theoretical gap.

Complementary inferences of this kind have further significance as they can assist in reducing the research-practice gap by increasing the utility of research and effectiveness of practice (Sandelowski, 2006). That is, these findings may equip decision-makers with new theoretical notions of stakeholder management, as well as serve the practical purpose of guiding and improving head-teacher training, thus addressing a third lacuna, namely: the applied gap.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CCI	Claims, Concerns, and Issues
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
STT	Student Talking Time
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SV	School Vision
SVS	School Vision Statement
TTT	Teacher Talking Time

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Opening Statement

I have spent most of my 30 working years in a variety of roles in the Israeli education system. During this period, and especially my years as a head-teacher, I was concerned by one of the issues preoccupying the Israeli education system (probably similar to educational systems worldwide): the gap between the efforts invested by the schools to initiate change in educational outcomes, and poor results at the end of the process. Hence, the ardent search for factors and processes that may prove to be the "keys" to improvement in the outcomes of the schools and the educational system generally.

There appears to be great difficulty in identifying the weak link that thwarts the educational process and causes this discrepancy between input and output. Different strands of school effectiveness research have suggested different types of variables that might affect it, whether at the level of the individual student, classroom management or, alternatively, different aspects of the school organisation (Murphy, 1992; Wyatt, 1996; Scheerens, 2000). My experiences as a teacher and head-teacher nudge me towards the last; in common with some educationalists and researchers (Greenfield, 1992; Kurland, 2010), I have come to the intuitive understanding that a coherent vision, and its implementation, is essential to promote school success in inducing change in student achievements. This is what I have set out to explore.

This intuition, regarding the link between vision and success, is inspired by a principle, borrowed from the business world, that successful firms or corporations (i.e. profitable and thriving) are the ones who are best at maintaining values and implementing them in the organisation's everyday life. A Stanford University study (1990-4) determined that a key attribute of "best of the best" companies is an uncompromising adherence to values (Collins & Porras, 1994). I decided to test the applicability of this concept (with the necessary adaptations) to schools. However, this values-success equation overlooks an essential mediating variable, namely: the educational stakeholders, whose alignment

with the school's vision, and the values it espouses, is crucial to the viability of the School Vision (hereafter SV). I chose therefore to explore the link between the two concepts, values (School Vision/Mission) and stakeholders, as an appropriate explanation for school success, or lack thereof.

The initial research aim focused, therefore, on school vision and the way it is perceived by the educational stakeholders. The early, general research questions reflected this aim: (1) What do stakeholders in the Israeli School System understand by SV? (2) How is a SV created, shared with educational stakeholders and implemented inside and outside school-life? (3) What are the expectations (CCI = Claims, Concerns, and Issues) of the different groups of Educational Stakeholders from the school as an organisation? (4) To what extent do Educational Stakeholders' expectations find expression in the different manifestations of their SV?

Stakeholder management therefore forms the backdrop of this research, as some of the key relationships between school-management and its stakeholders in relation to School Vision will be explored. To this end, I chose to give voice to various stakeholders' views, shedding light on these relationships from an additional, different angle to the extant research. The use of evidence-based practice is invaluable for this purpose (Sandelowski, 2006), as it can bring to the fore the status of stakeholders as a factor in school success.

During the analysis of the interviews with the stakeholders it became apparent that two additional themes were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as having an impact on the school vision's viability and feasibility: the head-teacher's leadership style and the school context (although there was no mention of either of these in the interview questions). Therefore, after the preliminary analysis phase, I refined the research questions accordingly.

The modified research questions are: 1) What makes a School Vision viable? ; 2) What constitutes the educational stakeholders' role within the school system? 3) What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision? 4) How do stakeholders' ownership and their value affect their entire school-experience?

The research aim shifted at this point towards the emphasis on the contribution of the quality of stakeholder-vision relationship on school success and the factors that affect it. School success is neither easily defined nor lightly measured. The literature introduces two main perspectives of the terms 'school success' or 'school effectiveness' (Teddle & Reynolds, 2000; Stemler & Depascale, 2016): the more restricted view, which sees academic achievement as the dominant measure for school success, and the more comprehensive perspective, which measures school success, alongside grades and scores, by its culture, climate and stakeholders' well-being, i.e. the whole-school experience of the stakeholders. The weight ascribed to the stakeholders' views also entails a broader definition of 'success.' Success, thence, is now regarded as more inclusive, as it refers to the whole school-experience of the stakeholders, comprising attainment as well as well-being.

Historically, towards the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attempts to compare school effectiveness tended to focus on educational outcomes, e.g. test scores, (Hallinger, 2005), perhaps assuming that schools are homogeneous with regard to their overall purpose and the contexts they operate in. This approach however excludes other values which schools may champion (e.g. social, civic and moral values), and ignores the contextual variables that influence a school's culture and conduct. Criticisms of this approach maintain that these alternative values and contextual variables often find expression in every school's Vision or Mission Statement, thus making them a useful source of information, which might explain the differences between schools' cultures (Osborne, 2001; Stemler et al., 2011; Lee & Hallinger, 2012; Chapple, 2015; Hallinger, 2016). It is this gap between the two approaches in the research that this study will

address. (Vision and Mission are related concepts, which, for reasons discussed in more detail below, will be used interchangeably in this research).

To this end, I explore the option that educational stakeholder ownership of a school vision in its entirety is a process, one largely overlooked in prior research literature.

## **1.2 Dissertation Outline**

The research of school vision to date has some acknowledged limitations, among which I shall relate to two. Firstly, most studies refer to the vision as a static construct, without considering the process aspect of vision and mission statements (Sidhu, 2003). This study will emphasize the processual aspect of school vision. Secondly, most studies rely on the content of the school vision and/or solely on the testimonies of school head-teachers, as Stemler et al. (2011) argue, a view corroborated by my own brief review of research studies from the last 15 years). Such a perspective might lack in objectivity and trustworthiness, especially concerning the actual implementation of the values espoused in a school's vision statement. There is, therefore, the need to broaden the scope of perspectives by considering how various stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, parents, and community members) view and relate to their School Vision Statement (hereafter SVS), and how its values are manifested in the school's day-to-day activities. In order to gain a better understanding of the views of various school stakeholders, I decided to collect data from interviews with a sample of school members – head-teachers, teachers, students and parents – from three Israeli high schools, with regard to their perceptions of their respective School Visions.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows. First, I shall explore the concept of stakeholder ownership of a school vision, and the effect of this on school culture and climate, making it a constitutive component of the stakeholders' whole school-experience. Second, and in line with the inclusive view of school success, I shall explore the possibility that stakeholder ownership of a school vision contributes to the

improvement of said stakeholders' whole-school experience, thus enhancing school success.

The three relative gaps this research intends to address are therefore:

- **Theoretical gap:** The consideration of vision and mission statements as a dynamic process, as well as the inclusion of stakeholders' ownership as a criterion for school effectiveness, providing support to the view that school success should be measured by the whole-school experience of the stakeholders, rather than just scores and grades.
- **Methodological gap:** Giving voice to various stakeholders, rather than relying exclusively on head-teacher testimony, or the content of the school vision they themselves have designed.
- **Applied gap:** Identification of good practice in the creation, dissemination and implementation of school vision and mission statements.

The thesis is organized as follows. First, I explore the two key concepts (School Vision and Educational Stakeholders) independently, through a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature. Particular emphasis will be put on the interdependence of these two concepts, and their bilateral role in the educational arena.

Next, I discuss the research methodology used in this research. First, I introduce the research aim and research questions, and elaborate on my considerations regarding the conceptual approach which led to the design of the research, i.e. sampling issues, data collection, data analysis and write-up. Reflections on trustworthiness issues, ethical concerns and limitations, as well as my stance as a researcher, will conclude this chapter.

The data analysis chapter includes findings from three separate case studies, each exploring a different school. A cross-case analysis will follow, using the framework of the research questions, to explore key-themes across the three schools, expanding on the commonalities and differences between them.

A discussion follows, exploring findings in relation to stakeholder ownership of the school vision, and its contribution to school effectiveness. Finally, a brief conclusion will summarize findings, limitations and recommendations.

I now turn to the literature review and focus on the key concepts central to this study.

## **1.3 Research Context**

### **1.3.1 Background**

This study was conducted in the context of the Israeli education system. Below is a brief overview of the state education system, with special regard for its achievements, as compared to other OECD countries.

There are two Israels in one. The first is the “Start-up Nation”, led by the research universities, hi-tech, medical and bio-tech foundations, and so on. However, there is another Israel, one that is not receiving either the tools or conditions to work in a modern economy. This part of Israel is huge, and its share in the total is rising – becoming an ever-increasing burden that has been pulling Israel down for decades.

(Ben David, 2017-8, p. 4)

Formal education in Israel is publicly funded and centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. The educational system consists of four tiers: preschool, beginning at age 5 (although most children attend nursery programs from age 3); elementary schools (ages 6–12); junior-high or middle schools (ages 12–15); and upper secondary schools (ages 15–18) (Benavot & Resh, 2003). Compulsory free education begins at preschool

level and continues until 12<sup>th</sup> grade (age 18) (Ynet, 2007). The school year begins on September 1<sup>st</sup>, and ends in late June. This study refers to three schools in the high school tier.

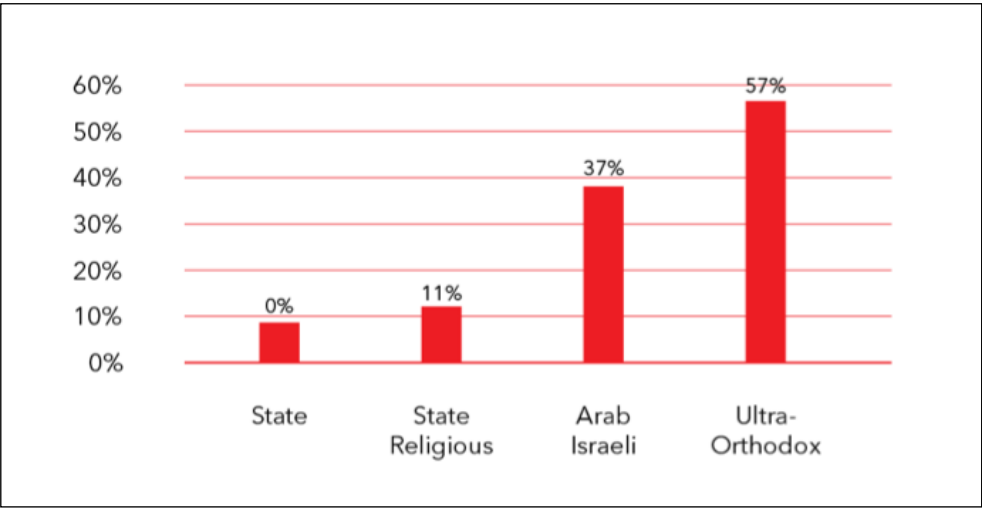
Israeli schools are divided into four different tracks: state-secular, state-religious, Arab and independent. The majority of Israeli children attend state schools and the teaching language is Hebrew. Schools in the Arab sector teach in Arabic, and offer a curriculum that emphasizes Arab history, religion, and culture.

High schools in Israel prepare students for the Israeli matriculation exams (*Bagrut*). These exams cover various academic disciplines, studied and examined in an ascending scale of difficulty, measured between one and five units. Students with a passing mark in the mandatory matriculation subjects (Hebrew language, scripture, history, state studies, and literature), who have been tested on at least 21 units, and passed at least one 5-unit exam, receive a full matriculation certificate (Edu.gov.il). A *Bagrut* certificate and scores often determine acceptance into elite military units, admission to higher academic institutions, and job prospects. It also serves as a comparative measure for school success.

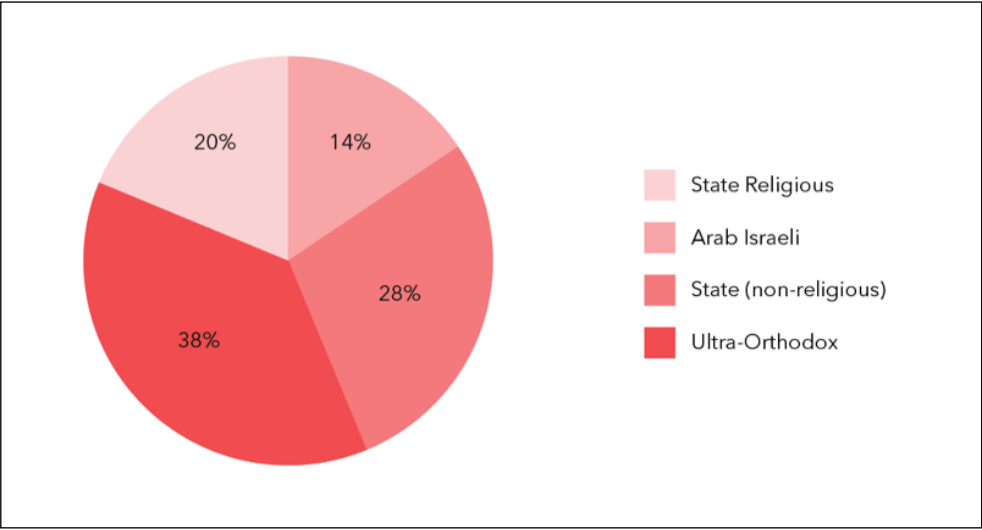
Recent reports (Blass, 2008) indicate that there has been no improvement in the educational achievement of the average Israeli student over the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, from an international perspective (primarily the TIMSS and PISA exams), a comparison of Israeli achievement in the core fields to that of pupils from other countries indicates that the overall level of Israeli achievement over the past decade is very low (Ben David, 2017-8). For example, the average level of achievement of Israeli lower secondary school pupils was below that of the 25 OECD countries in all but one of the international tests administered over the last decade. In four of the five tests, the percentage difference between the OECD and Israel was in double digits. Though Israel's scores in international exams have improved over the past two decades, they remain below those of 24 of the 25 OECD countries. Moreover, since the Israeli



sample does not include the ultra-Orthodox sector, where curriculum material is not used, the material, the actual national average – had it been measured – would probably be much lower (Hovav & Shavit, 2017). As shown in the chart below, the ultra-Orthodox sector constituted 20% of the student population in 2010, with an average yearly growth rate of 6.1% between 2010 and 2016.



**Figure 1.1: Increase in Primary-School Students (based on: Ben David, 2012)**



**Figure 1.2: Distribution of Primary-School Students (based on: Ben David, 2012)**

This comparison with other OECD countries also sheds light on educational inequality within Israel. Despite the rhetoric of ethnic integration and equal opportunities for the disadvantaged, practices of exclusion and segregation remain prevalent in the Israeli education system (Shavit, 1990; Dahan & Levy, 2000; Kashti et al., 2005). Educational gaps among Israeli children are the highest in the developed world – and have consistently been at the developed world peak for decades, e.g. in the Pisa test of 2015, educational inequality within Israel was rated 100/100 – the highest in the developed world. Such inequality during the formative years is not compatible with reducing income inequality in adulthood (Ben David, 2017-8), and can affect students' personal achievements and school success (Sirin, 2005; Smith, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2006; Biglan et al., 2012).

As a result of all the factors above, since at least the 1990s about half of Israel's children have received a level of education below that expected in developed economies. The level for the other half is low even by developing world standards; this other half will become a majority in the coming years (Ben David, 2012).

The low achievement that characterises the Israeli education system can be attributed to a number of factors, which include low national expenditure in the high-school tier; low teacher salaries; crowded classrooms; disparities in Israeli society (Dror, 2002; Horev & Kop, 2009; Blass & Shavit, 2017; Ben David, 2017-18).

### **1.3.2 The Research-Practice Gap in Education**

Another factor informing low achievement in the Israeli school system is the acknowledged gap between research and practice. As a field of inquiry, educational research has been criticized for its lack of relevance to practice, and in particular for emphasising a quest for fundamental understanding, at the expense of considerations of

use. Broekkamp and Van Hout-Wolters (2007) state that educational research has been criticised for being difficult, partial, limited in use, fragmented, and unapproachable.

The gap between educational research and practice is deemed by numerous researchers as problematic, as important findings are consequently not translated for consumption by teachers and administrators (Vanderlinde & Braak, 2010). Nonetheless, other authors express a more positive perspective, e.g. Levin (2004), stating that research has played an important role in shaping educational policy and practice.

An emerging field of inquiry seeks to strengthen connections between research, policy and practice across sectors, disciplines and countries, attempting to harness the benefits of research for organisational and societal improvement (Cooper & Levin 2010). To this end, Hirschhorn and Geelan (2008) suggest, *inter alia*, that a different form of research be pursued in education: "Rather than seeking generalised, decontextualised knowledge, research focused on seeking (rich, complex, concrete) descriptions of and prescriptions for practice is advocated" (p. 13).

My stance as both practitioner and researcher, as described above, is deemed to make me apt to fulfill the role of a mediator between the two worlds, as I am offering here generalisations from evidence-based findings, presented in 'teacher language' and practical enough to allow implementation.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Vision and School Vision**

#### **2.1.1 Introduction**

The concept of Vision, and its articulation in the form of Vision and Mission Statements, is at the heart of the school–stakeholder relationship. In this section, I address its attributes and function in moulding the organisation's identity. Special attention is given to the different perspectives concerning the involvement of stakeholders in the design and implementation of their school's vision.

#### **2.1.2 Definition of Vision**

Even though there is general agreement among researchers concerning the importance of vision, it is difficult to find a simple, straightforward definition of this concept. Researchers choose to emphasize different aspects of the role played by vision in various organisations, rather than comprehensive definition. Some authors focus on the relationship between vision and leadership-tasks and competencies (Larwood et al., 1995; Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Hallinger, 2001; Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Strange & Mumford, 2005; Kustigian, 2013). Others emphasize the role vision plays in transformational phases in the life of organisations (Larwood et al., 1995; Zakariasen & Zakariasen, 2002). Alternatively, Wilson (1992, p.18) defines vision as a coherent and powerful statement of what the organisation can and should aim to become, as do Senge (2006), Ylimaki (2006), and Yukl (2006). For others, vision is expected to inspire the organisation's members: It is a unifying motto to get all members of the organisation working toward shared goals (Lucas, 1998; Levin, 2000; Margolis & Hansen, 2003; Ölcer, 2007), as it has the power to inspire, motivate and engage people, rallying them for a joint effort to improve schooling outcomes (Kurland et al., 2010).

Thus, definitions of vision actually refer to various aspects of the concept. Strange and Mumford (2005, p. 122) offer a combination of the above elements, arguing that "vision involves a set of beliefs about how people act, and interact, to make manifest some

idealised future state;" whereas Collins and Porras (1994) stated that, "core values are the organisation's essential and enduring tenets – a small set of timeless guiding principles that require no external justification; they have intrinsic value and important to those inside the organisation" (p. 222).

Despite its seeming importance, vision is still not defined in a generally agreed upon manner (Larwood et al., 1995). Even the term 'vision' itself has numerous synonyms: Mission statements, credo, purpose, values, strategic intent etc. (Collins & Porras, 1991). Some suggest that these concepts are so tied together and overlapping, that to use one is to invoke all (Kantabutra, 2006), thus they use them interchangeably without sufficiently clear operational distinctions being made between the two terms, vision and mission (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Others emphasise the differences between the terms Vision, Mission and Goals. For example, Levin (2000, p. 92) who complains that "[Vision] is still frequently confused with similar concepts such as mission, philosophy, goals, and strategy...Whereas all of these provide organisation members with a sense of purpose, direction, and meaning, there are some important distinctions among these constructs". My review of the relevant literature indicates that the main attributes differentiating these concepts from each other are:

- Mission represents the present state of an organization's purpose, and its *raison d'être* (why the organization presently exists), while vision signifies the future of where an organization is going. The mission is present tense, while a vision looks to the future. (Dufour et al., 2008; Kustigian, 2013, p. 29).
- Vision is conceived as the end-result of what you have when you accomplish the mission (Kustigian, 2013). A vision is therefore "what we would see if our goals were achieved" (McTighe, J. & Wiggins, G., 2007, p. 23), while the mission is "the path by which you will achieve your vision" (Martin et al., 2017). The mission statement or purpose should be a concise statement that describes how you will get there and your reason for being.

- As for articulation, Mission is first and foremost a symbolic expression of the organization's values. As such, it is generally articulated in an overarching fashion (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Some contend that mission can and should be written in a short, concise statement. The vision, on the other hand, needs to be more than a statement. It should be a description, which may be a paragraph or a whole page. It should paint a picture of the future that will come to be as we carry out our mission (Smith, 2016). A vision statement is therefore a compelling "picture of the future you wish to create, described in the present tense, as if it were happening now" (Senge, 2006, p. 302).
- Both constructs are a source of inspiration, but each one of them derives its power from a different origin. Vision draws its power from the leader's personal motivation that can act as a catalyst to action for oneself and potentially for others, whereas the power of a mission lies in the human need for meaning and purpose (Hallinger & Heck, 2002).

Despite their distinct nature, Vision and Mission are clearly related, in that they both espouse the core values of the organisation (DuFour et al., 2008). It is unanimously agreed that core values are the bedrock of every organisation's identity: its culture, climate and practice (e.g. Lezotte & McKee, 2002; Watkins & McCaw, 2007; Branson, 2008). These core values find expression in mission statements (the organisation's *raison d'être*), or vision statements (what the organisation aspires to become). In their research, Watkins and McCaw (2007) address the compound construct VMCv (Vision, Mission, Core values), maintaining that the alignment of the vision, mission, and core values to each other is crucial to the accomplishment of continuous improvement of the school. Alignment was defined by them as "the process of adjusting parts until they are in agreement to benefit the whole" (p. 434).

Watkins and McCaw's (2007) arguments for treating Vision, Mission and Core values as one united entity seem most applicable to this research of the Israeli education system, as in Hebrew – and other languages too (e.g. Japanese) – there is no distinction between Vision and Mission; the two constructs are represented by the same term: Vision. As will be expanded on in their analysis, the three schools' vision statements explored in this study mostly demonstrate attributes of vision: They provide a picture of the future they wish to create (where the school is heading), they use the future tense (or the present tense describing the future) and are all boosted by the head-teacher. At the same time, they seem to incorporate some attributes of mission (the ways by which the vision can be achieved), while specifying the values they comprise. This is the rationale for the choice of this study to treat the schools' vision, mission and core values conjointly, and for the use of the terms Vision and Mission interchangeably.

From the list of quasi-definitions presented above, and from a great number of additional research reports, one can derive several central dimensions that constitute organisational vision and characterize it, as will be specified in the following sections.

### **2.1.3 Organisational Vision and Organisational Outcomes**

A substantial body of academic work, especially that dealing with school leadership, school effectiveness and school improvement, expands on the connection between organisational vision and organisational outcomes in business and public organisations (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989; Collins & Porras, 1991, 1994, 1996; Wilson, 1992, 2008; Sammons et al., 1995; Baum & Locke, 1998; Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Mullane, 2002; Kilpatrick & Silverman, 2005; Carsten & Bligh, 2008; Sanders, 2016). Researchers view vision as important to leadership, strategy implementation, effectiveness, and change in business firms. Several mediating variables have been found to contribute to the link between organisational vision and performance, e.g. organisational learning (Kurland & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2004; Kurland, 2006); vision communication to employees and stakeholders (Baum & Locke, 1998) and leadership style (Berson et al., 2001). However, there are those who question this line of reasoning,

claiming that the concept of vision is overrated (Analoui & Karami, 2002; Barnett & McCormick, 2003). Others maintain that the exact nature of the relationship between vision and performance has not, as yet, been fully established (Bart et al., 2001).

Understanding vision and its theoretical definitions has been, until recent years, largely uninformed by data about how those charged with its implementation conceive it. Hence, the prevalent approach towards the definition of vision is extremely underdeveloped and markedly naive as can be seen, for example, in Larwood et al.'s (1995) contention that, "vision is what those using the term say that it is" (p. 217). Generally, what is known about what constitutes an effective vision whether in the business arena or in the educational field, is rather sporadic (Kantabutra, 2008). A more structured version of the dimensions which of a viable vision/mission will be offered later in this section.

#### **2.1.4 Vision in Educational Organisations**

The need for a vision in educational organisations appears to be even more acute, since most of them are non-profit organisations, which means that they operate without the feedback provided by profits and losses (Kilpatrick & Silverman, 2005). However, research into the notion of vision in the educational domain is still relatively unformed. The first standard articulated by the USA's largest secondary school accreditation programme requires that schools establish and communicate a shared vision, purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school (AdvanceED, 2010, p. 1). Setting a direction involves aligning people, motivating and inspiring them towards a vision, by way of developing shared understanding about school activities and goals. Such shared understanding also enables the organisation to cope with change (Kotter, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Despite the prominent role that vision and mission statements often play in education, educational researchers have generally ignored them as a source of empirical research data, based on two criticisms (Stemler et al., 2011). Stemler et al. refer mainly to



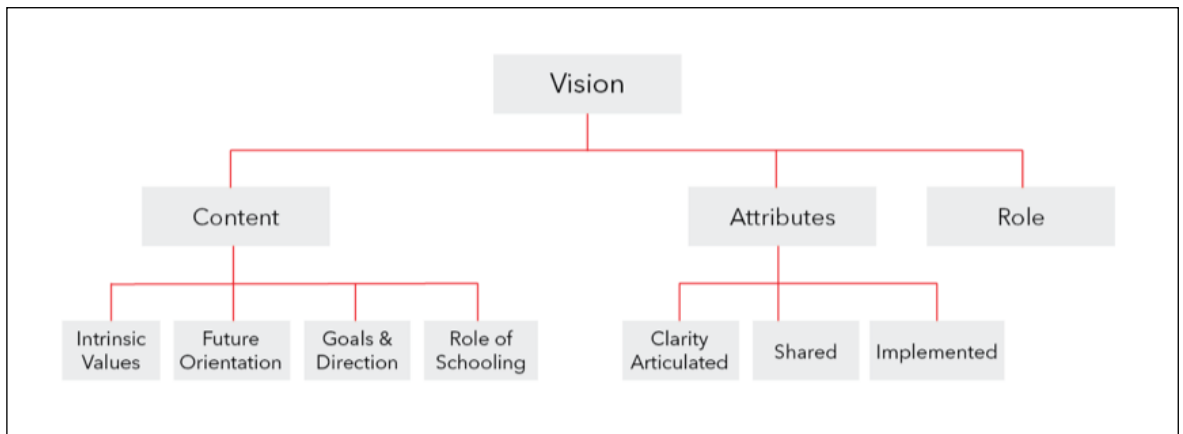
mission statements, but I found that their criticism equally applies to vision statements, namely: the assumptions that school Vision and Mission statements actually say nothing, as "they are filled with vacuous platitudes or because they end up being catch-all statements that attempt to be all things to all people." (p. 9). The lack of data on how closely a school's Vision and Mission statements correlate with the actual day-to-day functioning of the school.

Nevertheless, looking at it from a different perspective, the above mentioned criticisms may be seen as an incentive to dig deeper into the issue of School Vision, as articulated in schools' Vision and Mission statements, and scrutinise their validity and function in school life. Therefore, we need to consider how school vision can be viable.

### **2.1.5 What Makes a School Vision Viable?**

In relation to the issue of what makes a School Vision/Mission viable, research suggests that in order to assess their viability, we need to consider different dimensions of them. (As I chose to use Vision and Mission interchangeably, as explained above, I shall henceforth draw on relevant research pertaining both concepts, but use the term Vision for both for purposes of convenience – N.M.).

Extant literature suggests three main dimensions for the exploration and measurement of organisational vision: (a) Content; (b) Attributes; and, (c) The role it plays in the organisation. This structure will be later used as a framework for analysis and discussion. The above variety of dimensions was collected and adapted from both Collins and Porras (1991, 1994, 1996) with regard to the business world (also accepted by Kantabutra, 2006, 2008), as well as on contentions of various researchers in the educational field, as detailed below. Based on the assumption that these dimensions define the viability-extent of visions of organisations of various kinds, this study they will be applied to educational organisations, for the exploration of educational vision below, as demonstrated in the following chart:



**Figure 2.1: Dimensions of a Viable School Vision Statement**

### 2.1.5.1 Vision Content

Interest in vision content has grown following its central role in theories of charismatic/transformational/responsible/caring leadership, especially since the 1990s, due to the abundance of educational reforms and changes in schools from that time onward. Throughout the research, the content of a vision, both in the business and in education world, is oftentimes regarded as critical to determining whether a leader is successful in setting out new directions and/or maintaining high levels of continued success (Berson et. al., 2001). Inspirational visions were defined as 'strong,' and such visions have been associated with higher organisational performance (Baum et al., 1998) as leaders use vision to motivate their followers and to communicate strategic goals, thus fostering organisational performance and outcomes (Baum et al., 2004).

Studies of the vision content of managers in non-educational settings found it important that vision content should be highly inspirational, optimistic and future-oriented. More recent works includes the examination of actual features of vision and mission statements of managers, associating these contents with leadership styles and personality (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Larwood et al., 1995; Sosik & Dinger, 2007).

Some researchers argue that these vision themes largely apply to educational settings as well, (Berson et al., 2001; Barnett & McCormick, 2002). Generally, inspiring visions should include future oriented/optimistic statements, express confidence, highlight the intrinsic needs that can be met, challenges and opportunities, connect to the core values of the organisation, and place emphasis on providing direction and specific goals (Berson et al., 2001; Sosik & Dinger, 2007).

Traditional views of leadership place the process of vision creation in the hands of leaders, assuming that they are in the best position to chart a strategic path for the organisation. Still, because followers are integrally involved in moving the organisation toward the desired future state (see discussion on the Followership Theory, pp. 48, 51-2), it can be argued that the importance of followers in the creation and the realization of vision is equal to, if not greater than, the importance of strategic leaders (Carsten & Bligh, 2008). Moreover, the attributes of a viable vision, mentioned by a variety of researchers, corroborate this statement. All these attributes are stakeholder-oriented, as they aim at gaining the stakeholders' collaboration in the drafting of a vision statement, their alignment with its values, and their involvement in its implementation.

The following section will elaborate on the attributes of a viable vision, and inter-relationship between these and the stakeholders' role in school.

#### **2.1.5.2 Attributes of Vision**

If vision indeed has an effect on an organisation's performance, as is agreed upon by most researchers (e.g. Sidhu, 2003; Branson, 2008), then the attributes which contribute to its effectiveness should be explored. Collectively, many leadership authors have included in the content definition of visions the image of the future, the provision of directions to be pursued; a clarified set of ideals, and a sense of purpose, highlighting the uniqueness of an organisation (Berson et al., 2001). A comprehensive review of leadership, business strategy and entrepreneurship theories (Baum et al., 1998) identified seven attributes necessary for a vision to be effective: brevity, clarity,

abstractness, challenge, future orientation, stability, and desirability or ability to inspire. Kantabutra (2008), adopted Baum et al.'s (1980) list of attributes, all of which are expected to invoke stakeholders' commitment to this vision – towards its implementation, thus improving school performance. Kantabutra (2006) also contends that only the combination of all seven vision attributes in a vision can be expected to influence the vision's effectiveness via staff satisfaction. Nevertheless, he himself notes his reservations, and recommends that educators and practitioners refine the examination of certain vision variables in order to learn more about what constitutes an effective vision.

Concordantly, Yukl (2006) brings to the fore three attributes, that simplify Baum et al.'s (1998) suggested attributes, but are still associated with them:

- **Simple enough to be understood:** Relating to brevity, clarity and coherence.
- **Appealing enough to evoke commitment:** Relating to desirability or ability to inspire.
- **Credible enough to be accepted as realistic and attainable:** Challenge and future orientation.

The following sections will be dedicated to the exploration of these attributes, as interpreted in the relevant literature, namely: (1) Simple: a clearly articulated, coherent vision; (2) Appealing: a shared vision; and, (3) Credible: realistic and attainable, implemented.

### **(1) Simple: A Clearly Articulated and Coherent Vision**

It is crucial for leaders to be able to clearly articulate their visions for their organisations (Larwood et al., 1995; Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). A clear and coherent vision reflects the core values and core purpose of the organisation, and provides guidelines for decision-making. Hence, similar recommendations are made by education researchers regarding schools:

Vision need not be mystical or mysterious. If it works, it will be expressed in quite simple terms [...] It will be a reference point by which parents, teachers, pupils and others make sense of change and face challenges.

(Holmes, 1993, p. 16)

Greenfield et al. (1992) found in their research of school vision that principals who proved effective engaged in advancing a clearly articulated school vision for their school, and openly exchanged views with others about its accomplishment.

Notwithstanding, Ylimaki (2006) maintains that although clear goals may be helpful in guiding an organisation through a change process, total clarity is likely to exclude activities and purposes (and ultimately people) that might be desirable and important to the future of an organisation. Furthermore, the notion of vision as goals may not adequately convey the complex reality of today's educational problems and plans for improvement. The balance between clarity and coherence on the one hand, and communicativeness on the other, should therefore be considered in the process of designing a vision statement. Following a similar line of thinking, Kantabutra (2006) argues that clarity and abstractness may be considered contrasting attributes of vision: a vision which is clear may be too long and therefore difficult to communicate to followers effectively and frequently, whereas an abstract vision may generate conflict among groups of followers.

Allan (2001, pp. 290-1) sums up the problems that may engender a situation of this kind:

- (1) Much of what is found in the vision statement is so general that it is virtually impossible for people to know how to implement it. Such generic statements are probably meant to inspire people, but in effect, they push people to ignore them.
- (2) The vision statements are often void of practical implications for what people actually do on a day-to-day basis. Over time, this lack of action can lead people to conclude that the statements are "feel-good" sentiments that have been created for public relations reasons and need not be taken as serious statements of intent.
- (3) In an effort to cover all bases, vision and mission statements are generally too long and too complicated, which may drive members of the school's community to ignore the document entirely.

As aforementioned, inspiring visions should be optimistic and purposeful, represent the core values of the organisation, and foresee positive future challenges and opportunities. Simply put, we define 'vision strength' in terms of the extent to which the vision contains the above-mentioned inspirational contents (Berson et al., 2001). All the above is necessary to the harnessing of stakeholders to the vision of their school, as articulated in Holmes' (1993) unequivocal statement:

Vision [...] will be a reference point by which parents, teachers, pupils and others make sense of change and face challenges.

(p. 16)

Managers must involve stakeholders in the decisions that will ultimately affect them, as people will have more interest in getting involved in matters of importance to them personally (Yukl, 2006). Burns (1978) suggests that followers need to have a strong sense of purpose if they are to be motivated to act. An inspiring vision, clear, challenging and stable, will have power to generate emotional commitment, since it presents a view of a better future (Nanus, 1992).

A second dominant attribute of a meaningful vision is, therefore, its being shared with organisational stakeholders and that aspect will be discussed next.

## **(2) Appealing: A Shared Vision**

A shared organisational vision is one that all members of the organisation are committed to, as it reflects their personal vision and enables them to bring their own desires, values and standpoints together with the goals of the organisation and its future directions of development (Berson et al., 2001). A clear vision and mission statements that are shared by all stakeholders bring in a commitment that bonds them together towards a common cause, channelling energy toward a unified goal (Margolis & Hansen, 2003; Norman, 2016).

Greenfield et al. (1992) argue that a leader's vision should have sufficient depth to address the deepest convictions of organisational members, but the latter's ability to pursue and implement this vision depends on the leader's ability to develop warm working relationships with teachers as individuals, and a shared professional concern for good teaching practice (Greenfield et al., 1992; Popper, 1994 – Hebrew). Generally, the literature on charismatic/transformational leadership appears takes vision as a given, in terms of being the component of leadership that motivates people to higher levels of effort and performance (Sashkin, 1993; Larwood et al., 1995; Baum et al., 1998; Berson et al., 2001). This is all the more so in schools, where vision is considered to be the essence of leadership, creating the sense of purpose that binds stakeholders together and propels them to fulfill their deepest aspirations and reach for ambitious goals

(Greenfield et al., 1992; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Ylimaki, 2006; Kurland et al., 2010).

Stakeholders' collaboration implies commitment, but never without conditions. The follower wants the leader to create feelings of significance, community, and excitement – or "the deal is off" (Goffee & Jones, 2001). Daft (1999) offers a psychological perspective to the importance of involving stakeholders in the creation of a shared vision. He suggests that the significance of this process lies in its relation to basic human needs, namely: the desire to feel needed and appreciated, and to believe that one can contribute to meaningful changes in the world. Another psychological approach to a shared vision in schools contributes to high employee morale, staff's job satisfaction, effective participation, organisational commitment and organisational support, organisational citizenship conduct, and relationships between subordinates and their leaders (Alanezi, 2016).

Building a shared school vision involves collaborative processes within the school community which, in turn, bind all stakeholders together and establish group ownership of school vision (Barnett & McCormick, 2003), contributing to their feeling of community (Goffee & Jones, 2001). Three procedures of sharing the school vision were identified in the relevant literature, as follows:

- (1) Collaboration with the stakeholders in the drafting process of the school vision (Kurland et al., 2010; Carsten & Bligh, 2008; Kantabutra, 2008).
- (2) Availability of school vision contents, whether on the school's walls or through communication media (Van Houtte, 2005).



- (3) Constant referral to the values underpinning values of the school vision in discussions and debates regarding school life (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Alanezi, 2016).

It can be assumed that in a school where all the above procedures are applied, true sharing of the school vision will occur, and will have an impact on the stakeholders' sense of ownership of their school vision.

### ***(3) Credible: Realistic and Attainable, Implemented***

I chose to link the attribute of implementation to credibility, realism and attainability, as they are all related to stakeholder commitment and collaboration: Stakeholders who conceive their organisation's vision/mission as feasible and achievable will be more inclined to align with it and participate in its implementation. On the other hand, as mentioned before, without the stakeholders' collaboration there is little chance for such implementation:

While a school might have a vision statement that exists, if not purposefully enacted, it becomes empty of its true purpose.

(McClees, 2016, p. 53)

Many researchers maintain that the distinguishing feature of long-lasting successful organisations is that they use their vision, mission and values to guide decision-making (Bart et al., 2001; Zakariasen & Zakariasen, 2002; Mullane, 2002; Analoui & Karami, 2002; Sufi & Howard, 2003; David & David, 2003; Kilpatrick & Silverman, 2005; Barrett, 2006; Allio, 2006). "Unless the sense of vision is clearly debated, regularly restated and firmly embedded in what the school does, you might as well assume it is not there" (Holmes, 1993, p. 22). Pekarsky (2007) urges schools to engage in vision-guided educational practice, whereby the educational vision of a school is

collaboratively determined by key stakeholders and then made explicit, often in the form of a mission/vision statement. Blanchard and Stoner (2004) suggest using the following attribute as a litmus test regarding the viability of a vision or a mission statement: Is it used to guide everyday decision making? If the answer is positive, one's vision is working.

### **2.1.5.3 What is the Role of Vision in the Organisation?**

#### ***Vision is the Future Image of the Organisation***

The Vision may be considered the future image of the organisation at its best. Wilson (1992) defines it as a coherent and powerful statement of what the business should be ten years hence. By the same token, Daft (1999, p. 126) defines vision as "an attractive, ideal future that is credible yet not readily attainable." Conger and Kanungo (1987, p. 640) describe vision as "a set of clear ideal objectives, well-defined, which the leader would like the organisation to achieve in the future." Creating a vision means, therefore, describing the core ideology of the organisation and constructing its envisioned future (Foster & Akdere, 2007), and painting a portrait of the organisation's ideal future state (Carsten & Bligh, 2008).

Many researchers in the area of leadership characterize the charismatic/transformational leader as one who is able to point out the discrepancy between the current state of the organisation and the future goals it aspires to achieve (Berson et al., 2001). Hence, school leaders have to involve teachers [as well as other stakeholders] in developing a vision of what the future should be like, including defining goals by which to realize the vision (Zimmerman, 2006). Thus, visioning is a process of assessing how fit the organisation may grow and compete in the future (Millet, 2006). Such a process should be performed jointly by the head-teacher and the school members. It is the acknowledgement of the gap between the present and the future (or between the 'is' and the 'ought to be') that generates the creative tension essential for the improvement of school performance (Senge, 1990; Kurland, 2006). Visions portray future possibilities and oftentimes convince people to let go of the past (Shamir et al., 1993).

### ***Vision Differentiates One Organisation from Another***

Each visionary organisation has (or ought to have) a distinctive core ideology that is the essence of its vision (Ölcer, 2007). It is the vision that defines the organisation and distinguishes it from other organisations of the same nature (Collins & Porras, 1994). It is essential for every visionary organisation to have a statement of what the organisation stands for and why it exists – its core ideology consisting of its core values and core purpose (McManus, 2004). Moreover, there are those who think that a vision may sometimes be a source of difficulty if it fails to reflect the actual needs and values of the organisation (Barnett & McCormick, 2003).

In many ways, every school is unique. Each school has its own characteristics, shaped by such factors as its location, pupil intake, size, resources, and most importantly, the quality of its staff (Sammons et al., 1995). The vision statement is expected to convey the school's uniqueness.

### ***Vision is a Unifying Motto to Get All Members of the Organisation Working toward Shared Goals***

As noted above, a shared organisational vision is one that all members of the organisation are committed to, because it reflects their personal values, and enables them to merge their own desires, values and standpoints with the goals of the organisation and its future directions of development:

Unless vision and direction are communicated and well understood by everyone, your organisation won't even be in the game.

(Blanchard & Stoner, 2004, p. 22)

As explained above, visionary management is an intrinsic part of advanced and participatory form of strategic management (Baum & Locke, 1998; Westley &

Minzberg, 2004), which is believed to foster the success of the organisation. Millet (2006) describes the process of visioning as follows:

In visioning, the leader conducts the process like an orchestra – he or she may even play one instrument in the arrangement, but the leader does not try to play all instruments. The symphony of the group is what is important.

(p. 45)

### ***Vision Guides Decision-Making***

Vision is sometimes described as the compass of the organisation. The core ideology of the organisation, manifested in its vision statement, remains relatively constant and provides guidance in the process of strategic decision-making (Ölcer, 2007). This is probably the reason Baum et al. (1998) and Kantabutra (2008) included 'stability' in the list of attributes of a viable vision, together with 'future orientation,' 'challenge,' 'abstractness,' and the 'ability to inspire.' They both maintain, that a vision/mission statement should represent a constant ideology, an abstract yet appealing future ideal, the followers perceive as worth working for, as it is "credible yet not readily attainable" (Daft, 1999, p. 126).

"A lot of organisations have vision and mission statements, but most of these statements seem irrelevant when you look at the organisation and where it is going." (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004, p. 23). In other words, vision should not be regarded as an empty statement. Rather, it should reflect the organisation's common aims and aspirations, and the values it espouses should be enacted in each school's every day's practice.

Consistency, then, is key to a viable vision, which invokes stakeholders' alignment and commitment, and guides the school's decision-making process.

### 2.1.6 Summary: The School System and School Vision

In this section, I have tried to clarify the concept of vision, its definition and attributes, as well as its role in organisations, as reported in the research literature, both in business firms and in educational institutes. I worked on the assumption that findings from the business arena might be applicable to the educational world.

The following table provides a sample of empirical studies conducted in the past two decades, their core purpose, sample and main findings, most of which confirm the theoretical suggestion concerning School Vision and stakeholders:

Author/s	Year of Publication	Subject	Sample	Comments
Barnett and McCormick	2003	The investigation of transformational leadership behaviour and vision in schools	4 Head-teachers and 11 randomly selected classroom teachers from 4 schools – semi-structured interviews and content analysis	The influence of vision may be overestimated and the most critical leadership transformational behaviour is individual concern
Sidhu	2003	Investigating the mission statement – performance link	Interviews with CEO/ directors of firms (or business units of diversified firms in different multimedia industries	A mission statement can lead to superior performance and managerial implications
Strange and Mumford	2005	Vision formation and leader development	212 university undergraduates experienced the formation and presentation of SVS	Viable models, analysis of key causes and key goals and reflection, lead to the generation of evocative visions

**Table 2.1: A Sample of Empirical Studies regarding Vision/Mission**

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Watkins and McCaw	2007	Investigation of participants' knowledge of their school and district's VMCv	Teachers and administrators, enrolled as graduate students in educational leadership degree courses – exploratory survey, questionnaire and follow-up groups	There is a gap between teaching about VMCv and the failure to actually implement VMCv and managerial implications
Branson	2008	Interdependency between successful achievement of organizational change and attainment of values alignment within an organisation's culture. Description of an effective means for attaining such values alignment	Literature from the various fields of organizational change trial of a simple and effective framework for achieving such values alignment in an organisation	Values alignment is the bedrock, the foundation, on which all truly successful organisational change depends
Kurland et al.	2010	To explore leadership theories about vision as a component of leadership	1474 teachers at 104 primary schools	Confirmation that an inspiring vision has the power to generate emotional commitment
Stemler et al.	2011	Compare schools with regard to their primary aims or mission. Explores the utility of mission statements as data source for comparing and reflecting on schools' core purposes nationwide (US)	A survey of 150 high school mission statements and phone interviews with 15 head-teachers	The three major purposes of schooling across high school were: civic and emotional development, cognitive development – far broader than just cognitive or academic development and managerial implications

**Table 2.1: A Sample of Empirical Studies regarding Vision/Mission (Cont.)**

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Fayad (PhD Thesis)	2011	Various aspects of School Vision and Mission Statements	Principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels – survey	<p>(1)The same percentage of principals feel that mission statements differ and do not differ significantly from one school to the next.</p> <p>(2)A considerable number of principals reported that they do use the mission statements in many of the managerial and leadership aspects of their day-to-day jobs</p>
Kose	2011	<p>What leadership practices guide the development of school vision or mission?</p> <p>What dimensions of written vision statement provide leverage for transformative practice?</p>	A sample of six successful head-teachers in fostering students' achievements – interviews	<p>(1)The inclusion of staff and other stakeholders is critical.</p> <p>(2)Vision statements should be clear, specific and manageable.</p> <p>(3)The leader is the centre of the process.</p> <p>(4)Stakeholders should see the benefits the Vision holds for them</p>
Stich and Reeves	2014	Content analysis of university mission statements	Mission statements of several universities – content analysis	Beneath the generalized rhetoric of institutional mission statements lie powerful messages seemingly coded with varying forms of class-based academic capital

**Table 2.1: A Sample of Empirical Studies regarding Vision/Mission (Cont.)**

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Chapple	2015	A comparison of mission statements in Japan and New Zealand – To what extent do they reflect the local culture?	150 primary school mission statement in Japan and New Zealand – content analysis	Distinction between the definition of school success in Japan (focusing on the whole individual; instilling a balance of academic, social and civic attributes as a priority with students remaining passive participants in the process) and New Zealand (as an increasingly multicultural society, accepting, respecting and embracing diversity)
Gurley et al.	2015	Stakeholders familiarity with statements of mission, vision and core values and its impact on their lives	Graduate level, educational leadership students, who concurrently teach in schools	Little knowledge and little understanding

**Figure 2.1: A Sample of Empirical Studies regarding Vision/Mission (Cont.)**

Examining the research regarding the concept of vision in the educational arena enabled me to elicit the following insights regarding it, which are pertinent to this study and the research gap it addresses.

- (1) The role of a viable vision in educational establishments appears to be similar to its role in business firms.



- (2) Certain attributes are expected to determine the viability of the organisation's vision statement, e.g. clear articulation, stakeholders' alignment and implementation (Strange & Mumford, 2005; Kose, 2011).
- (3) There seems to be a connection between an organisation's viable vision and its outcomes (Sidhu, 2003; Fayad, 2011).
- (4) The organisation's stakeholders play a major part in designing, maintaining and implementing the vision of their organisation (Branson, 2008; Kurland, 2010; Kose, 2011).
- (5) Despite the importance ascribed to stakeholder alignment with their SV, in practice there is a noticeable lack of familiarity with it among them (Watkins & McCaw, 2007; Gurley et al., 2015).
- (6) There are researchers who contend the Vision and Mission Statements are overrated, and sometimes even cover for subversive messages (Barnett & McCormick, 2003; Stich & Reeves, 2014).

## **2.2 Stakeholders**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

As we have seen above, an attractive attribute of a vision is that it is shared. Therefore, we need to consider in more detail the question of shared by whom, which leads us to a consideration of educational stakeholders. The following section has a two-fold function.

In its first part, it explores the concept of 'stakeholders' in general, providing a backdrop of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings concerning stakeholder-management, stakeholders' status and stakeholders' role in organisations. The second part relates specifically to the role of the educational stakeholders in the school system, focusing on

educational stakeholders' function in their schools. Stakeholders' role and status in their school reflect, inter alia, the extent of their ownership of their SV, which comprises their familiarity and alignment with their SV, as well as their involvement in its implementation in the school's day-to-day practice.

In organisations, initiatives or endeavours, stakeholders are those with an interest or 'stake' in the organisation, alongside those who are impacted by it. Stakeholders include shareholders, management, employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and sometimes the environment (Freeman & Phillips, 2002). Because stakeholders may affect decision-making in any organisation, their interests should be considered during the process of decision-making. The common view is that stakeholders have the ability to either enhance projects or bury them (Preston & Donaldson, 1999; Bourne, 2006). A positive relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders is therefore critical, generating sustainability and contributing to its organisational wealth. Most researchers in the field acknowledge the merits of this approach (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Richards, 2004; Svendsen et al., 2004; Maak & Pless, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Stakeholders' Status in Organisations**

The past two decades have witnessed a powerful social phenomenon: the growing importance of stakeholders in the daily affairs of public and commercial organisations (Maasen, 2000). In the field of commercial business, the monolithic *stockholder* view, where returns to shareholders outweigh all other considerations, has been gradually replaced by a more diversified, *stakeholder* view. This latter approach accepts that various agents have interests and rights of comparable weight within, as well as without, the organisation (Richards, 2004). Correspondingly, the traditional regulatory, policy-making, and funding relationship between state and public sectors has gradually evolved: Stakeholders are treated as equal partners, rather than as subordinates (Maasen, 2000; Maak & Pless, 2006).

Where these changes have taken place, the top-down decision-making process is substituted by a complex multi-faceted process, in which different actors cooperate at different moments and on different levels. Consequently, the influence of stakeholders in organisational decision-making processes and their actual implementation has increased, and the interests of these stakeholders cannot be overlooked any longer (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Freeman & Phillips, 2002; Fletcher et al., 2003). Consequently, researchers have started to search for methods to gauge stakeholders' requirements, in order to develop a better understanding of their perspectives (Cleland, 1999).

### **2.2.3 What is a 'Stake' and Who are the Stakeholders?**

Stakeholders are defined as groups or individuals "who benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by [the organisation's] actions" (Freeman, 2001, p. 41).

The concept of 'stakeholders' draws on the field of business and management. It is commonly used to mean individuals or groups with a legitimate interest in an organisation, who are positively or negatively, favourably or adversely, affected by organisation's activities, or are able to influence the achievement of the organisation's objectives, based on the fact that they have some kind of 'stake' in it (Savage et al., 1991; Gross & Godwin, 2005; Smith, 2008).

Bourne and Walker (2006) suggest a close examination of the term 'stake,' that is, a stakeholder's *stake* could be defined as his/her needs or requirements and how he/she could impact the project. A *stake* could include an interest (the circumstances in which a person or a group will be affected by a decision); a right (legal or moral) or ownership (a legal claim to an asset or a property). In conclusion, they present the following inclusive definition:

Stakeholders are individuals or groups who have an interest or some aspect of rights or ownerships in the project, and can contribute to, or be impacted by, the outcomes of the project.

(Bourne & Walker, 2006, p. 5)

In the literature, we find several suggestions for the identification and classification of stakeholders and their status in organisations:

- (1) **Degree to which one is affected by the organisation's decisions:** The extent of influence decisions made by the organisation have on them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).
- (2) **Legitimacy:** Their formal, official, or contractual status in the organisation (Gibson, 2000).
- (3) **Power:** Their extent of influence or importance in a project or entity (Mitchell et al., 1997; Fletcher et al., 2003).
- (4) **Potential for cooperation or threat:** Potential influence on different issues, allowing for a typology of four types: supportive, non-supportive, mixed-blessing, and marginal (Savage et. al, 1991).

Stakeholders' rights derive, therefore, either from their power (their ability to contribute to or harm the organisation), or from a moral/ethical point of view, even in the absence of any apparent benefit or threat (Gibson, 2000; Friedman & Miles, 2002; Post et al., 2002). Every organisation or project management must anticipate stakeholder expectations as a part of decision-making process, to enhance success or prevent failure. To do so, they must be able to identify and classify their stakeholders (Svendsen et al., 2004), and develop strategies for managing stakeholders with different levels of potential (involvement, defence, collaboration, monitoring).

#### 2.2.4 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory both identifies and models the groups that are stakeholders of a corporation, and recommends methods by which management can give due regard to their interests. In short, it attempts to address the "Principle of Who or What Really Counts" (World Lingo). Donaldson and Preston (1995) distinguished between *descriptive*, *instrumental*, and *normative* approaches to stakeholder theory. The descriptive approach indicates whether stakeholder interests are taken into account; the instrumental approach is concerned with the impact of stakeholders in terms of corporate effectiveness. The normative approach considers the reasons why corporations ought to consider stakeholder interests, even in the absence of any apparent benefit.

The different perspectives offered by stakeholder theory reflect the understanding of the different types of stake, highlighting potential stakeholder expectations (Bourne & Walker, 2006): *Social science stakeholder theory* focuses on concepts of justice, equity and social rights as the moral basis for stakeholders' stake in the organisation (Gibson, 2000). *Instrumental stakeholder theory* maintains that the relationship between stakeholders and managers is contingent upon the nature, quality and characteristics of their interaction (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This view implies the need for negotiation, resulting in conflict or harmony (Bourne & Walker, 2006). Jones and Wicks (1999) attempt to harmonize the normative (moral/ethical) foundations of the theory with its instrumental (profit/wealth enhancing) aspects. To do so, they present a *convergent stakeholder theory* that explains stakeholders' actions and reactions in terms of their mutual relationship with management.

Stakeholder theory (in particular the instrumental approach) has support in the field of strategy and management. Recent research literature manifests an increased focus on the intellectual capital of firms – embracing all forms of intangible assets, specifically human, structural and relational resources. Relationship capital is defined as all the

resources linked to the external relationships of the firm, as well as that part of human and structural capital concerned with a company's relations with stakeholders. The adoption of a similar approach to the management of non-profit or third sector organisations is essential, as non-profit organisations must compete with each other for community support and government funds, and intellectual capital management gives organisations a competitive advantage (Fletcher et al., 2003; Svendsen et al., 2004).

Whilst stakeholder theory has been approved in both the academic literature and in business practice, it has been criticized for being vague and blurry (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jones & Wicks, 1999), its limitations (Friedman & Miles, 2002), and for its supposed focus on the interests of human participants in the organisation (Orts & Strudler, 2002). All this notwithstanding, there is a clear impetus for identifying the interests of stakeholders, as failure to do this may lead to project failure (Bourne & Walker, 2006).

### **2.2.5 Stakeholder Management**

As defined by Fletcher et al. (2003), Stakeholder Management aims to guide organisational managers in the on-going process of analysing and evaluating the interaction between the organisation and its members. To this end, stakeholder management endeavours to identify the interests of related stakeholders, so as to assess risk levels and potential obstacles to the organisation's success (Savage et al., 1991; Bourne & Walker, 2003; Fletcher et al., 2003). Furthermore, stakeholder managers are responsible for delineating and keeping track of explicit and implicit relationships between diverse groups of stakeholders and the organisation. These relationships can be leveraged, in turn, for the purpose of building short- and long-term partnerships and collaborations among stakeholders, for the benefit of the organisation as a whole (Mitchell et al., 1997; Llewellyn, 2009).

In accordance with the concept of organisational wealth as both tangible and intangible (Sveiby, 2001), Preston and Donaldson (1999) argue that, under certain circumstances,

stakeholders have the ability to enhance organisational wealth, and that positive relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders generate economic benefits. This approach is acknowledged by most researchers, informing the search for a process to monitor stakeholders' CCIs (henceforth Claims, Concerns, and Issues), in order to gain a better understanding of their perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Savage et al., 1991; Frooman, 1999; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Kelsey & Pense, 2001; Fletcher et al., 2003; Bourne, 2006). To this end, methodologies have been developed for stakeholder management to gauge stakeholders' CCIs (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Savage et al., 1991; Jones & Wicks, 1999; Kelsey & Pense, 2001; Fletcher et al., 2003; Bourne, 2006), and subsequently address them, whether as agents, beneficiaries or underrepresented victims.

To sum up, stakeholder management, within a business or projects, proposes a strategy of utilizing information, gathered in a process that consists of the following steps (Llewellyn, 2009):

- **Stakeholder identification:** Creating a map of interested parties, internal or external to the organisation.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** Acknowledgement of stakeholders' interests, concerns, authority, common relationships, etc.
- **Identification of the resulting claims** stakeholders are likely to make.
- **Stakeholder matrix:** Positioning stakeholders according to their level of influence and impact (from the organisation's perspective).
- **Identification of the resulting strategic challenges.**

As Bourne and Walker (2006) put it:

Stakeholder engagement is a formal process of relationship management through which companies, industries, or projects engage with a set of stakeholders in an effort to align their mutual interests, to reduce risk and to advance the organization's economic advantage.

(p. 7)

Effective stakeholder management assumes that functional organisation strategy requires consensus from a plurality of key stakeholders about what needs to be done and how (Savage et al., 1991). The achievement of such consensus depends on the on-going administration of stakeholder engagement.

The key to effective stakeholder engagement is accountability. On-going communications with stakeholders should include the determination and assessment of service value as perceived by stakeholders, including such elements as knowledge sharing, complementary resources, capabilities and collaborations (Preston & Donaldson, 1999; Kelsey & Pense, 2001; Fletcher et al., 2003; Young, 2010). This is primarily focused at developing relationships at the executive level, providing the opportunity to determine the set of values and principles that both management and stakeholders (whether in business or in education) will abide by. This marks a development towards the perception of leadership as an interactive process, with stakeholders active and influential partners in the leadership process, as suggested in the followership theory.

### **2.3 Stakeholders in the Education System**

It is frequently argued that educators should take cues from the success of the business sector, to replicate these successes in the educational arena (Gross & Godwin, 2005). It is acknowledged that knowledge practices of a radically different kind (business, educational; corporate, community) now form part of educational



management (Mulcahy & Perillo, 2010), with regard to an increased range of engagements: business plans, targets, indicators, benchmarks, standards, contracts, sponsorships and endorsements, and so on (Ball, 2003; Molnar, 2007), as well as stakeholder management. Stakeholders are recognised as being of particular importance in public and non-profit organisations. Both tend to have a more diverse group of stakeholders than private for-profit organisations, making it more difficult to identify strategic issues (Bryson, 2011).

It would be true, yet unhelpful, to say that everyone is a stakeholder in education. The traditional list of educational stakeholders (the state, management, teachers, parents, students) has been replaced by a great number of interested parties, such as communities, local authorities, non-profit organisations, business firms, alumni, religious groups etc. (Gross & Godwin, 2005; Smith, 2008). In his paper about the Nepalese School System, Sowton (2003) begs to differ. He maintains that educational stakeholders are easy to identify, as there are five stakeholders who in different societies, types of schools and levels of education will hold varying degrees of influence and authority. These stakeholders are, directly, students, teachers and headmasters and, indirectly, parents/the community and the state. The three groups within the school, in most forms of education, form a direct hierarchy. The other two have a cross-cutting influence across all sectors, again to different degrees, depending on a number of factors.

For this research, I chose to focus on the relationship between educational organisations and a limited number of their stakeholders, both internal and external: head-teachers, teachers, students, and parents. These stakeholders have various expectations of the outcome of schooling and the purposes of learning, which affect how they structure educational institutions, define learning, and understand the nature of the student. These can appear to be mutually exclusive (Smith, 2008):

- Society wants to educate children in order to insure that its various economic and cultural institutions are protected and perpetuated. Its values are merely pragmatic. Its method is mainly competition, and its objective is to mould students into the next generations of producers and consumers.
- The state seeks to educate children to ensure a stable, productive and powerful nation. Its method of operation is also competition, in combination with mythic inspiration and the moral imperatives of altruism and civil justice.
- Religious groups want to educate children in order to bring them in line with the believed wills of various deities. They tend to operate by brokering shame and absolution.
- Parents want their children to have an education so that they are equipped with skills that will allow them to leave home and flourish (or at least subsist apart from them!) along the lines of their unique potential, thus affirming the parents' wisdom and sacrifice in raising them.
- Students expect to be educated, so that they have plenty of choices in ways in which to comfortably realize the autonomy they so envy in their parents.

Sowton's (2003) description of the Nepalese educational system seems surprisingly applicable to the situation in the Israeli education system. The two groups that wield the most – and one might, fairly, say disproportionate – influence and power are head-teachers and the state. The other three groups – parents/the community, students and teachers – all have conspicuously small stake-holdings. Students are not generally consulted on any issues. This is reflected in the classroom pedagogy of "talk and chalk," where 95% of lesson time is TTT (Teacher Talking Time) and 5% STT (Student Talking Time) (Sowton, 2003).

The critical importance of stakeholder engagement, and alignment of their goals and vision, is well established. Communication with stakeholders as part of effective management is vital for organisation leaders. By assessing each stakeholder's potential to threaten or to cooperate with the organisation, managers may identify supportive, mixed-blessing, non-supportive, and marginal stakeholders (Savage et al., 1991). Having identified them, they can establish relationship not only with close, supportive, "tame" stakeholders, but also those who may be hostile to their goals and vision (Bourne & Walker, 2006). AdvanceED (2010) clearly sums up the central role of stakeholders in establishing a viable School Vision:

The school should, *inter alia*: (i) establish a vision for the school in collaboration with its key stakeholders; (ii) communicate the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support; (iii) identify goals to advance the vision; (iv) ensure that the school's vision and purpose guide the learning process; and, (v) review its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate.

(AdvanceED, 2010, p. 1)

Nonetheless, the vast majority of leadership research studies focus on leaders (The Wallace Foundation 2009; Kelly, 2013). Kurland et al. (2010), citing numerous sources to support their points (e.g. Sergiovanni, 2000; Fullan, 2002; Hallinger, 2003; Stewart, 2006; Harris et al., 2015), state that the success of schools fundamentally depends on school leaders, as school leaders are accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn, and are essential for high-quality education.

The following section will therefore review the extant literature on educational leadership and management, and specifically the developments relevant to this study.

## **2.4 Educational Leadership and Management**

The linkage between the concepts of Vision and Stakeholders brings to the fore another important concept: Leadership. The leader is the nexus between those two concepts, as he/she are by definition held accountable for both. The theory describes two leadership patterns: transformational and transactional leadership (Kurland et al., 2010). Until the early 1970s, transactional leadership prevailed. Leadership was conceived as an exchange process in the fulfillment of contractual obligations, represented as setting objectives and monitoring and controlling outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2003). Transactional leaders exerted influence by setting goals, clarifying desired outcomes, providing feedback and exchanging rewards for accomplishments.

Since the late 1970s, a new genre of leadership theory, alternatively referred to as "charismatic," "transformational," "visionary" and/or "inspirational," has emerged in the organization literature (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1999; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungu, 1987; Sashkin, 1988, Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993; Dvir et al. 2002). Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) provided an understanding of how leaders influence followers to transcend self-interest for the greater good of their organizations in order to achieve optimal levels of performance (Antonakis et al., 2003). They developed the full-range transformational leadership theory, based on the assumption that people are motivated by instrumental motivation, but more so by such factors as the need for self-realization and belonging. Transformational leadership, therefore, aims at transforming followers, helping them to reach their full potential and generate the highest level of performance. Transformational leaders are proactive, raise followers' awareness for transcendent collective interests and help followers achieve extraordinary goals (Bass, 1985, 1989, 1999; Leithwood et al., Hallinger, 2003; 1998 Stewart, 2006).

In the context of the school milieu, early empirical work (Leithwood et al., 1999) found that the transformational leadership model first emerged in education literature in the 1980s, in response to demands on the school system to raise standards and improve

academic performance, and in recognition of the link between leadership and school effectiveness (Stewart, 2006).

A third approach to leadership referred to as passive leadership, or laissez-faire, is virtually "non-leadership," i.e. an avoidance of making decisions and using authority, as well as abdication of responsibility (Bass, 1999; Dvir et al. 2002; Antonakis et al., 2003). This approach is not dealt with here as it was not evident in any of the case studies.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when performance standards became dominant in the educational arena, head-teachers found themselves at the nexus of accountability and school improvement, with the increasingly explicit expectation that they will function as 'instructional leaders': strong, directive leaders, successful in leading their school toward high academic achievement. Above all, the instructional approach "sees the leader's prime focus as the responsibility for promoting measurable outcomes for students" (Day et al., 2016, p. 22). Whereas transformational leadership seeks to build the organization's capacity to select its purposes and to support the survival of changes to the school's core technology, the instructional leadership tradition maintains that "goals are viewed as an instrumental agent used by instructional leaders to narrow the attention of staff, parents and students on a limited range of activity" (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 172). Instructional leaders therefore align the strategies and activities of the school with its academic attainment, and are involved in managerial roles such as coordinating, controlling, supervising and developing curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2005).

#### **2.4.1 Responsible Leadership and Caring Leadership**

As expanded on above, the pendulum of leadership theory trends tends to swing back and forth between the opposite extremes of transformational and instructional leadership. However, the research literature brings to the fore two leadership styles which strive to combine the two constructs, in line with stakeholder theory:

(1) **Responsible Leadership** - A responsible leader's core task is to develop relationships with stakeholder groups (Maak, 2007; Gu & Johansson, 2016), in order to “raise one another to higher levels of motivation and commitment for achieving sustainable values creation and social change” (Pless, 2007, p. 438). Starratt (2005) argues that responsible leaders develop relationships as an equally important part of their leadership, not instead of but alongside strategies for improving academic achievement for all students. To a responsible leader, academic performance, although important, is not the only goal of successful school leadership. An equally important goal is the promotion of the best interests of the student beyond academic work, including the inculcation of values of fairness, justice, and equity as well as democratic learning that promotes civic engagement and understanding. Such leadership is often referred to as ethical or moral educational leadership, around the consideration of what is in the best interest of the students (Stone-Johnson, 2013).

(2) **Caring Leadership** - Caring leadership is defined in the research literature by the perception that the pursuit of academic achievements alone does not attend sufficiently to the quality of social relations required for effective education (Hoy et al., 2006). Alongside their strong preference for academic achievements, caring leaders stress communication and the attendance to the particular needs of others (Noddings, 2006; Gu & Johansson, 2013). Caring is further defined by promoting the general development, welfare and well-being of others, addressing particular needs of others and developing the capacity for caring among self and others. "The ethic of care reflects concern about helping students meet their needs at whatever level they may be and also addresses who is helped and who is hurt by the decision-making process" (Stone-Johnson, 2014, p. 4). Also the impact of role modeling, often practiced by caring leaders, is enhanced by a nurturing attitude (Higgs & McMillan, 2010). The literature on caring education suggests that the concept is powerful in

terms of addressing the immediate needs of students, teachers and families, and may also promote the longer term outcomes of belonging and engagement, a sense of personal well-being, and academic success (Louis et al., 2016). In their research into effective school leaders, Wildy and Louden (2000) found that head-teachers who emphasized caring as the core of their practice shared a distinct set of values, namely: "caring, strong, fair, open and have the capacity to involve others and to articulate long term goals " (p. 175).

#### **2.4.2 Low SES and Attainment**

Caring leadership is beneficial for all students, but it is critical for students from low SES families. There is abundant documentation of the negative impact of low family SES on academic achievements, a notion which has been extensively explored since the late 1970s: "School success is greatly influenced by students' family SES" (Sirin, 2005, p. 445). Following Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), researchers and practitioners strived to explain differences in children's outcomes, via understanding the impact of their background on their academic achievements, as well as on their self-esteem and self-trust (e.g. Smith, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2006; Biglan et al., 2012). (There is more on Low SES and Academic achievements in Appendix B, pp. 364-6).

#### **2.4.3 Educational Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought rapid changes in society and economy around the world (Wagner, 2008; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Suto, 2013), which present a challenging environment for educational leaders. The technological revolution has brought radical changes in the communication between people, the use of data, ways of thinking and problem solving; Due to enhanced globalization processes, economic necessity and low civic engagement compound the urgency to develop the skills and knowledge needed for success; The interconnectedness of our global economy, ecosystem and political networks require communication, collaboration, and problem solving with people worldwide; Low levels of civic engagement highlight the recognition that rote learning

about government is not a sufficient way for students to learn how and why to be engaged citizens; (Saavedra et al., 2012).

These developments in society and economy require that educational systems equip young people with new skills and competencies, which allow them to benefit from the emerging new forms of socialisation and to contribute actively to economic development under a system where the main asset is knowledge. These skills and competencies are often referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies, to indicate that they are more related to the needs of the emerging models of economic and social development than with those of the past century, which were suited to an industrial mode of production (Ananiadou et al., 2009).

Today, because of rapid economic and social change, schools have to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, technologies that have not yet been invented and problems that we don't yet know will arise.

(Andreas Schleicher, OECD Education Directorate, 2010)

Educators must respond to these changes by preparing their students for the society in which they will work and live (Salpeter, 2008; Larson et al., 2011). In order to adapt to the new world, students must be equipped with 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the emergence of very sophisticated information and communication technologies, computers and telecommunications expanding their capabilities to accomplish human tasks (Dede, 2009). While the specific skills deemed to be "21<sup>st</sup> century skills" may be determined differently from person to person or place to place (Suto, 2013), and despite the critique directed at it (Silva, 2009), the term does reflect a general (if somewhat loose and shifting) consensus (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). There is no single widely-accepted definition of "21<sup>st</sup> Century skills." Arguably, this is to be expected, given the diversity of agendas held by different functionaries in the education system (Suto, 2013).



However, the basic principle of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the shift in the roles of teachers and students. Current approach emphasises active student agency, as learning is expected to depend on students' activity, collaboration and initiative rather than on the transmission of knowledge by a teacher or by a textbook (Van Lier, 2000; Polman, 2004; McIntyre, 2006; Saavedra & Opfer, 2013). Student agency is therefore one of the most important life skills that schools provide (Kaplan, 2012, pp. 121-6). Subsequently, the role of school management is to provide students with opportunities to become active agents in their own learning (Mitra, 2004; Kornfeld et al., 2005). The cultivation of student agency is supposed to amplify students' subsequent behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement during learning activities, as well as improve their achievements (Mitra, 2004; Gore, 2005; Reeve et al., 2011; Ya-Hui Su, 2011). At the same time, it enhances their involvement in the values their school vision espouses and contributes to their motivation to implement it (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2004; Anderson & Graham, 2016).

#### **2.4.4 Leadership and Followership: A Paradigm Shift**

While for many years the prevailing leadership literature has viewed organisational stakeholders from a leadership-centric vantage point, in recent research, more attention has been paid to the role of followership in the leadership process. Through the leadership-centric lens, followers have been considered as recipients ('empty vessels' - Goffee & Jones, 2001), or moderators of the leader's influence, or as 'constructors' of leaders and leadership.

The study of followers as key components of the leadership process through their enactment of followership has been largely overlooked in the leadership literature. (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). However, more recent research, upholding a followership-centric orientation, focuses on the relationship between leaders and followers as an interactive process with a multitude of followers as stakeholders inside and outside the corporation (Maak & Pless, 2006). In this process, to be adequately understood, leadership must be

seen for what it is: part of a duality or a relationship. There can be no leaders without followers (Goffee & Jones, 2001). This means that following behaviours are a crucial component of the leadership process (Howell & Mendez, 2013). All this represents a major shift in the leader-follower paradigm: a clear progression from leader-centric to follower-centric, recognizing leadership as a co-constructed process between leaders and followers (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

The study of followership sees leadership as a dynamic system involving leaders and followers interacting together in context, by way of free communication among followers about the nature of the group, its identity and normative attributes, allowing followers to construct and modify the group-prototype, and thus to influence leadership (Hogg, 2008). Building a common social identity is expected, therefore, to empower followers, as it produces three emotional responses in them: A feeling of significance, a feeling of community, and excitement and edge in their life (Goffee & Jones, 2001).

Vision has a vital role in the establishment of school collaboration with its stakeholders. The concepts of Vision, Vision Statement and Mission Statement will therefore be thoroughly explored in the next part of this chapter.

## **2.5 School Vision/Mission and Educational Stakeholders**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

To gain insights into what affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision, this section focuses on the factors that affect this relationship. Special attention is given to the practice of the school management toward its stakeholders, and the way this affects stakeholders' value and the extent of their ownership of their SV.

In the Educational Leadership Assessment framework, conducted by the New York State Department of Education (NYSTCE, 2006), we find the following description of an 'accomplished school building leader':

The accomplished school building leader understands how to lead people in the development and implementation of shared goals for student learning and achievement. The leader works with key educational stakeholders to develop a vision for the school and articulates it clearly to a variety of audiences in a sustained commitment to making it a reality. The leader communicates clearly and effectively, showing confidence and addressing hard questions effectively. The building leader works purposefully with others, listening to them, motivating them, building trust, and communicating high standards and expectations for self, students, and staff.

(p. 1)

This description sums up common perception of the role of leadership as the nexus between vision and stakeholder management in school. Sharing the school vision has for the most part been considered in the literature as the role of the organisation's leader, who is expected to influence others to adopt certain ideologies and ways of acting. However, researchers and practitioners have routinely overlooked the importance of followers in the leadership equation (Carsten & Jones, 2008). In fact, leadership must be seen for what it is: part of a dual relationship. There can be no leaders without followers (Goffee & Jones, 2001), and the leader-followers relationship is described by Lord (2013), as follows:

Social psychologists have typically viewed leaders and followers as being engaged in a mutual exchange of transaction, in which both parties benefit and in which both parties are active contributors.

(p. 256)

Leader-centric and follower-centric approaches differ in their perceptions of the relationship between leaders and their followers. The two approaches, as well as a compromising view, are presented in the next section, in relation to the concept of a shared vision.

### **2.5.2 Leadership, Followership and Organisational Vision**

The majority of definitions offered in the literature for an organisational vision ascribe to the traditional perspective, which places leaders in the active role of creating and articulating the vision, whereas the followers' role is mere passive conforming to the visionary direction (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Strange & Mumford, 2002; Kantabutra, 2006, 2008; Reeves & Boreham, 2006; Hallinger, 2013).

Both the literature and the empirical research of vision suggest that vision creation and dissemination are largely the responsibility of the leader, hence focusing on the leader's perspective in their investigation of vision. Fewer studies have identified the role that followers play in the visioning process (Day et al., 2001). For example, Carsten and Bligh (2008) point out that the investigation into the role that followers play in creating and disseminating the vision is noticeably absent from the above mentioned research, while "it is implicitly assumed that follower support is required to advance a vision and move the organisation in the desired direction" (p. 279). Based on two studies they conducted, they consider ownership of the vision an extremely important component of an effective vision.

A more balanced approach acknowledges the importance of the leader's role without ignoring that of followers. It views the followers as active, relatively independent agents in organisations, rather than as passive and compliant recipients (Lord, 2013). Such an approach is likely to produce optimal theory and/or effective practice. Head-teachers are expected to work based on the unique culture and values within their schools, which means there is a greater emphasis on building relationships with all school stakeholders.

Such an approach entails a change in the status of stakeholders, as it regards them as equal proactive partners in the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 201). This is based on the premise that the school vision and culture reflect those of the parents,

students, teachers and local community (Sergiovanni, 2000), thus facilitating their alignment with their school vision and their ownership of it.

### **2.5.3 Stakeholders' Ownership of the Organisational Vision**

Ownership is defined as having belonging or possession over something, likely involving organisation's members and fulfilling their human need to feel that they are invested in, and responsible for, the outcomes associated with an action or initiative (Pierce, 2001; Carsten & Bligh, 2008), i.e. for a sense of ownership.

The stakeholders' degree of ownership of their School Vision (Day et al., 2010) comprises:

- Their familiarity with the values underpinning it
- Their alignment with and commitment to these values
- Their involvement in their implementation in the school culture and practice

To achieve the kind of ownership that produces increased commitment, consciousness or engagement, researchers recommend the involvement of stakeholders in the design and implementation of a program, rather than simply being assigned a project or initiative without knowledge is not enough (Carsten & Bligh, 2008).

Such involvement is expected to promote ownership, because if the students, teachers and parents are united in the development and monitoring of the vision, they can feel united in the shared aspiration for a better future together:

With regard to Vision, it seems logical that follower ownership should be the goal of any organisation that desires movement toward the ideal future state.

(Carsten & Bligh, 2008, p. 280)

#### **2.5.4 Stakeholder Value**

The abovementioned 'ideal future state' of an organisation, according to followership theory advocates, goes beyond economic outcomes (in business firms) or grades and scores (in educational institutions) and has everything to do with stakeholders' value. Harrison and Wicks (2013) define the term 'value' for stakeholders broadly as anything that has the potential to be of stake to stakeholders. By this logic they contend that organisations "that tend to make their stakeholders better off will be the ones that are able to retain their support and participation and thrive over time" (p. 101). Two salient managerial stakeholder orientations have been identified in the literature regarding stakeholders' value:

- (1) The performance-based approach (Sachs & Rühli, 2011), where attention is focused on the contribution of stakeholders to a higher, measurable, performance of the organisation (in business firms – profitability and economic returns; in education – test scores and academic achievements).
- (2) The stakeholder-based perspective that assumes that stakeholders' well-being contributes to the business performance in ways that extend beyond profitability and economic returns (Harrison & Wicks, 2013), or academic achievements and test scores in the educational domain.

Whether the organisation pursues the satisfaction of stakeholder interests for economic reasons (the instrumental approach) or merely due to a moral commitment (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Harrison & Freeman, 1999), creating value for stakeholders is assumed to contribute to the organisation's effectiveness, and should therefore be

considered the goal of any organisation, all the more so educational institutions. As mentioned before, the enhancement of stakeholders' ownership of their school vision and their engagement in the decision-making process is a proven way to create value for them, and thus contribute to the school's effectiveness.

As system-level accountability has failed to deliver the anticipated transformation of education performance, educational policy has shifted to the school autonomy, emphasising greater choice and diversity within the school system (Harris, 2005). Concordantly, researchers are looking for the mediating variables between the structural features of the school and the outcomes for pupils and teachers, e.g. a consequent use of culture and climate to describe organisations in their entirety, including – besides the shared beliefs – the relationship between individuals and groups in the organisation, the physical surroundings, and the characteristics of individuals and groups participating in the organisation (Van Houtte, 2005).

School culture, school climate and stakeholder well-being have been added to the list of dimensions that constitute the effectiveness, or rather the "success", of schools, and consequently as guidelines for school improvement (Van Houtte, 2005; Bascia, 2014; Van Gasse et al., 2016; Thapa, 2013). The logic behind this attitude is the consideration of the whole experience of the students' years at school, and not just the narrow domain of academic achievement.

### **2.5.5 Stakeholders' Ownership of Their School Vision**

Now we address the impact of stakeholders' ownership of their SV on their entire school experience. First we consider how school culture, school climate and stakeholders well-being, which result from the stakeholder's sense of ownership, are presented as components of the school experience in its entirety.

Then all the above will zoom in to two basic perspectives of school effectiveness: The first is the narrow perspective, which considers academic achievements as the ultimate criterion of school effectiveness (or success). The second is the broad perspective, which considers the stakeholders' well-being, resulting from its culture and climate, as an integral part of school success, alongside academic achievements.

## **2.6 School Culture**

Walk into any truly excellent school and you can feel it almost immediately – a calm, orderly atmosphere that hums with an exciting, vibrant sense of purposefulness. This is a positive school culture, the kind that improves educational outcomes.

(Jerald, 2006)

Whereas school culture started to get the attention of educational scholars in the 1970s, it was not until the early 1980s, and later on in the 1990s, that culture became a major theme in organisation science, widely recognized as an important tool for defining each school's character and the understanding of fundamental differences between schools (Van Houtte, 2005).

The term "school culture" generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. But the term also encompasses more concrete issues, such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, and the degree to which the school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

(The glossary of Education Reform)

Although most scholars in the field of educational administration have a common, almost intuitive, understanding of the concept of school culture, the field of education still lacks a clear and consistent definition of the term (Maslowski, 2006). Maslowski offers his definition to the term, based on Schein's (1985) model: "The system of basic



assumptions, norms and values, as well as the cultural artefacts, which are shared by school members and influence their functioning at school" (Maslowski, 2006, p. 9).

According to Schein (1985; cited by Maslowski, 2006), members of an organisation create their own culture, which represents their shared basic assumptions and beliefs, resulting from their daily interactions. This means that culture can be considered a socially constructed reality. It is a reality which has a serious impact on the daily behaviour of those working in an organisation (e.g. a school). Schein also explains that the human mind needs cognitive stability. In this sense, the shared basic assumptions that make up the culture of a group can be thought of as psychological cognitive defence mechanisms against anxiety, to allow the group to continue to function. Sergiovanni (2005) follows this line of thinking, stating that teachers and students alike need culture in all aspects of their lives, as culture provides the order and norms that are needed to give us a sense of purpose and value.

Three aspects of culture can be identified: content, homogeneity and strength (Maslowski, 2006; Dumay, 2009), as follows: (1) The content of culture refers to the meaning of basic assumptions, norms and values as well as cultural artifacts shared by the school members. The content is often characterized by means of dimensions or typologies such as "collaborative' or 'achievement oriented."; (2) Homogeneity of culture refers to the extent to which basic assumptions, norms, values and cultural artifacts are shared by the school members. A culture is homogeneous if (nearly) all staff members ascribe to the same assumptions, norms and values; and, (3) The strength of culture refers to the extent to which the behaviour of school staff is actually influenced or determined by the assumptions, values, norms and artifacts that are shared in school.

Vision and vision-building play a central role in the construction of a professional culture. A vision concerns the goals that an organisation wants to achieve, and indicates a shared consensus about the value of daily activities and decisions in relation to some

goals and the future of an organisation (Vandenberghe & Staessens, 1991). Jerald (2006) argues that culture is born from an organisation's vision, beliefs, values, and mission. Culture develops and grows up through an accumulation of actions, traditions, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals that are closely aligned with that vision. When alignment is tight and the culture is strong, new students and staff members pick up on an organisation's true vision and values almost immediately, whether the culture is negative or positive (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

"The role of school leaders in the crafting of cultures is pervasive. Their words, their nonverbal messages, their actions, and their accomplishments all shape culture" (Deal & Peterson, 1998, p. 31). A decade later, Peterson and Deal (2009) broadened the scope of the term, referring to 'leadership' as a collaborative effort of all school stakeholders:

School leaders from every level are the key to shaping school culture. Head-teachers communicate core values in their everyday work. Teachers reinforce values in their actions and words. Parents bolster spirit when they visit school, participate in governance, and celebrate success. In the strongest schools, leadership comes from many sources.

(Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 30)

In schools with a collaborative culture, it is their collective responsibility to provide direction and ensure coherence as decision making occurs (Hoppey, 2006), as well as to promote an inclusive ethos and create a friendly welcoming culture to all stakeholders (Gu & Johansson, 2013). Successful school principals comprehend the critical role that the organisational culture plays in developing a successful school (Macneil et al., 2009). A head-teacher's actions must model and support a collaborative culture in many ways, such as modelling collaboration in working with other professionals in the school and ensuring that goals are explicit and continue to be clear to all (Waldron & McLesky, 2010).

Whereas 'school culture' focuses on embracing the beliefs and values reflective of the common behaviours that characterize the organisation by setting the standards for behaviour within the school, 'school climate' refers to stakeholders' (students, teachers, and parents) perceptions with regards to the leadership of the organisation in cooperation with the working environment, and the formal and informal organisation of the school.

## **2.7 School Climate**

The concepts of school climate and stakeholders' well-being have been gaining increasing interest and attention from researchers over the last two decades. The National School Climate Centre defines school climate as the quality and character of school life (NSCC, 2007). School climate is based on patterns of students, parents and school personnel's perceived experience of school life; It also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, and learning practices, and organisational structures (Thapa et al., 2013).

Hoy (1990) sees it as the relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behaviour, and is based on their collective perceptions of behaviour in schools. Loukas et al. (2006) define climate as "the quality and frequency of interpersonal interactions. School climate, ownership, culture and stakeholders' well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing interpersonal, organisational and instructional dimensions" (p. 491). Hoy et al. (2002) mention two contemporary frameworks for studying school climate: openness and health, both referring to interrelationship between school members.

There is no shortage of definitions for school climate, but while the terminology is not exact, researchers tend to refer instead to 'areas of impact,' factors and indicators. For example, Hoy et al. (2002), Loukas et al. (2006), and Hughes and Pickeral (2013) all agree on four areas of impact: (1) Support for Learning; (2) Stakeholder Engagement;

(3) Collegiality; and, (4) Head-teacher Leadership. However, the latter is considered an "umbrella" under which the first three attributes "nestle nicely." A long list of additional dimensions by which school climate can be assessed is offered in the research literature (Ruus et al., 2007; Bascia, 2014; Ramsey, 2016), e.g. safety; connectedness (or a sense of belonging); relationship between the organisation's members; academic emphasis; and, parental involvement.

Various factors have been identified in the literature as necessary for a positive climate (e.g. Hoy et al., 2002; Ramsay et al., 2016). These include: collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships (Spicer, 2016). A similar set of dimensions of a healthy school climate is offered by Macneil et al. (2009): goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation and problem-solving adequacy. Additionally, the NSCC states that a positive school climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People are engaged and respected.
- Students, families, and educators work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

Common to all the above-mentioned factors is the salience of positive student, teacher, and administrator interrelationships (Hoy et al., 2002) and stakeholders' collaboration with the school stakeholders towards the accomplishment of the school's values and goals.

Culture and climate go hand in hand. "A truly positive school climate is not characterized simply by the absence of gangs, violence, or discipline problems, but also by the presence of a set of norms and values that focus everyone's attention on what is most important and motivate them to work hard toward a common purpose" (Jerald, 2006), i.e. a positive culture.

Nevertheless, school climate and school culture are not interchangeable concepts (Van Houtte, 2005). Whereas school culture, which is viewed from an anthropological perspective, comprises what members of an organisation assume, believe and think, school climate, viewed from a psychological perspective, reflects students', school personnel's, and parents' experiences of school life socially, emotionally, civically, and ethically as well as academically (Hoy, 1990; Thapa, 2013). Culture therefore considers values, meanings, and beliefs held by stakeholders, while climate relates to their perception of those values, meanings, and beliefs (Van Houtte, 2005; Macneil et al., 2009).

However, the combination of a collaborative culture and a positive climate contributes to the well-being of the community, which is in turn conducive to the school success.

## **2.8 Stakeholders' Well-Being**

As school is a living and learning environment, it is responsible for its students' psychological and physiological well-being, by creating a favourable climate (Ruus et al., 2007). Well-being is achieved through the attention to basic human needs, e.g. the

need for efficacy and autonomy, the need for acceptance and empathy, the need for identity and dignity, involvement and solidarity. Despite the fact that the research attributes these needs to students, it is apparent that they may be applied to all stakeholders alike.

Several factors that enhance well-being have been identified in the research literature, all of them relating to stakeholder ownership (Engels et al., 2008; Anderson & Graham, 2016; Van Gasse et al., 2016): a shared vision, communication strategies, shared leadership, personal and professional support, responsiveness to stakeholder expectations, high commitment and high performance. All these features are regarded in the research as contributing to a healthy organisational climate and, due to the climate-well-being nexus, to the stakeholder's well-being.

As mentioned above, stakeholder-based perspective challenges both business firms and educational institutes to examine more broadly the value their organisations in terms of the stakeholder perspective. This perspective is about creating a level of well-being for the stakeholders, thus retaining their support and participation over time for the enhancement of the organisation effectiveness and success (Harrison & Wicks, 2013).

## **2.9 School Effectiveness/Success**

Since the 1970s, research into school effectiveness has moved beyond the input-output model. School achievement was no longer the dominant variable, a change that occurred alongside growing interest in finding out what happened behind school walls:

Successful principals build cultures that promote *both* staff and student engagement in learning *and* raise students' achievement levels in terms of value-added measures of pupil progress in national test and examination results.

(Day et al., 2016, p. 253, original emphasis)

Although it is acknowledged that measurable outcomes of academic progress and achievement are key indicators in identifying school 'effectiveness,' they are seen in the research as insufficient to define 'successful' schools. A vast range of leadership research conducted over the past two decades shows clearly that 'successful' schools strive to educate their pupils by promoting positive values (integrity, compassion, fairness, and love of lifelong learning), as well as fostering citizenship and personal, economic, and social capabilities (Day et al., 2016).

These wider social outcomes are likely to be deemed no less important than fostering academic outcomes, as they make for a complete education. Still, they are less easily quantifiable measures of success, thus presenting a continuing challenge for the education system. Unless methods are found to evaluate these broader outcomes, the education system will continue to focus on a single measure of school effectiveness: test/exam results, rather than instilling values like the development of students as lifelong learners, employability skills, citizenship, self-confidence, teamwork and emotional well-being, all widely recognised as essential qualities for individual success in adult life and for social cohesion (Deakin-Crick et al., 2014). One possible way to measure these broader outcomes is to examine the stakeholders' own perceptions of their organisation's culture and climate, and their well-being in it (Harrison & Wicks, 2013).

An effective school culture will provide students with a respectful mediating experience through which they can understand, examine, affirm, modify or change understandings of the world and how they want to engage it. "[E]ach student will be respected, welcomed and included in within that which defines the school" (Fisher et al., 2012, p. 9). Research has revealed that a collaborative culture leads to higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues, improved professional satisfaction, improved instructional practices, better outcomes for all students, and school change that is maintained over time (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Nor and Roslan (2009) maintain that a caring

school culture helps build positive relationships, a sense of belonging, and positive self-concept amongst members of the school. All the above actively contribute to the creation of a healthy school climate. If the school climate evokes a positive spirit, then students and teachers tend to fall in love with the school and students are ready to learn because they feel valued and feed off of the positive emotions of the staff (Loukas et al., 2006).

The combination of a healthy school climate, and the strong school culture it reflects, therefore constitutes the basis for stakeholder well-being, and concordantly promotes better learning and higher academic achievements, namely a more comprehensive school experience. School effectiveness (or success), in this context, can be measured through the perceptions reported by multiple informants, illuminating their various perspectives (Ramsey et al., 2016). Such measures will provide a more complete and accurate account of the school's success.

## **2.10 Interim Conclusion**

In this chapter, I clarified two main concepts, school vision and educational stakeholders, and outlined their relationship. I have reviewed the way each of the two concepts is conceptualised in the literature, tracing the changes in the research perceptions of them, and highlighting their inter-dependence: school vision cannot be viable unless it has gained the support of the stakeholders, whereas stakeholders need a vision that enables them to align with it.

Two Emergent central issues were dealt with on the basis of the above review: Stakeholder ownership of their school vision and stakeholder value, both resulting from a collaborative culture. Such a culture creates a healthy climate of positive relationships and a sense of belonging amongst members of the school. Ownership and value therefore enhance stakeholder commitment and involvement in the school life. Such a commitment is expected to contribute to the school effectiveness – the second central issue examined in this research.



Two main perspectives were presented in referral to school effectiveness: The narrower perspective, which regards academic achievements as the main measure for school effectiveness, and the broader view, which proposes the inclusion of school culture, school climate and stakeholder well-being – alongside academic achievement – as indicators of school success.

School vision, and stakeholder ownership of it, is at the heart of all the dimensions mentioned above. It plays a major part in the formation of the school culture and climate, thus promoting the stakeholders' well-being. Such well-being improves the whole school-experience of the stakeholders, leading to the school's increased effectiveness and higher achievements.

The salient consensual assumption is that successful schools can be high-achieving and maintain the well-being and personal development of their students. Schools of this kind, despite differences in size, organisational structure and financial resources, share a similar trait: all their stakeholders share a common vision, which reflects their perspectives and attends to their expectations. Such a vision motivates the stakeholders to "go the extra mile," i.e. go beyond ordinary expectations to ensure the implementation of the school vision's values towards students' success (Penn-Towns et al., 2001; Perkasky, 2007; Day et al., 2016).

Finally, at the end of the chapter, I referred to the two initial questions which triggered this research: What defines a successful school, and what are the factors that contribute to this? The literature, theory and research alike, generally tends to support the comprehensive measure of school success, the entire school-experience of the stakeholders. As all three schools examined in this research are regarded as 'successful' by the establishment in the sense of their academic achievements (matriculation scores), as I explain below, further exploration their 'success' through the lens of their stakeholders' perceptions is desirable. Given the perceived nature of school-experience,

it is only appropriate to listen to the voices of the stakeholders themselves regarding it – not just head-teachers, as is mostly the case in prior research, but also the teachers, the parents and, most importantly, the students.

In the following chapter, I will therefore focus on three Israeli schools, starting with a rich description of each school's contextual characteristics. I will then move on to report stakeholders' conceptions about their schools' Vision and its viability, in the framework suggested in the research literature, namely: (1) Content; (2) Attributes; and, (3) The role it plays in the organisation, shedding light on their relationship with the school management and allowing for initial insights about the school's culture and climate. The data provided by the different groups of stakeholders will constitute the basis for a more comprehensive analysis of both themes common to all three schools and themes unique to each school, to enable the exploration of their commonalities and differences in the subsequent Cross-Case Analysis chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the present chapter, I first introduce the research aim and the research questions. I then clarify my stance as a researcher, selected from various options offered by the relevant literature. In the following section I will elaborate on my considerations regarding the conceptual approach which led to the design of the research, i.e. sampling issues, data collection, data analysis and write-up. Reflection on trustworthiness issues, ethical concerns and limitations will be reported to conclude this chapter.

In general, the research was a topic-oriented, multiple case study (Gibton, 2001b). It will take an interpretive stance and employ qualitative methods.

### **3.2 Research Aim and Research Questions**

Having surveyed the issues raised by the relevant research literature, I chose to investigate in this study two concepts: School Vision/Mission and Educational Stakeholders, the dyadic relationship between them, and how school management practice affects this relationship. As the two concepts are interrelated (School Vision/Mission is expected to reflect the stakeholders' perspectives, whereas its viability is defined by their alignment with it), their linkage was examined through the School Vision Statements and their perspectives regarding it.

The research literature indicates that School Vision has been explored mostly through the eyes of school management, thus creating a seeming gap in knowledge. This study seeks to address this gap by adding the perspectives of the stakeholders regarding this issue, thus giving voice to the educational stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of the school system in an Israeli context, as well as their status in it. The data source in focus is therefore interviews held with a sample of each school's stakeholders' groups: management, teachers, students and parents. Information from other data sources, e.g.

school publications and observations, serve the purpose of juxtaposing, with the intention of increasing rigor and trustworthiness.

Following the above, and in line with Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 25) advice, I started out with some general research questions, intended to clarify what in the general domain was of most interest, but without limiting my vision. As the core focus of the study is the interrelationship between educational stakeholders and their school vision, I began with general research questions dealing mainly with the attributes of each school's vision and with the stakeholders' involvement with it (see details in the Introduction Chapter, p. 2). The initial research questions were based on the list of dimensions of a viable School Vision as suggested by the research literature (see pp. 16-7 above). Already during the initial analysis phase of the interviews with the stakeholders, two additional factors constantly surfaced: the head-teacher's leadership style and the school context. These two factors were mentioned by the stakeholders from all three schools, although there was no mention of either of these in the interview questions. Apparently, these two attributes were conceived by the stakeholders as having an impact on the school vision's viability and feasibility, as well as on their status and role in their school. Therefore, already after the preliminary analysis phase, I decided to refine the research questions accordingly, so that they would include all four factors which interact to affect the School Vision-Stakeholders' relationship.

As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter above (see p. 3) the research aim shifted at this point towards the emphasis on the contribution of the quality of stakeholder-vision relationship on the school success and the factors that affect it. Success, in this context, was now regarded more inclusively, as it refers to the whole school-experience of the stakeholders, comprising attainment as well as well-being.

The modified research questions are explicated below:

- (1) What makes a School Vision viable?
- (2) What constitutes the educational stakeholders' role within the school system?
- (3) What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision?
- (4) How do stakeholders' ownership and value affect their entire school-experience?

### **3.2.1 What Makes a School Vision Viable?**

The three dimensions suggested in the literature research pertaining to the viability of the School Vision (see Literature Review Chapter, pp. 17-25) are: (1) Content; (2) Attributes (simple, appealing, credible); and, (3) The role it plays in the organisation.

These three dimensions constitute the framework for the analysis of the SVS of each of the three schools explored in this research, in order to determine, and subsequently compare, the extent of their viability.

### **3.2.2 What Constitutes the Educational Stakeholders' Role in the School System**

The bulk of the research literature regarding stakeholders in organisations (both in business and education) relates mainly to their role or function in the organisation, whether as active, relatively independent agents, or as passive and compliant recipients (see pp. 33-4).

The two factors that are considered as determinant of the stakeholders' role are: their ownership of their school vision (familiarity, alignment and involvement in implementation); and the value ascribed to them by the management (see pp. 48-9). Stakeholders' interviews in this study are analysed accordingly, towards the understanding of their views regarding their own status in their schools, and the roles they fulfill in them.

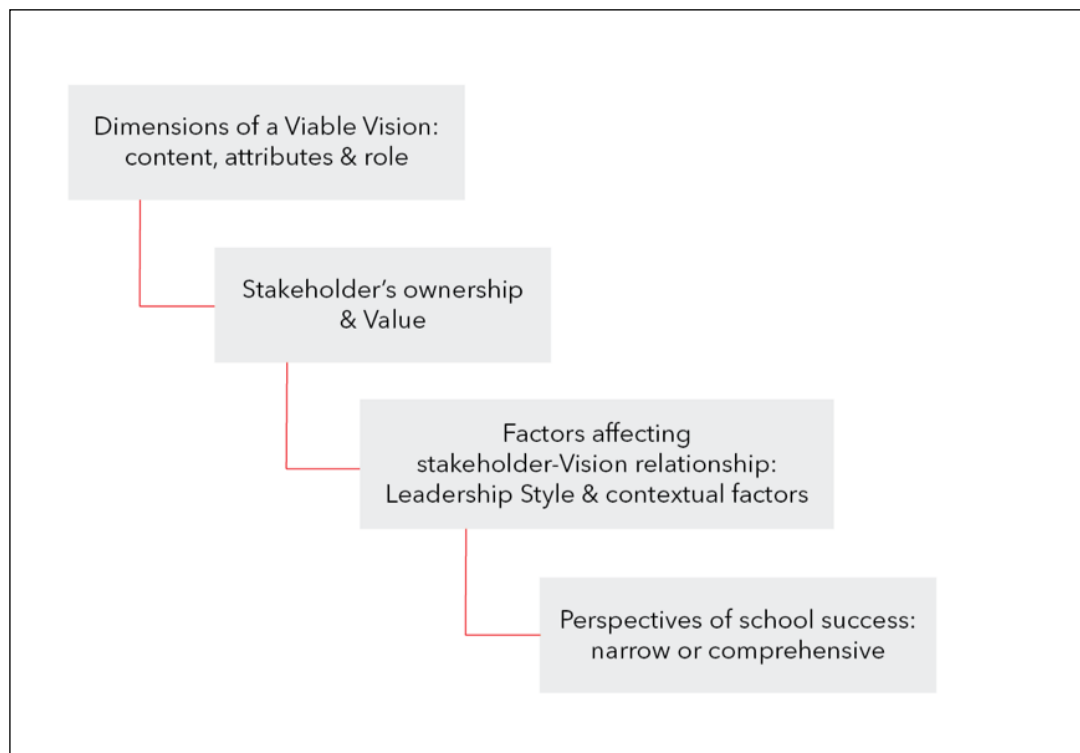
### **3.2.3 What Affects the Mutual Relationship between the Stakeholders and Their School Vision?**

As mentioned above, two additional factors which play a major role in the stakeholder-vision relationship were identified by the stakeholders: The head-teachers' leadership style (mainly top-down or collaborative); and the schools' contextual factors, both external and internal. The analysis of the testimonies of each school's stakeholders focused on these two factors, towards the achievement of a better understanding of these relationships.

### **3.2.4 How Do Stakeholders' Ownership and Value Affect Their Entire School-Experience?**

Two main perspectives are presented in the literature regarding the quality of the stakeholders' entire school-experience, which consequently defines each school's success or effectiveness: (1) The narrow approach, which considers academic achievement as the sole criterion for school success; and, (2) The comprehensive approach, which views the entire school-experience (comprising both attainment and stakeholders' well-being) as a bench mark for a successful school. The whole analysis process, throughout the three research questions discussed above, is intended to constitute the basis for the evaluation by the stakeholders of the quality of their school-experience, and its implications for the school's success.

As a whole, the stakeholders' views are deemed to be the most reliable source of information for the exploration of their school-experience. The above four research questions are designed to explore the way the stakeholders conceive the complex set of factors surrounding this central issue, in keeping with the following conceptual framework.



**Figure 3.1: Framework of Analysis and Discussion – Key Constructs**

### 3.3 My Position as a Researcher

The research literature exploring the researcher's role distinguishes between narrative researchers whose research goal is "giving voice" to their participants, and the researchers whose goal is "decoding" the texts of their interviews at some other level of understanding. When the narrative researcher construes the project as "giving voice" to underrepresented participants, the role conceived by the researcher is being a collaborator and a conduit; however, when the researcher's goal is adding his own understanding to the original texts, he assumes the role of an interpreter (Josselson, 2007).

In the present study, I saw my role as a combination of the two. I started out with the intention to "give voice" to the educational stakeholders and their perceptions and expectations of the educational system, but more so I aimed to involve interpretive efforts and to relate the interpreted data to larger, theoretical significant concepts. This position in turn might allow evidence-based practice to facilitate better use of research findings, and eventually contribute to the closing of the research-practice gap (Hammersley, 2007; Lunsford & Brown, 2017). Such a stance placed a very heavy responsibility on my shoulders, as the inherent ethics of research "lies in the resolute honesty of the researcher's reflexivity, which states clearly the biases, aims, and positioning of the knower and the circumstances under which the knowledge was created" (Josselson, 2007, p. 549).

The researcher takes full responsibility for what is written, throughout the whole research process. From this point of view, the report is not "about" the participants, but rather "about" the researcher's meaning-making. In my study, I endeavoured to adapt Kvale's (1983) alternative angle in regard to the role of the researcher: as the process is a joint interviewer-interviewee undertaking of "co-construction of meaning," the researcher has to be aware of their on-going relationship, and how it affects the way the research topics and questions are approached, negotiated and responded to – "indeed, how the co-construction of meaning takes place" (Kvale, 1983, p. 175). The main task of the interviewer is to understand what is said (by the interviewee) via registering and interpreting it, as well as being observant and able to interpret vocalisations, facial expressions and other bodily gestures. Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind that interpretive qualitative research can only "explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality" (Holliday, 2007, p. 6). The researcher has therefore to recognize his/her limitations, and not seek to "master" reality.



The concept of 'researcher as a research instrument,' introduced by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 368), enfoldes the notion of the qualitative researcher being the key person who obtains data from participants and facilitates interaction to create a context where they can share rich data regarding their experiences and life world. It is also the researcher who translates and interprets data generated from participants into meaningful information (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). In order to meet the challenges presented by this role, I tried to stay self-aware and humble, not just during specific analysis episodes but throughout the whole research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Assuming a reflexive stance (Holliday, 2007) helped me scrutinize my research experience, decisions and interpretations, to allow the assessment of the extent to which my interests, positions and assumptions influenced the inquiry (Charmaz, 2006) (see section on 'Reflexivity' below, p. 309).

I applied other measures to address threats to rigor and ensure trustworthiness (e.g. triangulation, rich description, meticulous documentation, identification of recurring patterns). These measures were designed to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency, and accountability of my research and meet the following criteria (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003, p. 421): credibility; dependability and confirmability; and, limited transferability. These are detailed in the section on 'Rigor and Trustworthiness' below (see pp. 99-103).

From a personal perspective, during this research I drew on the experience and intuitions developed through 30-odd years of service in various capacities in the Israeli education system (practitioner-researcher). Narrative Theory acknowledges the fact that researchers often have an intimate familiarity with the research topic and the literature about it. It is recommended that such familiarity be considered as a vantage point (Holliday, 2007); but the researcher is also cautioned to remain as open as possible to whatever s/he perceives and senses in the early stages of the study (Charmaz, 2006), and to discipline him/herself to recognise particular prejudices and preconceptions and

set these aside (Holliday, 2007). Following Malterud (2001), I took it upon myself to be prepared to use strategies for: questioning findings and interpretations, instead of taking them for granted; assessing their internal and external validity, instead of judging them obvious or universal; thinking about the effect of context and bias, without believing that knowledge is untouched by the human mind; and displaying and discussing the processes of analysis, instead of believing that manuals grant trustworthiness (p. 483).

At every step of the research process, I maintained an on-going systematic process of self-searching, recording my "conceptual baggage," comprising my "thoughts and ideas about the research questions at the beginning and throughout the research process" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 32). I referred openly to my beliefs, values, perspectives, assumptions and preconceptions as well as to their reflection on my research decisions, so that these could all be revealed and contested. Following Holliday (2007), I tend to believe that my professional experience might add to the overall argument and to the rigor of the analysis. This will be explained in the Reflexivity section below.

Having introduced the research aim and the research questions as well as my position as a researcher, the next section will expand on the rationalisation of the use of qualitative methodology to explore the research questions.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Following Merriam (1998, p. 29), the study is defined by the following characteristics: particularistic (focusing on a particular phenomenon); descriptive (providing a rich, thick and detailed description of the phenomenon under study); and, heuristic (seeking to expand and deepen understanding of the phenomenon under study). The research design, described in the following section, is meant to reflect these characteristics.

### **3.4.1 Research Methodology**

#### **3.4.1.1 Qualitative Case Study**

An inductive strategy for linking theory with data is typically associated with the case study and qualitative research approach (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2009; Thomas, 2011a, 2011b). In this study, the case study design was selected because of the nature of the research, which is intended to explore a social phenomenon, anchored in a real-life context, from multiple perspectives, resulting in a rich holistic account of this phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Simmons, 2009). Case study was therefore used in this study, as it engenders an in-depth understanding of the subject under study (School Vision/Mission in a sample of Israeli high schools), as well as allowing for the exploration of the perspectives of the various participants (Educational Stakeholders).

More specifically, following Ricoeur's (1970) phenomenological 'hermeneutics of faith', I strived to anchor my interpretation in the interview text, and not exceed its limits. In line with the above, the research methodology used in this study emphasises valuing the subjective experience and accepts there are different perspectives, with the intent to maximise the depth and richness of the information collected.

#### **3.4.1.2 Paradigmatic Methodology**

The belief underpinning this research is that there is no single reality or truth. Moreover, reality is shaped largely by the way we perceive it, know it, interpret it and respond to it (Shalsky & Alpert, 2007; Shkedi, 2003; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Instead of a real, essential and objective reality, it refers to a subjective and relativist reality (Spector-Mersel, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), reported in a range of accounts, taken face value and interpreted. The research paradigm would therefore be *interpretative* (seeking to explore different interpretations of the nature of a certain human experience) rather than *realist* (regarding the experience as an external phenomenon) (Connolly et al., 2011).

The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism, as it does not believe that the world is external (as does the positivist ontology), but rather perceives reality as subjective and different from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Concurrently, the interpretive epistemology is one of subjectivism which is based on real world phenomena (Scotland, 2012). The goal of the interpretivist research is to explore and interpret the meanings in human behaviour, and to understand motives, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context bound (Edirisingha, 2012).

In line with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the interpretive paradigm presented above, the phenomenological approach deemed appropriate for this study. Phenomenological approaches are based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself, which is at the heart of positivistic approaches (Lester, 1999; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Cresswell, 2009). They are concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual (Van Manen, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2007), while precluding (or "bracketing") taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving (Merriam, 1998; Holliday, 2007).

#### **3.4.1.3 My Realistic Standpoint and the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)**

The choice to investigate a social experience, stakeholder-vision interrelations, by way of exploring how it is perceived by those who live it, reflects the realistic standpoint this study takes: "Reality does not exist objectively, but is constructed as multiple subjective realities" (Jeong & Othman, 2016). Such a perspective is concerned with the detailed examination of a personal lived experience, its meaning to participants and how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2011). As such, it is deemed to be "powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted

assumptions and conventional wisdom" (Lester, 1999, p. 1). It has appeared to me that the realist orientation of this study is consonant with the principles of the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA):

IPA aims to grasp the texture and qualities of an experience as it is lived by an experiencing subject. The primary interest is the person's experience of the phenomenon and the sense they make of their experience rather than the structure of the phenomenon itself.

(Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 167)

Despite the fact that IPA is mostly identified with psychology research and has been little known to educational research (Wagstaff et al., 2014), it seemed that it suits the nature of this study exploring individual experiences, while the methodology it offers serves the realist standpoint as well as the aim of this study: "An IPA study typically involves a highly intensive and detailed analysis of the accounts produced by a comparatively small number of participants" (Larkin et al., 2006).

There are three theoretical principles of IPA (Jeong & Othman, 2016): Firstly, IPA values the participants' own perspectives on their experiences. Secondly, IPA is essentially committed to examine closely the unique, particular experience of each individual participant, from which themes that respond to the research question(s) emerge (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Thirdly, IPA is in the line of the interpretative (i.e., hermeneutic) tradition rather than the descriptive one within phenomenology (Smith et al., 2011; Wagstaff et al., 2014). However, while the centrality of the participants' own perspective is emphasised, the researcher's interpretation of the text is also considered a crucial element in the development of a coherent, themed investigation (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Wagstaff et al., 2014). This becomes implicit in the concept of double hermeneutics: the participants try to make sense of experience (the first hermeneutic layer), upon which the researcher makes his/her own interpretation (the second layer):

In an IPA study, different data from different methods are used discriminately, and main themes are always elicited from data that reflect the teacher's or student's own voice, such as those from interviews or personal diaries, while other data sources are used to triangulate or contextualize such themes.

(Jeong & Othman, 2008, pp. 565-6)

The data gathered from the participants were therefore analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), in an attempt to provide rich evidence and offer credible and justifiable accounts of the phenomenon explored in this study. Despite the entailed expectation for limited generalisability, both the thick description and measures like triangulation, content analysis and peer-review were used to enhance credibility and make the findings of this study accessible and enlightening for educational practitioners.

To recap, IPA seeks to "give voice" to a phenomenon and then make sense of that initial description, in relation to wider social, cultural and theoretical context (Larkin et al., 2006). Of central concern to IPA is in-depth exploration of an individual's lived experience of a phenomenon, its meanings for the individual and how the individual understands and makes sense of their personal and social environment (Denovan & Macaskill, 2013). In line with this, in my study I am trying to give voice to educational stakeholders (teachers, students and parents), who have been for the most part ignored in the educational research until now, and to explore their personal perceptions of the concept of SV in the context of their social environment, as well as allowing for deeper understanding and the inference of 'naturalistic generalisations' (Melrose, 2009).

#### **3.4.1.4 Educational Stakeholders and School Vision**

The phenomenological approach and its entailed methodology were chosen as they serve well to explore two central concepts of this study: 'Educational Stakeholders' and 'School Vision' (both dwelt upon in depth in the Research Aims and Literature Review chapters).

## **(1) Educational Stakeholders**

Concerning educational stakeholders, as the main goal of this research is to scrutinise reality as seen through the eyes of the stakeholders, the assumption of the existence of an objective reality had to be ruled out. Therefore, I chose to induce my understanding of the researched issues mainly from the testified perceptions of the participants (Elliott, 2005) and chose to 'give voice' to various educational stakeholders by way of

combine[ing] the rich description of a phenomenological 'core', which aims to capture something of the claims and concerns of the 'person-in-context' with the more speculative development of an interpretative account, which considers the meaning of such claims and concerns.

(Larkin et al., 2006, p. 117)

This combined orientation was chosen in light of the fact that in interpretive research "education is generally considered a process, whereas the school is often viewed as a lived experience" (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). Understanding the meaning of a given process or lived experience entails assembling reports of multiple realities constructed socially by individuals, subsequently enabling the formation of an inductive hypothesis (rather than a deductive or testing mode of inquiry). This process of gaining knowledge seeks to cause as little disruption of the natural setting as possible, which is important if stakeholders' voice is to be heard and explored (Merriam, 1998).

## **(2) School Vision**

As for the second focal concept, Vision, it is essential to juxtapose the vision held by stakeholders and implemented in the school activity with the vision presented in the formal statement. This is imperative, because school vision statements are often constructed to support (or please) the educational authorities and therefore can follow a formulaic approach which has no bearing on the school culture (Blanchard & Stoner,

2004; Arrington, 2013). "A lot of organisations have vision statements, but most of these statements seem irrelevant when you look at the organisation and where it is going" (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004, p. 23). Another issue that seems worth attending to is that school vision statements are so general and immeasurable, that they can never be implemented. Allen (2001) brings two examples of such statements: "We want our students to reach their full potential mentally, physically, and socially" and "We seek excellence in all that we do." Such statements, Allan says, cry out to be ignored because they allude to ideas and results that are impossible to track. "A school can never know if its students are reaching their 'full potential' or if they are seeking more 'excellence' this year than last" (Allan, 2001, p. 290).

This research seeks, among other issues, to explore the possible gap between the School Vision and the Vision Statement. A primary assumption in this research is that a SV is basically an internal entity, a mental model (Strange & Mumford, 2005); i.e. one that is subjectively perceived and not susceptible to direct observation, as opposed to the formal, written SVS which is external and open to examination. It is therefore essential to conduct an in-depth inquiry of the participants' perceptions in order to be better informed about the School Vision (Sabar, 2001; Yin, 2009), and scrutinise the written SVS separately by way of content analysis, for the sake of understanding the congruence (or lack thereof) between the two.

The practice of the phenomenological hermeneutic foundations (Shalsky & Arieli, 2001; Josselson, 2007), involves interpretation in every phase of the research: in the creation of the conceptual framework of the research questions, in the sampling procedures, in drafting the interview protocols, in the transcription of the oral text (Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2010). I chose to draw on Ricoeur's understanding of the hermeneutic point of view, which sums up my position in a neat way. According to Ricoeur (1970), a tension exists between what he defined as 'hermeneutics of suspicion' and 'hermeneutics of faith.' This distinction is based on the assumption that "language itself is from the outset and for the



most part distorted: it means something other than what it says, it has a double meaning, it is equivocal" (p. 7).

From the point of view of the hermeneutics of faith, the interpretive effort is to give "voice" in various ways to the participant(s), while the researcher working from the vantage point of the hermeneutics of suspicion (or rather of demystification) strives for an explanation beyond the participants' account. The goal is not to challenge or disprove the participants' meanings – in fact, we may well accept that the person believes what he or she says – but to turn our attention elsewhere. Such an approach generally requires that meanings be retrieved and restored before being subject to decoding. In other words, we must be clear what the participant actually means before we can consider what meanings lay hidden (Josselson, 2004).

Following Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, every interpretation offered is anchored in the interview texts and does not exceed their limits. "Given IPA's commitment to preserving the integrity of the participant's account, the process is necessarily iterative, a synergistic process of description and interpretation" (Thackeray & Eatough, 2015). For example, each teacher's reply to the first question ('the ideal Vision Statement') was first read separately and interpreted objectively face-value. It was only upon the examination of the replies of several teachers that an insight emerged: some of the teachers' replies were characterised by an air of transcendence. The understanding, therefore, surfaced from the text itself during the second reading.

### **3.4.2 Data Collection**

Given the intensiveness of the research and the inherent limitations of time and resources, I was obliged to set boundaries for the context of the case I selected in terms of places (three high-schools in the vicinity of Tel-Aviv) and time period (seven months). During this period of time, detailed information was collected using a variety of data collection procedures, which are described in detail below, over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995; Kesley & Pense, 2001; Eich, 2008).

### 3.4.3 Sampling

As is often the case with the sampling process of multiple case study research, my main concern was to find a purposive sample of cases that – both individually and collectively – were likely to maximize insight and understanding of the phenomena and the human experience this study is interested in (Stake, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Thompson, 2004; Silverman, 2005).

Due to time and feasibility limitations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Lal et al., 2012), I chose to restrict the selection to a small number of secondary schools in Tel-Aviv and its outskirts (Lal et al., 2012). A purposive sample of three schools, deemed information-rich for the purposes of the present study, was eventually selected from a pool of twelve potentially suitable secondary schools – a procedure recommended by Merriam (1998), Sandelowski (2000), and Gagnon (2010) – supplied by the Head of the Tel-Aviv District at the Ministry of Education.

All three school managements were willing to participate and effectively respond to the research questions (Cresswell, 2009). This kind of sampling was intended to render three separate "portraits," one for each school, and then offer a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998), in order to increase credibility by generating qualitative, process-oriented results and insights. Tentative criteria for the selection of the three case studies were established in advance, in concordance with the conceptual framework of the research aims and its two focal concepts: School Vision and Stakeholders, i.e. a coherent SVS, ostensibly shared and publicised; a functioning Students' Council and PTA; and cooperative head-teacher and staff (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 1998). However, my "opportunity to learn" was considered a criterion of primary importance, though not exclusive: "Given our purposes, which cases are likely to lead us to understanding, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalisations" (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

In line with the constructivist nature of this study, an evolving sampling process was engaged. Final selection decisions were not planned beforehand, but developed during the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998; Bitsch, 2005). Naturally, one of the initial considerations I had in the choice of the first school was ease of access (Stake, 1995), which was facilitated by my professional relationship with the head teacher of School A.

The data collection process thus started in School A, which (apart from convenience considerations) was also chosen for its relevance to the research aims, according to the tentative criteria which had been established beforehand. Once I started to collect and analyse data from School A, I felt it would be beneficial to try and find a second school that robustly stood up to the same tentative criteria (Yin, 2009), i.e. a coherent SVS, ostensibly shared and publicised, a functioning Students Council and PTA, and a cooperative head-teacher and staff. At this point, the sampling process took a turn towards theoretical sampling (Merriam, 1998), as it allowed for the identification of additional key concepts and features which would be utilised in the research.

In this context, School B was recommended to me for its reputation as being vision-guided, for the collaborative leadership style of its head-teacher and, no less, for its staff commitment to their School Vision. These features constituted yet additional parameters for the exploration of cases in this research.

At the next juncture, following the study of two fairly similar schools, the need arose for diversity (Hutchinson, 1988; Merriam, 1998), in order to cover a wider range of contexts and collect more extensive data. At this point, I returned to the list of schools provided (see p. 71 above). Most seemed to operate in a similar context as the two schools I have already collected data from. One school stood out though, as it seemed to cope with problems I had not yet encountered, and to operate in a totally different setting – seemingly a perfect third case for juxtaposition with the other two schools. So

I chose to add School C to the sample, as it enabled the examination of a different setting (a low socio-economic status neighbourhood), with a different kind of population (mainly minorities and immigrants). The overall aim was to provide a reference point by which to effectively evaluate the findings gathered thus far.

Despite obvious differences between the three schools, hindsight revealed one crucial trait they had in common, to be later added to the list of criteria: All three head-teachers had served for more than 15 years in their respective schools, constantly re-affirming their commitment to their SV. From my own experience, I understood the importance of the role of the head-teacher in the shaping of school culture. The decision to add head-teachers' leadership style and characteristics as another central criterion for the theoretical sampling process was based on the assumption that head-teachers played a major role in the articulating, disseminating and implementing their SVS, in as much as vision could be considered to be a crucial element of effective leadership. This assumption has been supported by a wide range of theoretical arguments (e.g. Senge, 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Goldring et al., 2008; Yukl, 2010), as well as underpinned by empirical research (Kurland, 2010; Stemler et al., 2011). This issue is dealt with extensively in the Literature Review Chapter (see pp. 43-9 above).

The sample within the cases (head-teachers, teachers, students and parents), "whom to look at, or talk with, where, when, about what, and why" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27), was identified before the data collection began, based on the relevant research literature, which specifies the identity of educational stakeholders, both external and internal (see Literature Review Chapter, pp. 32-42). My status as a veteran of the Israeli education system, with considerable inside information and connections (Bitsch, 2005), contributed to shaping initial sampling decisions (my stance as a researcher is elaborated upon on pp. 68-70 above). Consequently, the research population of the study included five groups with a total of 45 stakeholders (15 teachers, 3 head-teachers, 16 students, 9 parents, and 2 administration officials). The sampling within the case can

be defined as a maximum variation sample, as it includes representatives of various groups of stakeholders in the educational system.

Access to each of the schools naturally involved the approval of the respective school managements. Lists of potential participants (teachers, students and parents), were offered by each school management. The candidates were all approached by telephone, and those who agreed to participate were eventually interviewed face-to-face.

Having the school management select the people to be contacted might have created a limitation, as the selection can be assumed to be distorted in the school's favour – every school would want to present their organisation in the most favourable way, after all. Yet to me, this supposedly biased selection seemed beneficial. At my request, the stakeholders presented by the school management were the ones who belonged to the inner circle of decision-making, and hence could be expected to be intimately familiar with the school's day-to-day life and manner of operation. These participants were therefore likely to be the most productive in answering the research questions (Marshall, 1996).

The list of teachers thus comprised management staff and homeroom teachers, parents who are PTA members, and student members of the Student Council. The deficiency, therefore, was turned into an advantage. Each stakeholder mentioned in the text was identified by name (alias) and title (Head-Teacher – HT; Teacher – T; Student – S; Parent – P.). A list of all participants and their demographic data is presented as Appendix C (see pp. 369-71). Within-case sample has been added to each case-study.

To sum up, purposive sampling procedures were employed in this study, in concordance with the research aims and the research questions. Based on the assumption that this study aims "to discover, understand and gain insight," I selected "a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The within-case sampling procedure

employed mainly maximum variety sampling technique, gathering data from 5 different groups of stakeholders. The between-cases sampling process in this study underwent various stages, eventually becoming a mixed purposeful/theoretical sample – a combination of different sampling strategies (Hatch, 2002; Teddlie & Yu, 2007): The convenience sampling of School A led to a "snowball" sampling technique (School B), whereas the selection of School C represents a maximum variety sampling technique.

The three schools eventually selected for this study were:

- (1) **School A:** An eminent secondary school located in the heart of Tel-Aviv, with a homogeneous population of over 1,500 students from exceptionally high socio-economic backgrounds, and an excellent track record in final exams (matriculation) scores.
- (2) **School B:** One of the best secondary schools in Tel-Aviv, based on the outskirts of the city, with a fairly homogeneous, middle-class population of approximately 900 students, and a very good success rate in the final exams (matriculation).
- (3) **School C:** A smaller secondary school to the south of the city, with roughly 500 students. This school accommodates students from a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including: Jewish, Arab (both Christians and Moslems), as well as first- and second-generation immigrants (mainly of Russian and Ethiopian origin). The multi-cultural composition of this school, coupled with its location in a low socio-economical neighbourhood, meant that it struggled to compete with its abovementioned counterparts in terms of final exams ratings (matriculation).

#### **3.4.4 Methods and Tools**

Qualitative methods of data collection were chosen for this study as they naturally lend themselves to the investigation of the latent significant cultural patterns underlying the way different participants (stakeholders) perceive and interpret the same context-specific reality (school). As various studies have shown (Schamber, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Mack et al., 2005; Yin, 2006; Creswell, 2009), the analysis of these patterns has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of social phenomena and the option to construct a new theoretical framework.

Seeing as that qualitative data collection is about "asking, watching, and reviewing" (Wolcott, 1992, p. 19), data were collected through interviews with educational stakeholders, observations, and analysis of relevant official documents (i.e. public records, personal documents, and physical materials within the study setting). This method of data gathering might also cater for this research intent to contribute to the closing of the research-practice gap by way of systematic collection of data in the field, in order to inductively produce a coherent theoretical concept of the research area (Bitsch, 2005). Despite being strenuous and time-consuming, face-to-face interviews were preferred over written questionnaires or interviews via telephone/internet, as these provided me with the opportunity to monitor what cannot be observed with the latter forms of data collection: behaviour, feelings or how people interpreted the world around them (Merriam, 1998; Schilling, 2006).

The empirical core of this thesis comprises three stages, reflecting the basic distinction between primary information sources (first-hand information gathered directly from the participants via interviews) and second-order information sources (e.g. documents and observations) (Shkedi, 2003, 2010). These three stages were preceded by piloting procedures, which were employed in this research with the intention of reducing risks pertaining to credibility and trustworthiness. The piloting test-procedures were constructed in congruence with the overall methodological orientation of this research,

i.e. the accumulation of different perspectives – in this case, various functionaries in the educational system (teachers, parents and students who were not involved in the study) – to create a trustworthy research instrument.

**Stage 1** of the research consists of a series of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with different groups of Educational Stakeholders as defined above. The choice to start the data collection process with interviews was not haphazard, and was subject to practical limitations as well as a theoretical rationale. The practical constraint was the short period during which school staff, students and parents would be available. The school year in Israel lasts 10 months (from September to June); of these, September and June are dedicated to organisational matters, so participants would not be available. The High Holidays (September-October) and Passover (March-April) vacations also take their fair share of around eight weeks. The window of opportunity is therefore rather narrow, and one has to "seize the day" and complete the interviews within a relatively limited period of time.

The theoretical rationale had to do with the fact that this research deals with internal entities (meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds). These meaning structures are often hidden from direct observation. The in-depth nature of an interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his/her experience (Charmaz, 2006). Whether used alone or in parallel with other data collection tools,

the central strength of interviewing is that it provides a means for doing what is very difficult or impossible to do in any other way – finding out what is in and on someone else's mind.

(Hatch, 2002, p. 92)

The apparent option was to engage in face-to-face interviews, in order to induce a rich description of the life experience of schooling as seen by its various stakeholders.



Interviews were held at locations selected at the participants' convenience (mostly on school premises or coffee shops in the vicinity of the school). Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes. To generate a cohesive and holistic picture of participants' perspectives, the views of each stakeholder group were treated as having equal value (Odhiambo et al., 2011). Interviews (held in Hebrew) were audio-taped, accompanied by occasional note-taking to mark the interviewer's personal observations concerning interviewees' non-verbal and/or other noteworthy elements of communication, e.g. non-verbal sounds, pauses, tone of voice, and peculiar wording (Schilling, 2006).

All interviews (see Appendix F, pp. 378-87) started with a background question, to prepare the participants for the interview context and recorder, and to ease their concerns about the precise nature of the interview (Hatch, 2002). The interviews were faithfully transcribed from the recordings (in Hebrew), and pertinent observations were inserted in the appropriate places using a different font. The interviews were eventually subjected to inductive content analysis in order to identify and categorise relevant criteria.

Interview questions were initially developed from the research questions and later refined throughout the piloting procedures and the actual interview process. The participants were also offered two closed questions: They were asked to place themselves on a "familiarity rate" of 0-5, in order to determine their estimate of their knowledge about the SVS. They were also presented with a list of 6 values (based on Stemler et al., 2011), which they were asked to prioritise, in order to find out more about their expectations of the school system and its vision. The primary aim of this stage was to offer a conceptualised, in-depth account of stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of their school as seen through their eyes and expressed in their own words. The interview schedule was designed to combine structured questions as well as open-ended questions aimed at providing scope for further probing (Thompson 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). The interview protocols focus on questions clustered around the following issues: (a) Respondents' familiarity (or lack thereof) with their

SVS; (b) The day-to-day activities in which the values of the SV are reflected; and, (c) Respondents' expectations of their SV.

**Stage 2** of the research consists of content analysis of the written Vision Statements of the schools under study, as well as other documents (e.g. school publications, work plans) which have a direct bearing on the subject of SV (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The National Vision - as articulated in the State Education Law of 1953 – was also used as a relevant source, as it provides an insight to the formal orientation of the authorities towards the values underpinning the Israeli school vision. Content analysis was further applied to the product of a recent, online public survey on the National Educational Vision conducted in Israel toward the 2013 elections. This stage seeks to identify the values, beliefs and presuppositions underpinning each SV statement, and its compatibility (or lack thereof) with the National Educational Vision.

**Stage 3** is comprised a series of semi-structured observations used as second-order information sources (Shkedi, 2003). These field notes (observations as well as document analyses) are considered secondary, as they do not provide descriptions and explanations gathered directly from the participants (Shkedi & Harel, 2004). Such information sources are meant mainly to support a full enough picture of the phenomena under examination: whether or not organisational routines stemming from the SV are implemented and institutionalized so as to make them normative constituents in school life (Spillane et al., 2010). Observations were held mainly in teachers' lounges, in PTA meetings and in the school yard, during breaks. The data gathered at this stage need to be compared with first-order data as well as strands in the analysis process.

These themes were further explored in the context of the relevant research literature. As reported in detail in the Literature Review Chapter (see pp. 16-25 above), there appears to be broad agreement among researchers of organisational vision (e.g. Collins & Porras, 1991, 1994, 1996; Holmes, 1993; Leithwood et al., 2004; Kantabutra, 2006; Yukl, 2010; Kurland, 2010), that in every organisation, vision is constituted of three

dimensions: content, attributes, and role in school. We have examined the themes that emerged from the analysis of the various stakeholders' report of their perceptions of School A's Vision Statement against these three dimensions, with the intent of drawing a rich description of the relationship between the School Vision and the way it is perceived by the stakeholders in each of the three schools investigated in this research.

### **3.4.5 Data Analysis**

The transition from description to analysis was rather demanding. It was only when I got to the cross-case analysis that the actual analysis started to take shape. My encounter with the principles of the IPA (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) approach offered methodological guidelines which seemed consonant with my initial intentions (Larkin et al., 2006):

- (1) The possibility of doing the detailed, nuanced analysis on a small sample.
- (2) The interest in exploring, in detail, participants' personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience.
- (3) The starting with the detailed examination of one case until some degree of closure has been obtained, then moving on to a detailed analysis of the second case, and so on through the corpus of cases. Only after this had been achieved, an attempt was then made to conduct a cross-case analysis, the tables of themes for each individual interrogated for convergence and divergence.
- (4) The interactive processes of the participants trying to make sense of their personal and social world, and of the researcher trying to make sense of the participants' attempts to make sense of their personal and social world (Delmar, 2010).

The analysis process, identified as "a form of intersubjective process of sense-making between two agents, a teller and a reader" (Popova, 2014, p. 1), also helped serve the purpose of 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 1995), "where readers gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented in case studies" (Melrose, 2009, p. 1). As I imagined that this study would be of interest principally for practitioners in the educational system, it was important for me to allow them to recognise similarities and find descriptions that resonated with their own experiences, to draw their own naturalistic generalisations, and to apply these to their own personal contexts and tacit knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The multi-phase reiterative analysis (see pp. 93-7 below) was flexible enough to allow unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during analysis. Each of the three schools was described and analysed separately, constituting a particular case study. The context each school operated in and the leadership style of its head-teacher were added to the modified research questions as the detail emerged, as they proved relevant to the study.

### **3.4.6 Conceptual Framework**

As stated above, the methodology of data analysis chosen for this research is consistent with the qualitative-constructivist assumptions of Narrative Theory, i.e. to investigate the researched phenomenon in its natural surroundings, from the point of view of the participants themselves and with a fairly modest expectation of generalizability, as I had no way of knowing in advance the extent to which the findings of one case could be applied to other settings (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Shkedi, 2003; Shalsky & Alpert, 2007).

The data collection process and the analysis process are distinct from each other (not as in Grounded Theory, where they are carried out simultaneously). The initial analysis procedure was established following the completion of the data-gathering phase of each of the three schools, and the narrative line was elicited from the interviewees'

testimonies as I proceeded from one school to the next. The coding categories were derived directly and inductively from the raw data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The process of data analysis employed a bottom-up approach i.e. the piecing together of systems to give rise to more complex systems, thus making the original systems sub-systems of the emergent system. The individual base elements of the system were first specified in great detail, then linked together to form larger subsystems, which then in turn were linked to form a complete top-level system. This approach was selected as this research is primarily interested in the perspective of stakeholders (Sabatier, 1986).

The analysis process comprised two broad phases. In the first phase, I wished to draw a general picture of the researched phenomenon, based on the narratives of the participants. The construction of a descriptive picture allows for transparency, thus increasing the rigor and credibility of the analysis results (Shkedi, 2003). In the second phase, I was faced with two missions: the dismantling of the data into meaning-units, and reassembling them to create a category system, leading eventually to theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2006).

### **3.4.7 Content Analysis**

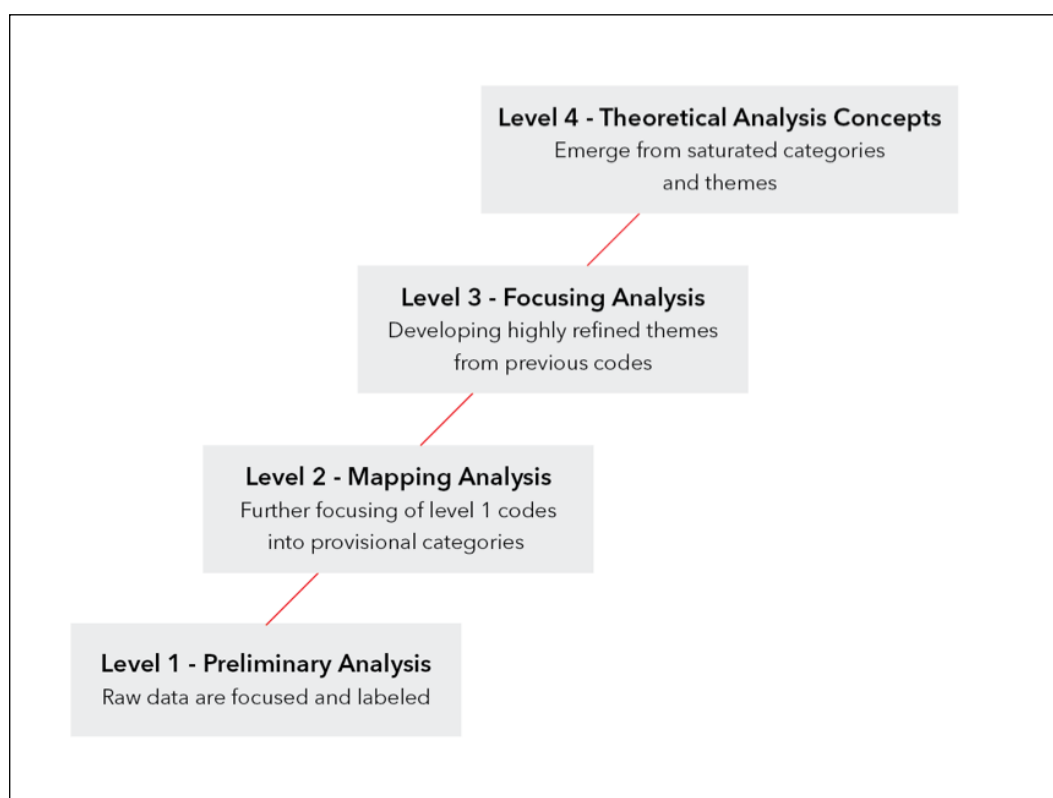
As for content analysis, whereas the present study is mostly inductive in nature, deductive reasoning has not been entirely excluded. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) introduce three approaches to qualitative content analysis, based on the degree of involvement of inductive reasoning: conventional, directed and summative. For the present study, I chose to apply the directed approach, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. Then, during the data analysis, I immersed myself in the data, to allow themes to emerge from the data; the coding categories were derived directly and inductively from the raw data.

The decision to apply the directed approach was taken due to the fact that the purpose of this approach is usually to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) – the aim of this research. This was true especially at the initial

stage of the choice of research tools, where it served to establish the relevant conceptual variables for the interview protocols by drawing on existing theoretical frameworks and related previous studies. For example, this study draws, *inter alia*, on Stemler et al.'s (2011) suggestion that a systematic analysis of school missions over time or environments "may offer educators and policy makers a window into a perspective on school purpose that has been largely absent from the empirical research literature" (p. 34). In accordance with the above suggestion, I chose to add the perspectives of various educational stakeholders, while using some of Stemler et al.'s research tools, thus broadening the relevant context.

### **3.4.8 Interview Qualitative Analysis Procedures**

I started out by familiarizing myself with the data ('immersion' – Rubin & Rubin, 2005) through listening to the recorded interviews, transcribing them and reading them thoroughly time and again, in order to gain a comprehensive orientation without losing sight of the context of the data. During the transcription process, I inserted my own impressions of various non-verbal signs (slips of the tongue, sounds and physical expressions of discomfort and hesitation) in a different font, as I found that they might contribute to the rigor of the analysis (Schilling, 2006). In order to support credible and trustworthy inferences, I chose to follow a set of systematic and transparent procedures for processing the data collected from interviews with various stakeholders (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). These analytic procedures were performed according to the following design (see Figure 3.2 on the next page) which I outlined based on Shkedi (2010, pp. 444-53), in compliance with the methodological guidelines adopted in this study:



**Figure 3.2: Qualitative Content Analysis Levels**

Having exhausted the immersion phase, I started the *preliminary analysis* (Level 1), which consisted of identifying, naming, categorizing and describing ideas found in the text (Gibbert & Ruigork, 2010), rather than referring to physical linguistic units. Essentially, each line, sentence and paragraph was read in search for the answer for the repeated question "What is it about?" Each segment of text that was comprehensible by itself and contains one idea constituted a meaning-unit (Merriam, 1998). These basic units reflected each interviewee's conceptions, while keeping their original meaning, sequence and context (Lieblich et al., 1998 – Hebrew). Each unit was translated into English, paraphrased and given a name (code) taken directly from the participant's faithfully translated wording. The aim at this stage was to open up the examination and to reveal the directions of the analysis. The same procedure was applied to each participant in a certain stakeholder group (e.g. teachers). The integration of codes between the group members was done in the next phase – the mapping analysis. An illustration of the *preliminary analysis* matrix follows:

Original Text - David	Paraphrased Codes	My reflections
"My immediate association with the term 'School Vision' is: The main target which the school should strive to achieve; a summit one climbs toward; Guidelines"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target</li> <li>• Summit</li> <li>• Guideline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination, an exalted target to aim for in the future</li> <li>• A platform for school activity</li> <li>• Use of metaphors</li> </ul>
"Main values in my SV: Acceptance of the other; Educating toward pluralism; Multi-Culturalism; Equality; Excellence - Realisation of every Student's Potential"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Values</li> <li>• Excellence</li> <li>• Realization of Potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity to such values may be partly attributed to his being in a gay marriage</li> <li>• What does it really mean?</li> <li>• SV values vs. his own values</li> <li>• How are they implemented?</li> </ul>
"Drafting of the SV was done following a directive from the municipality many years ago. At the time, there were discussions about it, but all this is in the far past."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A directive from the municipality</li> <li>• Many years ago - distant past</li> <li>• Discussions - only back in the day</li> </ul>	

**Table 3.1: The Preliminary Analysis Matrix**

At the next level, the *mapping analysis*, the data in every meaning-unit was carefully studied, compared to other meaning-units, with the intent to detect connections between them. Related paraphrased codes which share a common topic (elicited from all the interviews of the same stakeholder group), were brought together to create provisional categories given a joint name, deliberately disregarding the sequence and context of the text, with the intent to elevate the data to more abstract levels (Lieblich et al., 1998). These categories, in turn, will be integrated to create themes. The names of the categories at this stage were still drawn either from the original wording of the participants or chosen by me, but not from the theoretical literature. At this stage, relationships started to surface between "categories," which represented a certain aspect of the researched phenomenon, and "sub-categories" (content categories) which illustrated this aspect. Each emerging category was compared with all others to ensure that they were mutually exclusive (Sherman & Webb, 1988). An illustration of the *mapping analysis* matrix follows:



Paraphrased Codes	Categories (Themes)	My reflections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target</li> <li>• Summit</li> <li>• Guideline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credo</li> <li>• Guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When asked a theoretical question, they all know what the SV should be. It is when it comes to their SV that things look different.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil rights values</li> <li>• Excellence</li> <li>• Realisation of every student's potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Values</li> <li>• Academic Achievements</li> <li>• Excellence</li> <li>• Realisation of Potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dichotomy: Human values vs. academic achievements – which one prevails?</li> <li>• On the face of it – nothing wrong. A suspicion arises: Is it a euphemism for mere academic achievement?</li> <li>• Familiarity with SV - Overrated.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A directive from the municipality</li> <li>• Many years ago. Far past</li> <li>• Back then - discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detachment</li> <li>• Relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SV not inherent to the school culture and everyday life. An external directive.</li> <li>• Document drafted many years ago. Not relevant to present school life.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.2: The Mapping Analysis Matrix**

The *focusing analysis*, the third phase of the analysis process, comprises the selection of the most significant or frequent provisional categories by sorting, synthesizing, integrating and organizing them in the form of themes (Charmaz, 2006). Focused categories, which I named "themes", are essentially what appears to be an aspect or an issue referred to in a large number of provisional categories elicited in the mapping analysis, and with the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of the researched phenomenon (Shkedi, 2010 – Hebrew). While examining every category, I kept asking myself "What does it indicate?" and then compared it to other categories revolving around this issue (Sherman & Webb, 1988). The selection of themes was eventually based on a matrix of salience and frequency of categories. To ensure the mutual exclusiveness of the categories, I double-checked for overlapping categories. An illustration of the *focusing phase* matrix follows:

Categories	Head-Teacher	Teachers	Students	Parents	My Reflection
<b>Ideal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credo</li> <li>• Guidelines</li> <li>• The future image of the school</li> <li>• The ideal graduate</li> <li>• Social and human values</li> <li>• Academic excellence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All my decisions, boundaries, and goals stem from my vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direction, Credo, Cause, Meta-Goals, Guidelines, Aspirations</li> <li>• The future image of the school; the ideal graduate</li> <li>• Social and Humanistic values; Academic excellence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal</li> <li>• Values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road map</li> <li>• Guidelines</li> <li>• Work plan</li> <li>• Visionary basis for school activity</li> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Aspiration</li> <li>• Commitment of staff</li> <li>• Shared with SH</li> </ul>	<p>A seeming discrepancy between what is described as the ideal SV, and the description of the real SV.</p> <p>Such a gap is shared by all stakeholders, except for the students, who are straight forward about it from the start.</p>
<b>Reality:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obligation</li> <li>• Practical goals</li> <li>• Euphemism</li> <li>• Immaterial</li> <li>• Full of catch phrases</li> <li>• BS</li> <li>• Please the authorities</li> <li>• Image, front</li> <li>• Dismissal</li> <li>• General statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I consider the term 'vision' as a synonym of the term 'objective' or 'goal'</li> <li>• Adds an air of elegance</li> <li>• My declaration of intent</li> </ul>	<p>Miriam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A directive from the municipality</li> </ul> <p>Rina:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aloof</li> <li>• Immaterial</li> <li>• Discrepancy between the SV and real life</li> <li>• Meant to please the authorities</li> </ul> <p>Dana:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretentious and full of catch-phrases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence = academic achievements</li> </ul> <p>Gadi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A way to get resources from the authorities</li> <li>• What is excellence exactly?</li> </ul> <p>Ronnie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dictated</li> <li>• What the school wants people to think of it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly implemented</li> <li>• Inoperable goals</li> <li>• Not practical</li> <li>• PR</li> <li>• In reality – mainly academic achievements</li> </ul>	

**Table 3.3: The Focusing Phase Matrix**

The data collected from all the stakeholder groups from the three-school sample were in turn subjected to all three phases of the analysis process. Only then was it feasible to start Level 4 – the theoretical analysis.

### **3.4.9 Cross-Case Analysis**

Having reached a certain extent of saturation in the process of describing and analysing each one of the individual cases, a cross-case analysis appeared to be highly relevant (Merriam, 1998), as the findings seem to offer support for the assumption that each school's culture and practice were substantially distinct (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). Such a cross-case analysis allowed for the comparison of the commonalities and differences of the cases, in order to deepen the understanding and explanation and enhance generalizability (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003).

Based on the cognitive theory of learning, it may be assumed that developing cross-connections between related concepts enhances inferential and analogical reasoning relating one case to another, building cross-connections between cases, while preserving the essence of the original case, accumulating and producing new knowledge (Khan & Van Wynsberghe, 2008). Although "the real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation" (Stake, 1995, p. 8), I have learned that some generalisations can still be made and strengthened via multiple case studies. Engaging in cross-case analysis has therefore provoked my imagination, prompted new questions, revealed more dimensions, and produced alternatives, generating ideas and constructs. It helped me understand the relationships between the single cases, derive knowledge from each case, refine and develop concepts and build or test theory (Eckstein, 2002), aspiring to enable "naturalistic generalizations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Melrose, 2009) through the cross-case examination. The reporting of the findings of this study reflects this line of thought.

### **3.5 Writing-Up**

Following Pontoretto's (2006) suggestion, according to which, "the researcher's task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behaviour) within its particular context." and at the same time creating a 'vicarious experience' for the reader to experience the situation or the context that the participants were exposed to, so that

the readers can "cognitively and emotively 'place' themselves within the research context" (p. 543). Interweaving the data with my interpretations and relevant literature helped create a rhythm, which is "a recognizable pattern throughout the Analysis or Findings section" (Chenail, 1995, p. 5). To this end, I arranged the descriptions of the three schools in a similar order, allowing for additional surfacing categories along the way, towards converging them around commonalities and dissimilarities.

Reporting the findings of this study entailed the organisation of the data, previously collected and analysed, through thematic analysis (Holliday, 2007), to the end of producing convincing arguments, interpreted broadly, yet evidenced by relevant data extracts and relating to the extant research literature.

Underpinning the processes described above was done with the intention of making the research as rigorous and trustworthy as possible, as well as conducting it in a reflexive and deeply ethical way. I will now say more about these concepts and demonstrate how I embedded them in my design research.

### **3.6 Rigor and Trustworthiness**

Qualitative rigor and trustworthiness relies on the researcher's accountability for the accuracy of the findings, the congruity of the instrumentation, the appropriateness of the data collection and data analysis techniques, and the relationship between the conclusions and the data they are drawn from. No less do they depend on the way the data are presented to the reader (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Cresswell, 2009).

No researcher starts the analysis process *tabula rasa*. Each researcher has conceptual perspectives gained through prior experience and knowledge, whether consciously or unconsciously (Charmaz, 2006; Shkedi, 2010). This understanding applies to me, as I am intimately familiar with the educational system. I honestly tried to turn my

inevitable preconceptions from a disadvantage to an advantage, by being extra-cautious about leaving my preconceptions out of the research field, by involving my research supervisors as co-analysts, and by using "bracketing" methods (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Semi-structured individual interviews were held with pre-selected groups of stakeholders (head-teachers, teachers, students, parents, and government/municipal officials).

My pursuit of a rigorous and trustworthy study therefore entailed challenges of instrumentation rigor, bias management and the presentation of a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Shenton, 2004). The following measures were taken by me to enhance trustworthiness and rigor.

### **3.6.1 Translation and Transcription**

As the research was conducted in Israel and the interviews conducted in Hebrew, I felt the need to ensure the accuracy of the data through the faithful transcription and translation of the recorded interviews. To this end, I transcribed the recordings on the same day of the interview, in order to retain a fresh memory of nuances observed and recorded. The translation was made word for word, with as little interpretation as possible. Since I am not a native English speaker, whenever in doubt, I consulted a native English-speaking friend about the correct translation. To enhance the credibility of the data presented, I endeavoured to insert as many verbatim quotations from the stakeholders' reports, which also served the research objective of literally giving voice to the stakeholders' perspectives.

### **3.6.2 Peer Evaluation**

As expanded on in the 'Data Collection' and 'Data Analysis' sections above (see pp. 80-5 and 90-7 respectively), for the sake of maintaining accuracy via increasing instrumentation rigor, I engaged two peer-examination techniques:

- (1) **Piloting:** In order to check whether the instrument used (interview protocols comprising for the most part study-specific open-ended questions) had the potential to generate consistent and trustworthy results contributing to a better understanding of the researched phenomena. Qualified peer evaluators were asked to comment on the interview protocol, to see if the planned procedures performed as envisioned by the researcher and to identify researcher biases (Chenail, 2011).
- (2) **'A critical friend':** A well-trained professional, familiar with the process but not involved in the previous steps, was asked to check the results of the analysis process against the original transcripts, to supportively counter my taken-for-granted approaches and suggest alternatives (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 310; Shenton, 2004; Schilling, 2006, p. 32). Criticism from my supervisors added considerable value to the credibility of the analysis.

### 3.6.3 Triangulation

Several kinds of triangulation were practiced in the data collection and analysis process, to strengthen the overall validity by obtaining data from multiple sources, as well as using multiple data methods in multiple settings (Kesley & Pense, 2001). One form of triangulation was multiple data sources: Data from primary information sources (interviews) and second-order information sources (e.g. documents and observations), dealing with similar issues were juxtaposed (Schilling, 2006; Shkedi, 2003, 2010), for the purpose of the verification or refutation of findings.

Another technique was presenting the same questions to different groups of stakeholders during the interviews, in order to enable cross-verification (or refutation). For example, the gaps between the students' reports to those of the management and staff led eventually to the understanding that there are two versions of School A's Vision: The formal, written SVS (which is for the most part ignored) and the informal, oral School Vision which is acted upon.

Another form of triangulation was the exploration of various written sources in print and on the net (school publications, newspapers' articles and websites) in order to elicit information about the schools' life that might shed more light on the data gathered from the participants. Multiple data methods constituted another form of triangulation used in the data collection process: Individual interviews, documents' content analysis and, in certain cases, observations.

Of the four criteria offered by Guba and Lincoln (1989) for judging rigor (i.e. credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability/generalisability), so far I dealt with the first three, as well as their accompanying strategies, that were employed in this research.

#### **3.6.4 Generalisability**

In regard to the issue of generalisability, since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is unrealistic to expect broad transferability. To deal with this limitation, I wrote a dense and rich description (Geertz, 1973) of the participants' reports, and of their specific settings. Such a detailed description might help to convey the contexts of the phenomena under scrutiny, and allow readers to have a proper understanding of them, thereby enabling people not involved in the study to track the research process and determine which raw data were used to reach corresponding conclusions (Kesley & Pense, 2001) as well as draw their own "natural generalisations" (see section on 'Writing-Up' above, p. 98-9).

As stated above, the researcher himself may present a threat to the research's trustworthiness: "If time is not spent on preparation of the field, reflexivity of the researcher, the researcher staying humble and preferring to work in teams so that triangulation and peer evaluation can take place" (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003, p. 320). Reflexivity procedures employed throughout the whole research process, as described in the next section, were therefore essential.

The quality of every research, particularly qualitative research cannot be ensured without a reflective and recursive process on the part on the researcher. Contemporary theory of knowledge acknowledges the effect of a researcher's position and perspectives, and disputes the belief of a neutral observer, as it recognises that knowledge is partial and situated (Malterud, 2001). Reflexivity is defined as "the active construction of interpretation of experiences in the field and a questioning of how these interpretations arise" (Bott, 2010, p. 65).

### **3.6.5 Reflexivity**

Like every investigator, I entered the field of research with certain opinions, consciously or unconsciously representing previous personal and professional experiences. I had to be reminded to be attentive to and conscious of the origins of my own perspectives (Patton, 2002). In an attempt to avoid misinterpretation of the data due to my preconceptions, I started out the data-description limiting myself to the mere facts presented to me by the interviewees. It was only as the information accumulated that I started to identify patterns which could constitute a basis for interpretation and gained more confidence. I also had to overcome the inclination for forthright, assertive observations (which may very well be a part of my Israeli identity), and to learn to exercise greater caution in my statements. Another limitation I became aware of was that, as I am a passionate believer in the role of the educational system, it took me a long time, and numerous reiterations, to shake off the tendency to react emotionally to the findings.

As I mentioned before, it was only when I got to the cross-case analysis that I felt that I had got to the bottom of things, being able to offer my perspectives and justify my research decisions with integrity (Finlay, 2002). I endeavoured to provide sufficient data extracts in the text to allow readers to evaluate the inferences drawn from them and the interpretations made of them (Brewer, 2000).



### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The literature concerning ethical issues in qualitative research focuses on four key ethical principles: (a) Informed and voluntary consent; (b) Anonymity of research participants and confidentiality of information shared; (c) No harm to participants; (d) Avoiding conflicts of interest. In the present research I followed these principles, and the procedures associated with them, as guidelines (Merriam, 1998; Smythe & Murray, 2000; Halai, 2006; Josselson, 2007):

- **Informed and Voluntary Consent:** I was given lists of members of stakeholder groups by the managements of the three schools sampled for this study (teachers, student-members of the Student Council, and parents who were members of the PTA); I approached each one by telephone. Approximately 50% of the people approached gave their consent to be interviewed. Students under 18 were required to bring written authorization from their parents. Each participant was given a written as well as an oral account of the research purpose and procedures. Each participant was reassured that they had the right to withdraw from the study any time, and that the confidentiality of the information obtained from them will not be compromised.
- **Anonymity of Research Participants and Confidentiality of Information Shared:** Pseudonyms were used for both the schools and the participants. Discussions about the participants were conducted with the peer evaluators and my critical friend by pseudonym only, so that no one, other than me, could make a connection between the real people and the information obtained from them. Lists of participants will be destroyed when no longer needed. As the lists of stakeholders' names were given to me by the respective school managements, a concern could arise regarding whether the anonymity of the participants could be been compromised. Still, as only a few participants from each list actually took part in the study, and given the length of time that has passed since the interviews, as well as the precautions taken regarding their

names, I think I can be confident in stating that the anonymity of the participants can be guaranteed.

- **No Harm to Participants:** As the research is interested in matters of attitudes, perceptions and expectations, it is unlikely to expect any potential harm to the participants, especially as confidentiality and anonymity have been rigorously maintained. To this end, I piloted the interview questions very carefully, given the sensitivity of the issues I was arising, as I did not want to undermine the position of research participants in their schools by, for example, asking leading questions. In any case, participants were treated in a respectful, non-judgmental and empathic manner, all in line with the ethical requirements of the university.
- **Conflict of Interest:** A dilemma arose during the interviewing process at School A, due to my working relationship with the school head-teacher. I was concerned that this fact (which I thought best to disclose to the participants right from the start) might have an effect on their answers in either of three ways: Giving "the right answers," social desirability response bias (Nederhof, 1985; Fisher, 1993), that is, hiding their genuine thoughts in the fear that they will be disclosed to their head-teacher; and "sending messages" that they hoped I will pass on the head-teacher. In effect, I felt that my concerns were premature. The atmosphere during the interviews was relaxed and friendly, and most participants seemed to embrace the opportunity to express their perceptions – whether positive or negative. Of course, there was double-talk and lip-service, but my impression was that it had to do more with the school culture than with my relationship with the head-teacher. However, I referred to every suspicion of bias of this sort in the data analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In general, I tried to treat the information, articulated by the participants, at face-value, whereas interpretation emerged from the comparison of data within and between interviews. This problem did not arise in the two other schools, because I was not known to the head teacher or staff.

## CHAPTERS 4-5-6: FINDINGS

The Findings Chapters provide comprehensive profiles of the three schools explored in this research. Each profile consists of three sections as explained below.

The first section offers detailed a description of a series of aspects of each of the schools, which is intended to familiarise the reader with the identity of each school.

In the second section, I focus on the dimensions that define the Vision Statement of each school, and the extent of its viability, in regard to Research Question no. 1 (*What makes a School Vision viable?*). Concurrently, I referred to the constitutive dimensions of the stakeholders' role in the school: their ownership of their school vision, as suggested in the research literature, as well as the value ascribed to them by the management (Research Question no. 2: *What constitutes the role of the educational stakeholders in the school system?*). The head-teacher's leadership style and school context were discussed later, given their centrality in the stakeholders' management process (Research Question no. 3: *What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision?*). The discussion of Research Question no. 4 was saved for later, after the cross-case analysis, as it engages in the comparison between the three schools.

The third section of the chapter expands on striking features characterising each school, drawn from the analysis of the data provided by its stakeholders in their interviews.

The information presented in all three sections will later serve as the basis for the comparison of the three schools, their differences and commonalities, in the framework of the research questions, towards overarching conclusions concerning the stakeholder-vision relationship, and their effect on the school culture, climate, and stakeholders' well-being.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS FROM SCHOOL A**

### **4.1 Background**

#### **4.1.1 Introduction**

The first school examined in this research (henceforth referred to as School A) is described in the school publications and stakeholders' testimonies, as a highly rated, award-winning institute, renowned for its excellent performance in the national matriculation examination and the high percentage of students who volunteer to serve in highly rated – and competitive – army units after graduation. The school is situated in an upper middle-class neighbourhood of central Tel-Aviv, and caters mostly for the local population.

#### **4.1.2 Sources of Information**

Information about School A was obtained from school publications, stakeholders' interviews, the school's official web-site, relevant local press publications, and the internet. Information about School A's head-teacher was drawn from her own interview, interviews with other stakeholders, and deduced from her overt conduct.

#### **4.1.3 Demographic Details of School A Participants**

The head-teacher and a sample of six teachers, five students and three parents were interviewed in School A. All the teachers are prominent figures in the school, who serve as home-room teachers and fulfill various administrative and pedagogic functions. All students are members of the Student Council, and all parents are PTA members. Following are their demographic details.

#### 4.1.3.1 Staff

Alias	F/M	Age	Education	Tenure (Years at School A)	Comments
Ella	F	63	MA	28 (19)	Head-Teacher
David	M	51	MA	25 (25)	Vice Head-Teacher
Rachel	F	59	MA	35 (33)	
Miriam	F	52	MA	24 (24)	Vice Head-Teacher
Rina	F	49	MA	21 (17)	
Noa	F	47	BA	16 (4)	
Dana	F	48	BA	23 (21)	

**Table 4.1: Demographic Data of School A's Staff**

#### 4.1.3.2 Students

Alias	F/M	Age	Years at School A	Major Subjects	Student Council Role	Parents' Education
Gad	F	13.5	3	Physics, Philosophy, Computers	Member	Father - BA Mother - MA
Ronnie	F	18	3	Literature, Chemistry	Chairman	Father - MA Mother - BA
Yael	F	16	6	Physics, French, Bible Studies	Member	Father - Law Professor Mother - Lawyer (PhD)
Mali	F	14.5	3	Has not chosen yet	Member	Mother - PhD Father - High-School Diploma
Joseph	M	17	4	History, Physics	Member	Mother - Pharmacist Father - Accountant

**Table 4.2: Demographic Data of School A's Students**

#### 4.1.3.3 Parents

Alias	F/M	Age	Occupation	Education	PTA Role	Comments
Dan	M	53	Engineer	BA	Member	
Jerry	M	49	CEO	BA	Member - 10 years Chairman - 3 years	
Nathan	M	46	Lawyer	BA	Chairman - 10 years	4 <sup>th</sup> child at School A

**Table 4.3: Demographic Data of School A's Parents**

#### 4.1.4 School History

School A is a well-established, academically renowned institute in Tel-Aviv. It opened in 1944 with 14 attending students. Originally construed as upholding a socialist ideology, it was consequently identified with the working class (A 1947 newspaper article - full reference omitted due to ethical considerations – N.M.). Anecdotal evidence from newspapers of the period suggests the expectation that School A would disseminate Marxist values throughout the Israeli education system. Due to significant demographic shifts, virtually no trace now remains of the school's original socialist agenda. No reference to socialist values can be found in the school's publications, and no mention was made of these in interviews with staff.

#### 4.1.5 School Facilities

School A's facilities, spread over both campuses, include a comprehensive library, five science labs, a lecture auditorium, and an editing room for the arts department. Sports facilities include indoor basketball and volleyball courts, and outdoor courts for soccer, basketball, handball and table tennis. Many of its facilities are dated and in need of constant maintenance, but are generally in decent working condition.

#### **4.1.6 School Composition**

Today, School A caters for over 1500 students, most from high socio-economic backgrounds. The school comprises of both junior high and senior high year groups, and employs 140 teachers, most of who work across all years. Geographically, the school is divided across two sites; the first hosts Years 7 and 8, the second Years 9 to 12. The present study was conducted only in the high school, focusing on teachers, parents and students of the older year groups. On the school's website, it describes itself (perhaps grandly) as "one of the first schools in the big city. It is credited for its magnificent tradition of education towards excellence in education, values and achievement."

#### **4.1.7 School Staff**

School A's staff body is well-educated. The average academic level is high; all teachers have an academic degree, and more than half have postgraduate qualifications, either an M.A. or PhD, compared to an average 39% across the Israeli education system (Ha'aretz, 1.9.2014). From a gender perspective, the gender balance of the teaching staff is similar to most Israeli schools (according to formal data issued by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics), with 75% female and 25% male teachers (CBS, 2017). Staff ages range between 28 and 60, with an average age of 42 years (though younger teachers usually start out in the Junior High branch and later move on to the High School grades). Judging from personal observations, the prevailing culture seems one of obedience and compliance. This may be due to the fact that the same head-teacher has been in post for 23 years. But it could also be the opposite: she has held her post for so many years because she is admired by the staff. In many of the interviews, teachers frequently referenced the head-teacher, going so far as to repeat her ideas word for word. None of the teachers interviewed – even the ones who were most critical about the school system as a whole – uttered a word of criticism about their head-teacher. On the contrary, their attitude was one of admiration and respect, seeing her as the embodiment of the school and its vision. One telling example was when a teacher spontaneously uttered the head-teacher's name when asked about her first association with relation to the term 'School Vision.'

School A's website describes in detail the challenges presented to the school's teaching staff. The term 'excellence' is repeatedly referenced, as can be seen in the following excerpt. The constant emphasis on 'excellence' indicates that it constitutes a core value in the school culture, justifying the need to further examine this term and the school's perspective on it.

**School A's Teachers:**

**Excellence in Determination; Excellence in Persistence; Excellence in Outcomes**

- All school teachers are committed to the value of excellence.
  - Only outstanding teachers can bring their students to pursue the quest for excellence.
  - Only teachers who persistently strive to bring their students to set higher goals for themselves will be able to act as role-models for the latter.
  - Only teachers who believe in their own competence can maximize the potential of their students
  - Only teachers who are equipped with the necessary professional knowledge and expertise will be able to lead their students towards excellence.

**Figure 4.1: Excerpt from School A's Official Website**

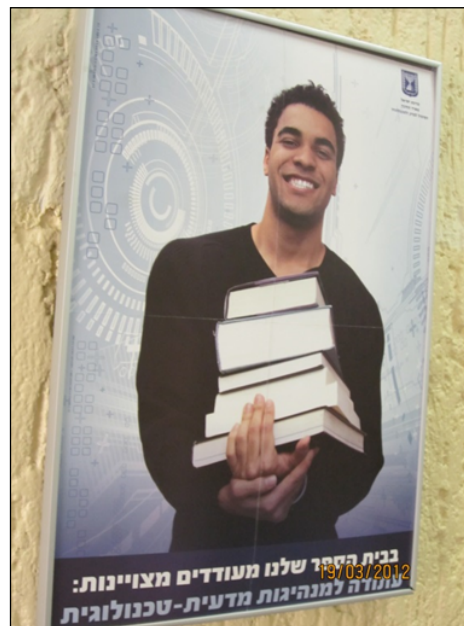
#### **4.1.8 School Curriculum and Culture**

School A encourages its students to specialise in diverse fields of knowledge. Students have the option of majoring in any of the following disciplines: Languages (Hebrew, English, Arabic or French); Social Sciences; Computers; Physical Education; Liberal Arts; Maths and Sciences; Geography; Psychology; Economics; and other alternatives. Observational and interview data gathered during the study suggest that the overall orientation of the school is geared toward academic achievement, specifically in the so-called 'hard sciences.' The poster shown below, hanging at the entrance to the



school, illustrates this point. The caption reads: "In our school we encourage excellence: The next generation of scientific-technological leadership" (my translation – N.M.).

There is no similar poster commending the liberal arts or humanities. In general, the school's overall final exams success rate has consistently held steady at above 95% per annum, making it one of the highest achieving schools in the country.



**Figure 4.2: Poster at School A**

A unique feature of School A is its specialized classes. In every year group, there is a designated class for gifted students (top 2%), drawn from across the city, alongside a sports class for gifted athletes (this class exists only in Junior High). There is also a small class for students with special needs or disabilities in each year group. The teachers in these classes are trained to work with this student group, and with a modified curriculum.

#### **4.1.9 Extra-Curricular Activities**

School A supports various extracurricular activities, including sport teams, a competitive robotics club and a choir. Students must complete a total of 60 hours of volunteer community service between Years 10 and 12, through a program called "Personal Commitment". The school also maintains exchange programs with other schools all over the world, student delegations visiting counterparts in Brazil, France, Germany, USA, Singapore and Spain, and hosting return delegations in Israel.

#### **4.1.10 School Achievements**

School A has a sterling reputation for academic achievement, evidenced by the answers given by students and parents when asked why they chose to study there.

School A hosts several unique projects, including:

- Student exchange projects with schools abroad
- A Robotics project, winner of many prizes in nationwide competitions
- A Young Entrepreneurs project, guided by high-tech expert
- A stock market simulation game
- A rhetoric and debate course

These projects, together with highly-rated special classes for gifted students of all ages, attract potential students and increase the demand for School A.

The choice of meaningful army service is also considered an indication of a school's success in Israel. In School A, enlistment rate for both boys and girls is very high, at approximately 95%.

#### **4.1.11 Head-Teacher**

##### **4.1.11.1 Biography**

School A's head-teacher, in her sixties, was born in Tel-Aviv to an upper middle-class family of Eastern European origin. She started out as a teacher in the 1970s, and worked her way up the ladder of the Israeli education system. She holds two MA degrees, in foreign languages and art.

##### **4.1.11.2 Educational Perspective**

School A's head-teacher presented her educational philosophy clearly and coherently during the interview. When asked about the stakeholders' group that should be at the centre of the school's attention, she says:

In my opinion, the students. First and foremost, we need to cater for the student's needs. The students need group affiliation that will strengthen them and create a positive experience. Only then they will be open to absorb what the teachers offer them. If the focus is on the teachers – we might lose the contact with the students.

She goes on to quote Gibran Khalil Gibran, saying that the students "lead us to the threshold of our own minds" as her motto. However, as noted later in this chapter, the analysis of interviews with the school's students suggests that their experience is very different from that of the head-teacher.

##### **4.1.11.3 Purpose of Schooling**

When asked about the main role of schooling, the head-teacher gives a rather lengthy answer:

Philosophically speaking, the school is expected to respond to the needs of the students, and concurrently to inculcate our beliefs and professional knowledge – everything the students will need in the future but do not know it yet: knowledge,

time-management skills, mnemotechnic faculties, self-discipline, training and practice. These are the things the students need – though they are not aware of it yet. This is the foundation for the students to grow from.

This perspective seems rather dated, despite being the dominant approach in compulsory education in much of the world (Saavedra & Opfer, 2013). Given rapid global change, researchers are constantly searching for a clear idea of the future, even the skills necessary for the labour market in a decade. "Today, because of rapid economic and social change, schools have to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, technologies that have not yet been invented and problems that we don't yet know will arise." (Schleicher, 2010).

Underneath the head-teacher's words, one detects a patronising undertone, adding to the ironic interpretation: the school staff knows what is appropriate, the students do not.

At the same time, the head-teacher adds another insight, one which seems dominant in the school culture as it is repeated by most teachers and in almost every school publication:

The school has to create an environment, which allows the students to realise their potential (whether high or low). We cannot give in on this matter. The school has to provide the students with tools which will enable them to cope with real life. Apart from knowledge, and the creation of new knowledge, the students have to be given tools like a clear open-eyed reality check, emotional intelligence and self-confidence, as well as communication skills, effortless movement in the world, reflection. We have to facilitate values like giving to others, commitment, creative team work. The school is expected to strengthen these attributes, as we aim to create a whole person, who is well equipped by the school to lead his life at their best.

Her terminology is vague. What exactly is "the creation of new knowledge"? How does one instill a clear-eyed observation of the world? What exactly is "a whole person"? To me, these terms, similar to those used in the formal, written School Vision Statement (contrary to the informal, oral School Vision which will be discussed in the following

section) are merely catch-all phrases. As Joseph (S) puts it: "The wording of the School Vision is very general, so that it is difficult to know what is implemented and what is not." In order to find out how feasible these aspirations really are and whether they are actually implemented, we will refer to comments from students, parents and teachers.

Whether valid or misguided, the head-teacher's comments seem internally consistent. At one point in the interview, she was asked to prioritise a list of values according to their significance to her. In her prioritisation list of values, she chose (what she conceives as) 'preparation for life' as the most important value. It remains to be seen to what extent these declarations are compatible with the school's activity.

#### **4.1.11.4 Communication with Stakeholders**

From the head-teacher's statements in the interview, especially concerning the process of drafting the School Vision Statement (SVS), one can learn quite a lot about her leadership practice and her communication with stakeholders. When asked whether drafting the mission statement was the first thing she did when she started out as head-teacher of the school, she replied:

Not at all. It happened later - can't tell you exactly when. I came to school with zero information about the school staff, or about the school vision. There was no written documentation and the answers I got were rather blurred. I had to gather information first about the inner life of the school, the people and their ideas – and only then I felt strong enough and in a position to start *dictating* and putting my intentions for the school in writing. (my emphasis – N.M.)

From this lengthy answer, two aspects of the head-teacher's management style become clear:

- (1) The constant use of the first person is not casual, but represents her practice of running the school.

- (2) The option of sharing her doubts and getting support from the school staff is not part of her management style.

Despite an unequivocal declaration ("Community involvement is most important to me. It would have been a lot easier and more efficient to do it with my own staff, but then we would miss an important need or issue"), the head-teacher's description of the process of drafting the SVS suggests limited involvement of school stakeholders: "At the beginning, the management team was involved. The dominant figure was the social activity coordinator, who had a very solid social perspective, balanced, diversified, and committed to values. The management team sat together in a couple of meetings and we drafted the School Vision statement." There is no mention of stakeholders other than the management team. In contrast, practices in other schools can be quite different, according to the literature. In Stemler et al. (2011), for example, an overwhelming majority of American head-teachers (93%) stated that committees or teams (administration, staff, parents, community leaders, and students) worked together to compose the SVS in a collaborative process. Even in situations where a smaller number of individuals were involved in crafting the initial draft, the SVS nearly always had to be approved by at least the school staff, and often by a committee of parents and outside community members as well.

School A's head-teacher noted that, "In our school we, from time to time, share our views with representatives of the school community: a monthly lengthy meeting with the PTA, frequent meetings with the Student Council." This statement is not consistent with the information gathered from other sources. PTA meetings (as the parents testified, and according to my own personal observation) dealt mainly with administrative and financial issues. There are no "sharing of views" and definitely no discussion of values. The head-teacher herself testified that, "the parents are most cooperative. They have almost no criticism of the school, but they really want to contribute." The PTA members accept their role as assistants of the professional authority – the head teacher. As for the Student Council – all five students interviewed confirmed that there had never been a discussion of the School Vision values in Student

Council meetings. "The Student Council does absolutely nothing," Mali (S) reported. "It is all about budget and parties." Yael (S) reported relentless (though futile) efforts on her part "to adjust the school activity to my own values and enhance the well-being of the students at school."

## **4.2 VISION STATEMENT**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

The research literature draws out a few characteristics common to the content of meaningful vision statements in both business and educational settings: Vision statements tend to include future oriented/optimistic statements; emphasize intrinsic values, challenges and opportunities; focus on providing direction and specific goals (Daft, 1999; Berson et al., 2001; Strange & Mumford, 2002; Sosik & Dinger, 2007). Unity of purpose, conveyed in the content of the SVS, is considered essential to the improvement of school activity, as it constitutes the focal point of communal action (Levin, 2001). The following section analyses School A's SVS, to determine whether the characteristics mentioned above are realised in it.

Information about the content of School A's SVS, as well as its ethos, was gathered from a variety of sources: The formal text of the SVS presented to me by the head teacher and various supplementary commentaries of it (e.g. "Why excellence?"; "The way to excellence;" "Stages in the journey towards excellence"). All the above were also mentioned, in slight variations, in various marketing publications and the school web site. The stakeholders' perceptions of it were drawn from their interviews.

The formal SVS of School A presented below (my translation – N.M.) was submitted to the Tel-Aviv Municipality in 2008. According to the head-teacher's subsequent letter to teachers, it "was approved with admiration," adding that the document has been re-phrased a couple of times in recent years, but it had not changed significantly.

#### 4.2.2 The Formal Vision Statement

Following is a verbatim translation of School A's formal Vision Statement (my emphases – N.M.):

- The school, via its teachers, shall impart *knowledge*, as well as information management and classification *skills*.
- The school shall act as a *socialization agent* for its students, as well as constitute a setting for *social interaction*.
- The school shall instill *moral values*, tolerance, open-mindedness, impartiality, fairness, and trustworthiness in its students.
- The school shall foster *independence and curiosity* in its students, encourage *creative thinking*, long-term planning proficiencies, mnemonic faculties, and time-planning capabilities.
- The school shall *attend to the emotional needs of every student*, as well as nurture emotional intelligence aptitudes: cooperation, self-confidence, positive self-image, and self-reflection.
- The school shall form a *stimulating and rich environment*, one which inspires a culture of excellence, creativity, originality, and critical thinking.

Four main values can be identified as underpinning the School A's formal Vision Statement, as follows:



- (1) **Knowledge and Learning Skills:** information management, classification, creativity, originality and critical thinking, curiosity, long-term planning proficiencies, mnemonic faculties and time-planning capabilities.
- (2) **Moral Values:** tolerance, open-mindedness, impartiality, fairness, and trustworthiness.
- (3) **Social Values:** the school as a socialisation agent, social interaction.
- (4) **Other Values:** A stimulating and rich environment that inspires all the above.

#### 4.2.3 Alternative Vision Statement

Taken at face value, the SVS meets the standards specified above: It comprises guidelines for future actions, specifies intrinsic moral and social values and sets inspirational goals. Nevertheless, school publications seem to portray a rather different picture of the school goals, as will be shown below. Moreover, according to the stakeholders, the formal written SVS is practically ignored, with another focal point taking its place: Academic Achievement.

The term 'excellence,' dominant in the school's discourse (as will be seen in the following sections), appears only once in the SVS, in the context of the school's environment, and the salient principle of the realisation of each student's potential is totally absent from it. This stands in comparison to repeated use of the phrase 'Excellence' in school marketing literature (e.g. "school's culture of excellence;" "the steps leading towards excellence;" "excellence as a way of life at School A").

The list of objectives noted in another document (The yearly work plan), which is submitted annually to the municipal authorities supports the initial impression that

despite the written text of the SVS, the most dominant value of the school culture is academic excellence. This list comprises three central objectives:

- Improvement in academic achievement
- Increase of the percentage of excellent students
- Maintenance of school achievement in final exams

In the detailed list of the high school goals following the above, 12 out of 14 objectives refer to academic achievement.

At this point, one identifies a discrepancy between the different statements issued by the school management. Whereas documents presented to the authorities (whether municipal or national) emphasise moral and social values, school publications aimed at potential stakeholders concentrate on academic achievement. This highlights a shift from moral and social values to academic excellence.

In another publication ("Get to know School A"), a summary of the school regulations distributed among the teachers we found another, more comprehensive version of the SVS (henceforth referred to as 'Version Two'), which may shed some more light on the school management's perception of it:

<b>Values</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Vision</b>	<b>The Ideal Graduate</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal excellence</li> <li>• Dignity</li> <li>• Involvement, commitment and responsibility</li> <li>• Patriotism</li> <li>• Identity and Heritage</li> </ul>	<p><i>Social-Emotional Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of accountability</li> <li>• Development of personal and interpersonal communication</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul> <p><i>Learning Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research skills</li> <li>• Creative and Critical-systematic thinking</li> <li>• Derivation of new knowledge (based on existing knowledge)</li> </ul>	<p>An educational institute which imparts values via teaching and on-going school life, as well as provides cognitive tools and non-coercive knowledge.</p> <p>An institute that upholds ethical conduct and whose teachers serve as role-models and a source of inspiration.</p>	<p>A graduate who is a complete person, committed to her/his Israeli identity and Jewish heritage, self-directed, able and willing to be responsible for his/her learning and function in a modern democratic society, complex, entangled, permissive and changing – under conditions of lack of confidence and certainty about the future.</p>

**Table 4.4: A Summary of School A's SVS (Version Two)**

The comparison of the two versions of School A's SVS (apart from the fact that more than one version of it exists), raises some interesting points:

- (1) In Version Two, the first value mentioned is 'personal excellence.'
- (2) Patriotism and Jewish Heritage were not mentioned in the formal Version, but are mentioned twice in Version Two.
- (3) The text of Version Two seems to contradict itself. For example, there is no symmetry between what the school aspires to impart and what the students are expected to have the school strives to impart values, cognitive tools, knowledge and ethical conduct in its students, the 'ideal graduate' is expected to acquire a Jewish identity, accountability and the ability to function in a future world.

(4) Whereas 'involvement and commitment' (presumably to society and the community) are mentioned in Version Two as key values, the part that describes the ideal graduate refers solely to individual capabilities and skills, supposedly acquired by the students during their studies, and totally ignores social values.

(5) It is also worth noting that the second value mentioned in the formal version, is absent from Version Two ("The school shall act as a socialization agent for its students, as well as constitute a setting for social interaction"). This value appears to be implemented in practice as testified by the students during their interviews. In this context, students mention "a social framework" as one of the main reasons they chose to attend the school. This omission from Version Two, of course, may be by design or happenchance.

The existence of more than one version presents an inherent problem of School A's SVS. Allan (2001), mentions a couple of additional problems which may prompt negatives sentiment from stakeholders:

(1) The SVS is comprised of overly general statements.

(2) The statements often lack practical implications.

(3) Vision statements, generally, are too long and complicated.

All these may encourage members of the school community to treat the document as a PR device, rather than a serious statement of intent.

School A's SVS, in the eyes of its stakeholders, contains all three problems. Moreover, all the above seem to apply to School A's community's perception of the different versions of their SVS: not only is the formal, written document ignored, the alternative dominant statement of values ('excellence' and 'realisation of student potential') are immediately translated into the feasible notion of academic achievement. One reason for this can be found in Allan's (2001) words: "A school can never know if its students are reaching their 'full potential' or if they are seeking more 'excellence' this year than last" (p. 290). A detailed discussion of stakeholders' perceptions vs. the formal SVS will be presented in the relevant section.

A fourth problem pointed out by Allan (2001, pp. 290-1) refers to an additional essential attribute of a viable vision statement: shared with stakeholders.

The next two sections examine the issue of a shared vision *vis-à-vis* the perceptions of School A's stakeholders with regard to their SVS.

#### **4.2.4 Stakeholders' Familiarity with the School Vision**

School A's Staff and parents (henceforth, teachers' names will be marked 'T,' students' names 'S,' and parents' names 'P' respectively), shared the understanding that the concept of "vision" represents a set of guidelines which should serve as a platform for the school activity. The head-teacher stated that everything that is done at school is value-guided, and stems from the SVS.

Teachers and parents express the same notion. They talk about credo, cause, direction, achievable value-guided goals of the SVS (David, Miriam, Noa – T); work-plan, strategic goals, road-map (Dan, Nathan – P). The words used by some indicate an air of transcendence: "A summit to climb towards," "something spiritual," aspirations (David, Rachel, Dana – T); "a model the school aspires to achieve," "A visionary strategic basis

for the school activity" (Jerry, Nathan – P). Additional qualities attributed to the SVS included the future image of the school (and its graduates) and the collective commitment of the stakeholders to it.

Most students, however, did not seem to accept these perceptions. They openly described the SVS as lip-service and a PR device: "It is more what the school wants people to think of it than what it really is" (Ronnie – S). Some believed that it was "bunch of catch phrases, which are meant mainly to please the authorities and/or extract resources from them" (Yael, Gadi – S). The students' attitude towards the SVS is mostly cynical – very far from the reverence that characterises statement by teachers and parents.

Ostensibly, teachers and parents treat the SVS with great respect. But closer examination of the text reveals cracks in the unified idealistic view (Rüschemeyer et al., 2009). It comprises "mainly goals dictated by the Ministry of Education" (Miriam – T); "pompous and euphemistic" (Dana – T); "The SVS should be spiritual, whereas in reality it is merely practical" (Rina – T); "[It] should focus on values, while in practice its centre of interest is learning" (Nathan – P); "The School Vision should be practical enough to enable its implementation" (Dan – P). Even the head-teacher, despite her determined declaration of commitment to the SVS, defined it as a circumlocutory, more "elegant" way to describe the essential functional goals and objectives of schooling. Eventually, she also acknowledged to several concessions made to the text of the SVS, to satisfy the authorities, such as the "no-drop" policy and Jewish heritage, which "*I am obliged to include...because I 'work for them,' so to speak*" (my emphasis – N.M.), demonstrating again the issues associated with the way of constructing her vision statement.

The head-teacher placed the blame for the apparent gap between the ideal description of the school vision and the reality on the authorities (the standards by which the school is assessed), on the parents ("they are not aware of the added value of the school

education") and on the students ("all they are interested in is academic achievement"). To a certain extent, she even blames the teachers ("they pushed towards achievement, but the school management would not allow it").

At this point, one can cautiously identify a lack of clarity – if not a latent negative attitude – among some of School A's teachers regarding the term 'vision statement' in general (what it should be), and as to School A's vision statement in particular (what it actually is). Some of the teachers, as well as students, seem unable to connect to it. The reason for this is unclear. Based on the research literature (Allan, 2001), it may be attributed to the process of creating the school's SVS, or to the way it is disseminated.

All this gives rise to further exploration of further possible gaps between School A's formal SVS and its culture, as well as whether or not such gaps will be found in Schools B and C. When asked to rate their familiarity with their School Vision Statement on a scale of 0-5, the average score of both teachers and parents was rather high: 3.5 (except for one parent and one teacher, who admitted from the start that they knew nothing of its contents); students' average score was 0.6. Nevertheless, when asked to elaborate about the values underpinning the SVS, the terms 'excellence' and 'realisation of students' potential' dominated the statements of teachers, parents and students – even though these values are not explicitly mentioned in the SVS.

The table on the next page sums up the comparison between stakeholders' perceptions of the SVS as stated in response to a request to mention at least three values in the formal document:

School Vision Statement	Teachers	Students	Parents
1. The school, via its teachers, shall impart knowledge, as well as information management and classification skills.	Research Skills and Knowledge (Rachel)		Learning Skills (Jerry)
2. The school shall act as a socialisation agent for its students, as well as constitute a framework for social interaction.			
3. The school shall instill moral values, tolerance, open-mindedness, impartiality, fairness, and reliability in its students.	Pluralism and Multi-Cultural Orientation; Tolerance and Equality (David)		
4. The school shall foster independence and curiosity in its students, encourage creative thinking, long-term planning proficiencies, mnemonic faculties, and time-planning capabilities.			
5. The school shall attend to the emotional needs of every student, as well as nurture emotional intelligence aptitudes: cooperation, self-confidence, [positive] self-image, and self-reflection		"There is <i>no reference</i> to students' emotional needs" (Gadi)	
6. The school shall form a stimulating and rich environment, one which inspires a culture of excellence, creativity, originality, and critical thinking		"There is <i>no effort</i> to induce critical thinking" (Joseph - S)	

**Table 4.5: Values Underpinning School A's Vision Statement vs. Their Perception by Stakeholders**



Given their declared high self-assessed familiarity rate, one would expect that both teachers and parents to be able to mention at least three values underlying the SVS. In reality, only two teachers and one parent mentioned one value that actually appears in the SVS. The majority of the values underpinning the document are totally ignored. It is important to bear in mind that the two main values that all the stakeholders agree upon ('excellence' and 'realisation of student potential') are not mentioned in the written, formal SVS. The following chart illustrates values mentioned by the stakeholders *not* mentioned in the SVS:

<b>Values</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
Excellence and Realisation of Students' Potential	David, Rachel ("High academic achievements"); Miriam ("Matriculation scores"); Rina ("Academic achievements"), Noa, Dana ("Academic achievements")	Gadi ("Science and technology"); Ronnie ("Academic achievement"); Mali, Joseph ("Academic achievements")	Dan, Jerry
Social and Civic Values	Rachel ("Social involvement"); Miriam, Rina ("commitment to the environment and society")	Jerry ("social values")	
Zero Tolerance toward Violence			Nathan

**Table 4.6: Values Mentioned by Stakeholders Yet Not Present in the SVS**

#### **4.2.5 Sharing the School Vision with Stakeholders**

As substantiated in the Literature Review, both theory and research regarding organisational vision maintain that a major prerequisite for an effective vision statement is its being shared with the stakeholders of the organisation (Pawar & Eastman, 1997; Barnett & McCormick, 2003; Lightwood & Riehl, 2003; Margolis & Hansen, 2003;

Kurland et al., 2010). The following section deals with the issue of sharing the SVS (or lack thereof) with stakeholders in School A.

The reports of all interviewed School A stakeholders reflect poor familiarity with the values comprising their SVS. This may be due to the fact that (according to their testimony) they were not involved in any process of either drafting or revising the SVS, nor were they invited to discuss it in any forum.

This lack of sharing is reported openly by the participants across the board. Only one teacher in School A, Rachel, was involved in drafting the SVS in the past ("and we have not dealt with it for a long time," she notes). All the other participants (teachers, parents and students) reported they did not contribute to it in any way, nor were they ever asked to. Moreover, two of the teachers (Noa, Dana – T), as well as all the interviewed parents and all 5 students, stated that they had never laid eyes on the written text of the SVS. No organised routine of informing the stakeholders about the SVS seems to exist.

School A's head-teacher made three statements concerning the involvement of the stakeholders in matters regarding the sharing of the SVS: (1) It was drafted by the management staff; (2) "[It] is discussed every time a pedagogical issue arises;" and, (3) "The SVS has been changed several times."

The first statement seems correct, as none of the other stakeholders (teachers, parents and students) testified to taking part in the process of drafting the SVS. The lack of sharing with the stakeholders is also reflected in the head-teacher's description of her initiative to draft the document for her school (see pp. 116-7 above), ignoring the possibility of involving the stakeholders. It seems that sharing is not part of the head-teacher's way of running the school.

Nevertheless, information gleaned from the stakeholders hardly reflects the two latter statements. Regarding the second statement (frequent discussion of the SVS in school forums), I found very little evidence for this. Despite declarations like "the values of the SVS run in our veins" (David – T), or "we do not mention the term 'vision', but we often refer to the values of the SVS " (Rina – T), most teachers found it difficult to point out a certain forum in which the document had been referred to. Two of the six teachers (Rachel, Noa – T) mentioned the beginning of the school year as an appropriate opportunity for the head-teacher to include matters concerning the SVS in her speech (speech – not discussion); one teacher (Miriam – T) claimed that the document was referenced in management forums – but none of the other teachers corroborated this claim. Four of the six teachers could not recall an occasion in which it had been brought up: "[It] has not been mentioned or referred to as such for many years" (David – T); "It is hardly ever mentioned" (Rina – T); "I cannot remember a forum in which it has been mentioned [...] In all my [four] years at school I remember only two occasions in which the School Vision has been referred to" (Noa – T).

Of the students who participated in the present study, all five stated that "the SVS has never been discussed in any forum that I have participated in." Gadi and Joseph insisted that it had never been brought to the table in the Students' Council meetings they attended. Some of the students (Mali, Ronnie – S) indicated that the SVS is usually referred to for PR purposes (also corroborated by one of the parents, Dan – P). The head-teacher mentioned frequent meetings with the Students' Council; but, based on the answers by the students concerning the meetings they attended, it was hardly ever been discussed in those meetings.

The parents' answers to the question about their contribution to the SVS seem to relate to their general perception of the issue of the school management relationship with the stakeholders. Nathan assures us that "issues from the SVS are frequently discussed in PTA meetings," but this statement appears to express mere wishful thinking;

immediately afterwards, when asked about the implementation of values from the School Vision Statement in the school activity, he states that this issue "is not brought to the attention of the PTA." In his view, the PTA should not deal with values, since its only role is to "help finance extra-curricular activities and represent the school *vis-à-vis* the authorities." Jerry, on the other hand, expressed a strong wish that, "the SVS should be revised and discussed frequently in PTA meetings and changed from time to time." Jerry's statement and Nathan's view indicate that PTA meetings with the school management deal mostly with financial and administrative issues.

For the sake of fairness, based on my own experience in the educational system, I find it appropriate at this stage to conjecture that the responses of the parents may be a reflection of the way in which the school staff usually tends to view parental involvement – as 'assistants' in organizing non-academic activities and dealing with financial aspects of the organisation, rather than being involved in academic or value-related matters.

As for the statement about the constant changes to the SVS (which is confirmed by only one of the teachers, Miriam – T), the head-teacher herself refutes it in her answer to another question: "The School Vision Statement has been revised several times, but only minor issues in it ['nuances' was her exact term] were changed. The core values have not been changed." As mentioned above, the reports of the stakeholders support the latter statement: the SVS has, in effect, not been revised over the years.

To sum up all the above, it appears that School A's stakeholders are for the most part detached from the SVS and the values it embodies. This issue will be discussed in detail in the closing section of this chapter.

#### **4.2.6 School Vision Implementation**

Another aspect of the issue of relevance (or lack thereof) of the SVS to school life is an assessment of the extent of its implementation in the school's daily routine. Researchers across the board agree almost unanimously that a vision statement ought to be clearly articulated, shared with the staff of the organisation and implemented in the everyday activities of the organisation. "A lot of organisations have vision statements, but most of these statements seem irrelevant when you look at the organisation and where it is going" (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004). In other words, vision should not be regarded as an empty statement. Rather, it should reflect the organisation's common aims and aspirations, and serve as a platform for decision-making in the organisation.

In answer to the question about the implementation of the SVS in school activity, the head-teacher declared that the school work-plan reflects its values, and that the school management conducts a revision process every year. This latter part of her statement was confirmed by some of the teachers (David, Rina – T), whereas the first part remains untested. In answer to the same question, a teacher (David – T) said that "the School Vision Statement is implemented all the time. All school activity is in accordance with the School Vision." Having examined the answers of School A stakeholders concerning the implementation issue, one cannot help but wonder whether this statement reflects reality, or is merely wishful thinking.

In order to address this question, in the following paragraphs I selected 4 core values from the written SVS, and examined them against stakeholders' answers to the question regarding the implementation of these core values. [The SVS of School A is presented in various school publications as follows – accurately translated by me – N.M.):

- (1) **Values:** Personal Excellence; Dignity; Involvement, Commitment and Responsibility; Patriotism; Identity and Heritage.

Whereas the term 'personal excellence,' as it appears in the formal SVS of School A, is comprehensive and consists of personal, social and national values, it is interpreted by most teachers as the student's level of academic achievement, mainly their scores in the national final matriculation exams, the *Bagrut*. This statement is demonstrated in detail in the section Excellence and Realisation of Students' Potential. Personal excellence in the sense of academic achievement seems central to school activity, with other values marginalised. Students and parents confirmed the teachers' perceptions. Most mentioned 'excellence' as a dominant value the school strives to inculcate: "The role of school is to lead us towards high achievements in the final exams. This part is implemented, whereas the personal aspects are neglected" (Gadi – S). The parents agree that the main role of school is to instill knowledge.

Only a few teachers mention moral and social values, beside the emphasis on academic achievement: Miriam (T) mentions civic values such as commitment, sharing, and Jewish heritage as part of history lessons at school: "We explain a lot. We convey the message through words" (One wonders whether talking and implementing are the same); David (T) and Rina (T) bring examples of democratic and liberal values (acceptance of the other), noting that at School A they accept students of various nationalities and religions. Dana (T) describes outdoor activities that focus on team work and cooperation, such as field trips and camping. Some teachers also mention the fact that the students are obligated to undertake a set amount of voluntary work in the community; but this is common to all high schools in Israel, and follows a directive of the Ministry of Education.

However, most stakeholders repeatedly refer to 'personal excellence' and 'realisation of student potential' as the main core values which are put to practice in School A, which is

clearly not the intention reflected in the SVS. These are the two values that, according to most stakeholders across the board, are the focus of the school activity.

Except for one teacher (Dana – T) who described a variety of social activities as a means to acquire 'social experience,' and a teacher (Miriam – T) who mentioned 'commitment' (to what?), none of these values were mentioned in all other answers given by teachers to the question about the values that are implemented in the school. Dana (T) also cited tolerance and endurance, independence, curiosity and emotional intelligence as values nurtured by some of the teachers, but not as a part of school policy.

(2) **Skills:** Social-Emotional Skills: Development of Accountability; Development of Personal and Interpersonal Communication; Leadership; Learning Skills: Research skills; Creative and Critical-Systematic Thinking; Derivation of New Knowledge (based on existing knowledge).

Almost none of the social-emotional values above finds expression in the statements of School A's stakeholders about school activities. The only attempt at implementing these values that they refer to is what is called "the new format of Teachers-parents conference." This new format, which had been piloted in the school for several years, is intended to encourage accountability and reflexivity among the students. This new format comprises self-assessment statements by the students of their progress, concurrent with teacher assessment statements. Both statements are sent to the parents before the meeting with the year teacher, and the compatibility (or lack thereof) between them is discussed during the meeting with the student, parents and the teacher.

Some of the teachers were rather enthusiastic about this new format: Rachel (T) mentioned that the students are guided towards 'auto-education' and 'self-appraisal,' whereas David (T) referred to this new format in connection the concept of excellence.

Noa (T) described this new initiative as an opportunity to give voice to the individual student, who is described by her as 'transparent.' At the same time, it was criticized mainly for two reasons: Noa (T) felt that only a few parents expressed interest in what the student thinks or feels. Most of them wanted to learn about their children's academic achievements and nothing else. Noa also felt that the school management did not invest the time and energy needed to learn from this experience. "The main issue," she commented rather cynically "was the commotion around it." Another problem lies in the procedure itself: Lots of papers exchanging hands, whereas a simple technological solution could have saved a lot of work for all those involved (relating also to the issue of relevance).

The value of Learning Skills in the SVS, which comprises Research Skills, Creative and Critical-Systematic Thinking and Inference of New Knowledge from existing knowledge, was hardly referred to by the teachers of School A in the context of the school practice. One teacher (Dana – T) mentioned the wide range of topics offered to the students as an example of "knowledge and skills." Nevertheless, a reservation followed straight away: "The main issue is academic achievement" (Noa – T). In relation to the intended inference of new knowledge in the SVS, Noa (T) states that, "in my school the main focus is on the transmission of knowledge," which seems to be quite the opposite of the inference of new knowledge from existing knowledge. Two more values are emphasized by some of the teachers as being implemented in their school culture: Pluralism (David, Rina – T) and team-work (Noa – T) – two values which (important as they may be) are not mentioned in the SVS.

As described in detail above, the students do not share the teachers' views. As might be expected, they are the ones who detected the lack of learning skills in the school curriculum. While the teachers make an effort to come up with examples of skills that are part of the curriculum, the students demonstrate a totally different perspective: to them, the main objective of the school practice is information and information-processing.



In both items above, we see clearly the gap, from the perspective of the stakeholders, between what is articulated in the SVS and its implementation in school life.

(3) **The Accomplished Graduate:** A graduate who is a whole person, committed to his/her Jewish heritage and Israeli identity, self-directed, who is able and willing to be responsible for his/her learning and utile functioning in a modern democratic society, complex, entangled, permissive and changing – under conditions of lack of confidence and certainty about the future.

As aforementioned, the portrait of the accomplished graduate, specified at length in the SVS, is mentioned by four of the six teachers who participated in the research, though in a very ambivalent manner: Rachel (T), obviously well-versed in the contents of her SVS, quoted almost the exact words of the document concerning this issue: "A student who is first and foremost a human being, curious about his environment, has self-learning skills, contributes to the community, helpful and attentive to the needs of society." However, when asked to specify what is being done in the school towards this worthy cause, she repeats the text of the SVS, but without practical examples, thus casting doubts about her first unequivocal statements. Another teacher, Miriam (T), also mentioned the image of the accomplished graduate. But, she also noted: "Mainly goals which are dictated by the Israeli Ministry of Education i.e. to lead every student towards a qualitative matriculation certificate, which is a prerequisite for higher education." The third teacher, Noa, who admitted unfamiliarity with her SVS, does still remember some sporadic citations of statements which were mentioned in various contexts during staff meetings – mainly about the ideal graduate the school aspires to cultivate. But she is unclear about what it means exactly. Noa said she would be happy if there was some mention of attention to the individual student in the SVS, but she does not really know whether this topic is actually mentioned or not. Rina (T) remembers three values that are prominent in her SVS, the first being the accomplished graduate the school aspires to educate. But when asked about the implementation of this value in the school culture, she referred mainly to excellence in the sense of matriculation scores.

(4) **Organisational Vision:** An Educational institute which imparts values in the due course of teaching and ongoing school life, as well as providing cognitive tools and non-coercive knowledge. An institute which upholds moral conduct and whose teachers serve as a source of inspiration and identification.

Item (4), quoted above, sums up of the kind of educational institution School A aspires to be. Nevertheless, the results above suggest that a large part of this is lost in the school's everyday life. It certainly has no bearing on the educational philosophy of the head-teacher ("the school is expected to inculcate our beliefs and professional knowledge – everything the students will need in the future but do not know it yet") quoted in full above.

Summing up the responses to the question of implementation, the realistic picture drawn by School A stakeholders is one of constant emphasis on academic achievement, which distorts the original intent of the written SVS. In the term "personal excellence" the SVS is associated specifically with personal and social values, such as dignity, involvement, commitment and responsibility, loyalty to one's homeland, identity and heritage – definitely not mere academic achievements.

The implementation of the SVS is one of the basic standards of a viable vision. In School A, this is not the case, given the wide gap between the SVS and its implementation. One of the teachers (Rina – T) described this gap saying that "there is lack of compatibility between the SVS and its implementation." What is implemented is an alternative, oral vision.

## 4.2.7 Leadership Style

### 4.2.7.1 Role Perception

The impression from the head-teacher's statements and conduct, as outlined above, is that she sees herself and the management staff as the origin of knowledge and professional authority. Hence, she appears to advocate the transmission model of education, through which teachers transmit factual knowledge to students via lectures and textbooks (Saavedra & Opfer, 2013). She acknowledges the need to cater for the students' needs – but on her terms. Presenting a paternalistic stance, she believes she knows what they need for their future, she knows what values should be inculcated and what skills should be taught, whereas "the students do not know it yet."

School A's SVS, and specifically its drafting, clearly reflect the head-teacher's views: It is *her* vision, which is based on *her* educational philosophy, which *she* imparts with the stakeholders, and she expects them to abide by these. The data suggests that her vision is the engine that sets the organisation in motion, and in terms of outcomes, most successfully so. This offers a probable explanation for the teachers' and parents' tractable response: one does not argue with proven success. On the other hand, it might explain the students' detachment from the school and its vision: they are not part of the system and do not belong, and therefore it is easier for them to protest against it.

The head-teacher's state of mind finds expression in her wording choice. Already in the answer to the first question ("Why does your school have a Vision Statement?") the frequent use of the first person is noticeable: "Everything *I* do or think is vision-guided. All *my* decisions, *my* boundaries, the goals *I* strive to achieve and the way *I* run the school – all these stem from *my* vision" (my emphasis – N.M.). Apart from the fact that this answer is rather removed from my question, the first impression is of a very self-centred view of the head-teacher's role. (For the sake of comparison, the head-teachers in Stemler's (2011) study referred to above, mentioned three primary reasons for a formal statement of a school's Vision: (1) To fulfill a bureaucratic requirement; (2) To

foster a dialogue among key stakeholders; (3) To communicate to the world the result of the deliberations with the stakeholders). The head-teacher's statement implies that she believes that the School Vision is *her* vision, co-existing with the formal SVS. She demonstrates full identification with the oral, informal School Vision, shaped by her objectives: the stress on excellence and academic achievement, and the augmentation of the school's reputation, which is the focal point of it all. Two major traits of her managerial philosophy as well as her practice of running the school indicate that she is inclined to being an instructional leader: the head-teacher's accountability, and the emphasis on measurable student outcomes.

#### **4.2.7.2 Head-Teacher's Leadership Style**

The leadership style and headship practices of School A's head-teacher portray her as an instructional leader, whereas the school's academic achievements (embodied in the high matriculation scores) justify considering her an effective one. To her credit, the head-teacher is goal-oriented, a quality which has been described as characteristic of effective leaders.

The main traits of instructional leaders, as specified in the research literature, are their ability to establish clear educational goals, to plan the curriculum and to evaluate teachers and teaching, focusing primarily on the students' measurable outcomes (Day et al., 2016). This characterization seems to apply almost unreservedly to the head-teacher's leadership practice, as it is described by the stakeholders and by the head-teacher herself. A rather dominant and consensual culture of academic pressure appears to thrive at School A, underneath the value-guided statements of the SVS. As shown before, the school work-plan (which, according to the head-teacher's statement is the practical manifestation of the school agenda) is dedicated primarily to the enhancement of academic achievements; the management staff endeavours to create monitoring mechanisms of weak links among the teachers; support systems are offered to less abled students to help improve their achievements. The students' statements confirm this suggestion, and some of them even go as far as to identify with it, stating that they

chose this school because it is known for its high matriculation scores. The majority of the teachers and parents accept this concept of the school role, and approve of it.

Like typical instructional leaders, the head-teacher may be described as a hands-on leader, unafraid to work directly with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning, and relying on her obvious expertise and charisma. She is involved in managerial roles as coordinating, controlling, supervising and developing curriculum and instruction. This reminds us of the head-teacher's role perception as described above, and is corroborated by teachers' statements about the central role she fulfills at school.

Effective leadership is described in the literature as consisting of three core components: principal leadership, community partnership, and organisational development (Sanders, 2016). It seems that in the head-teacher's case the first component is highlighted, whereas the other two are somewhat pushed aside. Generally, the main part of the principal's role is shaping the school's direction through vision and goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). In School A's case, this feature takes an interesting turn: The formal SVS, comprising a range of humanistic and social values, is practically ignored, whereas an alternative vision, directed towards student academic outcomes, takes its place. This issue will be discussed in the next chapters.

### **4.3 Analysis: Striking Features of School A**

Five themes emerged during the analysis process phases of the data gathered in School A. Each theme consists of a dichotomous combination of clustered linguistic phrases:

- (1) Ideal vs. Reality
- (2) Academic Excellence vs. Social/Civic Values
- (3) Involvement vs. Detachment
- (4) Relevance vs. Irrelevance
- (5) Identification (or Solidarity) vs. Dismissal: A Cognitive Dissonance

These themes were further explored in the context of the relevant research literature. In the following section, I shall examine the themes that emerged from the analysis of the various stakeholders' reports of their perceptions of School A's SVS against three dimensions: Content, attributes and role in school. The same procedure will be later applied to Schools B and C.

#### **4.3.1 Ideal vs. Reality**

The vision statement of every organisation, whether for-profit or non-profit, is liable to provide a unifying framework, as the values it comprises are expected to be shared by its stakeholders. The picture drawn from the interviews of School A's stakeholders is remarkably different. Their perceptions of their School Vision Statement suggest a series of gaps in and between the various stakeholders' groups, indicating diversity rather than unity.

In regard to the content of the SVS, there is a gap between the theoretical perspective of what a vision should be like ('ideal') and the actual SVS of their school ('reality'). As

detailed above, staff and parents of School A perceived the concept of "vision" as a set of guidelines which should serve as a platform for school activity. They use the terms 'credo,' 'cause,' 'direction,' 'achievable value-guided goals,' 'work-plan,' 'strategic goals,' and 'road-map' to describe their association with the term 'vision.' Moreover, an air of reverence is attached to it, using the words like summit, aspiration, 'something spiritual,' and a 'visionary strategic basis for the school activity.'

However, a more careful examination of staff and the parents' statements regarding their SVS reveals a gap between the allegedly unified idealistic view of the statement and its reality. Some of them complain about it being too general and impractical, whereas others go as far as to describe it as euphemistic and pompous. Another critique refers to the focus on academic learning rather than on values. The head-teacher herself implies that to a certain extent, the SVS was designed to please the authorities, as it defines the school goals in a more "elegant" way, as well as containing objectives – not necessarily acceptable to the school management – dictated by the authorities.

The gap described above is magnified by the distance between the adult stakeholders' views and the students' perception of the School Vision. It seems that at least some of the parents and teachers "talk the talk", feeling the need to show loyalty towards their school. The students, on the other hand, are open and straight forward. They describe the School Vision as lip-service and a PR device, mere catch phrases designed to please the authorities and/or raise more money. The overall air of their statements about the School Vision is one of dismissal and disrespect, far from the awe expressed by some of the adult stakeholders of their school.

All the above refutes the semblance of unity and collective commitment of School A's stakeholders towards their SVS, instead giving rise to further exploration of additional possible gaps between School A's formal SVS and its culture, as well as whether such gaps exist at Schools B and C.

### 4.3.2 Academic Excellence vs. Social and Civic Values

Nearly all the teachers, students and parents agree that the two main values are 'excellence,' in the sense of academic achievement, and 'realisation of student potential.' These two values require elaboration regarding how they are interpreted by the various stakeholders. The students unanimously translate them into 'academic achievements,' with no doubts that "the role of school is mainly to teach" (Gadi, Ronnie, Mali – S), as do the parents. Most of the teachers acknowledge the equation 'excellence' = 'academic achievement' and bring examples of how central this principle is in school life: Miriam (T) described an organised follow-up mechanism for the detection of weak links among the teachers regarding their students' achievements ("it is the responsibility of the teachers," she said). Similarly, Rina (T) described a monitoring system, which enables the school management to map the students' academic achievement.

At the same time, not all the teachers felt comfortable with the focus on academic achievements. Social skills, a sense of security and commitment to team work are some of the goals the teachers considered prior to academic achievement within the broader meaning of the term 'human being.' One teacher (Miriam – T) apologised for the emphasis on grades, blaming it on the dictate of the authorities.

As elaborated above, the teachers and the parents feel rather confident about their familiarity with their School Vision Statement. A closer examination of this issue refutes this feeling. As can be seen from the table (see Table 4.2, pp. 108-9), there is hardly any compatibility between the values they attribute to the School Vision and the values that actually underpin it. The two main values all the stakeholders agree upon ('excellence' and 'realisation of student potential') are not used in the written, formal SVS as such, but appear to be dominant in the school culture, to the point that it constitutes a parallel, oral vision statement, which guides the decision-making process and is shared with the stakeholders rather the formal written SVS.



The above supports the notion that there is a substantial gap between the values declared in the formal, written SVS of School A, and the perceptions most stakeholders have of it. Such a gap may present a problem in the context of the first and the second of the three dimensions essential to every effective vision statement: Vision Content, and its sharing with the stakeholders.

### **4.3.3 Involvement vs. Detachment**

Both Educational theory and research regarding organisational vision agree that a viable school vision is expected to create a sense of purpose that binds employees together and propels them to fulfill their deepest aspirations and to reach for ambitious goals. The following section deals with the issue of sharing the SVS (or not) with the stakeholders of School A. Furthermore, the inspirational strength of a vision depends on the extent to which it appears to be relevant to a particular context, i.e. the degree to which it reflects the interests and characteristics not only of the stakeholders, but also of the organisation.

This does not seem to be the case in School A. The reports of all stakeholders at School A reflect poor familiarity with the values embodied in their SVS. One may speculate that it is because they were not involved in any process of either drafting the SVS and/or revising it, nor were they invited to discuss it in any forum.

Based on the evidence found in the interviews with the stakeholders, School A's vision statement has not been revised or changed since its initial drafting. This is not to say that major changes could or should be entered in the SVS every year; but a process of revisiting it with the stakeholders may add to its relevance to them and to their commitment towards it. In their testimonies, most of School A's stakeholders expressed the wish to be given the chance to discuss the SVS and contribute to it.

Consequently, the school's stakeholders abide by it, but are not committed to it, because it does not reflect their own views and ideals. This seems applicable to both allegedly existing School Visions: The formal SVS (which they are not familiar with) and the dominant oral SV (which they do not agree with).

In summary, for the most part School A stakeholders are detached from the formal SVS and the values it embodies. The students admit rather bluntly that they regard the SVS as outdated and obsolete, with no relevance to their school life. The teachers and the parents seemed uneasy about acknowledging the gap between their declarations of commitment to the SVS and the role it played in school life in reality. This issue will be discussed in detail in the closing part of this chapter.

#### **4.3.4 Relevance vs. Irrelevance**

School A's SVS, to a large extent, reflects the head-teacher's perception of the role of schooling. When asked about her view of the role of school, the head-teacher emphasised the attendance to what she considers the students' needs, e.g. skills such as knowledge, time-management skills, mnemotechnic faculties, self-discipline, training and practice. In her view these skills will prove useful for the students in the future. The students, she says, are not aware of it yet, whereas the experienced adults already know.

Indeed, a major role of school is to prepare the students for adult life. Nevertheless, the world is changing rapidly, and educators must respond by preparing their students for the society in which they will work and live. Therefore, the perspective expressed by the head-teacher in relation to this issue, as well as School A's SVS, seem to reflect a rather outdated and irrelevant perspective towards education in the modern world regarding two main aspects:

(a) The main asset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century educational system was knowledge, suited to an industrial mode of production; developments in society and economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century require that educational systems equip young people with new skills and competencies. A group of more than 250 researchers across 60 institutions worldwide has categorized 21<sup>st</sup> century skills internationally into four broad categories (atc21s, 2014):

- **Ways of Thinking:** Creativity, Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Decision-Making, and Learning.
- **Ways of Working:** Communication and Collaboration.
- **Tools for Working:** Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Information Literacy.
- **Skills for Living in the World:** Citizenship, Life and Career, and Personal and Social Responsibility.

Some of the terms mentioned here do appear in School A's SVS, but unfortunately do not find expression in the school curriculum and culture – as demonstrated above in the section dealing with implementation.

(b) Another aspect in the statement of the head-teacher that seems doubtful concerns the role of the students in the learning process. The head-teacher's attitude is one of a "top down" nature, whereas the prevailing perspective of the educational research is ecological in nature. The main principle involved is that learning depends on the activity and the initiative of the learner, more so than on any "inputs" that are transmitted to the learner by a teacher or a textbook. Instead of relying on standards of learning imposed by others, students learn to rely on themselves, to challenge

themselves, to work with and for each other for goals they have themselves deemed worthy, thus amplifying their cognitive and emotional development towards improved outcomes.

In light of all the above, the head-teacher's pretension to be able to predict the future in terms of the present (or even the past), and the School Vision values reflecting it, seem archaic (if not presumptuous). Somewhat ironically, the students are the ones who, when shown it, point out the irrelevance of the SVS to their school life. Gadi and Joseph (S) complained that the school does not teach long-term learning and critical thinking, and that the teachers do not attend to the students' emotional needs. Ronnie (S) assumed that the SVS was drafted a long time ago and therefore less relevant to the present school population. Yael (S) discards it altogether, describing the SVS as empty vague catch-phrases that mean nothing. Among the teachers, Noa (T) and Dana (T) agree with the students that, in School A, little attention is given to the emotional needs of the students, and they stress the lack of collective learning and social skills. In their view, the aspiration for a graduate who is a "whole human being" is reduced to academic achievements.

School A's SVS is therefore conceived by its stakeholders as irrelevant, which surely adds to their reluctance to connect to it and their lack of motivation to implement it – the third dimension of an effective vision statement, pointed out in the research literature (Blanchard & Stoner, 2004; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Van Houtte, 2005; Higgs & McMillan, 2010; Widdowson et al., 2015; McClees, 2016).

#### **4.3.5 Identification vs. Dismissal**

Another aspect regarding the relevance (or lack thereof) of the SVS to the school life would be to assess the extent of its implementation in the school's daily activity. To this aim, I explored several resources.

First I examined the school work-plan, which is revised annually by the school management and constitutes the basis for the school's self-assessment. In the work-plan 13 out of a list of 14 central objectives deal with academic achievements, whereas only one objective refers to the contribution to the community. This does not seem to be in the spirit of the SVS. A vast majority of the subjects which are dealt with in the work-plan booklet, including detailed statistical data, deal with exam scores and ways of improving them. A small part of it is dedicated to the inculcation of Jewish heritage as well as to students' final projects (20 students out of 1,500!), which seem to reflect to some extent the values underpinning the SVS. Surely, there is nothing wrong with concentrating on learning results. The problem seems to be the disparity between what the declaration and the practice.

Stakeholders' statements regarding the four core values of School A's SVS were also analysed, and the results were unequivocal. On the term 'personal excellence,' comprising personal, social and civic values, all three stakeholder groups (teachers, students, and parents) agreed that in everyday school life, it is interpreted mostly as academic excellence. The main role of school is high achievement in the final exams. Human values (e.g. commitment, sharing, volunteer work and Jewish heritage) are mentioned by the teachers, but according to the teachers' statements, they seem to be peripheral, secondary to the main objective. Of the list of 'social-emotional skills,' almost none of its components find expression in the stakeholders' description of school activity. 'Research skills' were hardly referred to by the majority of the stakeholders. Merely 'transmission of knowledge' and 'information and information-processing' are described by teachers and students as the dominant teaching technique.

The above analysis confirms the assumption of the existence of a gap between what is articulated in the SVS, and its implementation in school life as seen through the eyes of the stakeholders. The reality of School A's life, as reflected in the stakeholders' observations, is very different from that declared in the SVS. The school is described by

its stakeholders as an institution that systematically places great emphasis on academic achievements, very far from the original intent expressed in School A's SVS. One of the teachers (Rina – T) described this gap by saying that "there is a lack of compatibility between the School Vision Statement and its implementation." What is implemented is the alternative oral vision, the School Vision.

#### **4.3.6 Conclusion: An Alternative Oral School Vision**

In the examples mentioned above, there is convincing support for my initial supposition about the gap between School A's stakeholders' perceptions of their SVS and its formal iteration, as to all the dimensions of a viable SVS suggested in the literature: its core values, its sharing with the stakeholders and implementation in the school culture.

These gaps gave rise to the speculation that in fact there is an alternative, oral Vision Statement in School A, more dominant than the formal written SVS and which serves as a platform for actual school activity.

This particular situation creates a problem for some of the school stakeholders. All the stakeholders (particularly members of the school staff), when asked about their association with the term 'vision statement' in general, were aware of the fact that the SVS should be taken seriously and acted upon. They mentioned words like 'direction,' 'goals,' 'road-map,' 'compass,' etc., which indicates that they understood the meaning of the term. This created a cognitive dissonance between their understanding of the importance of the SVS to the school and to the educational system as a whole, while they themselves feel detached and even at times opposed to it.

To resolve this conflict, the teachers found ways to circumvent their lack of attachment to their School Vision, mainly by using bypass expressions which describe the SVS as a vague influence, an abstract entity whose fragments inspire thoughts and actions in an

indirect way, but which cannot be articulated or implemented. For comparison sake, the phrase "the issue of excellence is raised in every meeting" (David – T) was expressed in what seems a rather decisive and tangible tone. The analysis of the parents' interviews reveals a similar attitude: The SVS is very important, but it is unrealistic to expect its implementation. The students, or rather most of them, express distrust concerning the SVS and disillusionment with the possibility that it will be implemented.

Wishful thinking also seems to play a part in the effort to untangle this awkward situation of what seems to constitute a cognitive dissonance. Teachers referred to the mutability of the SVS, but these statements are clearly not accurate, given that it had not been updated or revised since its creation, and there is only a single incidence of actual referral to it. Although the SVS is not on display anywhere on school grounds, it does appear in the school publications and website, suggesting (as hinted by some stakeholders) that it plays a part in the school marketing and PR procedures, but is not directed at teachers and students.

All the above was intended to provide the reader with a rich description of School A as seen through the lens of the stakeholders. School A will be more closely discussed in the framework of the research questions in the cross case analysis (see Chapter 7, pp. 246-92 below), with additional broader perspectives drawn from the findings from School B and C.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS FROM SCHOOL B**

### **5.1 Background**

#### **5.1.1 Introduction**

The second school examined in this research (henceforth referred to as School B) is a highly rated, award-winning institute. The school is situated in a middle-class neighbourhood of Tel-Aviv, and caters mostly for the local community.

#### **5.1.2 Sources of Information**

Data about School B were obtained from school publications, stakeholders' interviews, the school website, the local press and the internet. Information about the head-teacher was derived mainly from his own interview and deduced from his overt conduct. Because he was reluctant to talk about himself during the interview – using for the most part 'we' rather than 'I' – data were complemented from the sources mentioned above.

#### **5.1.3 Demographic Details of School B Participants**

School B's management team was asked to present a list of interview candidates, characterised mainly for their assumed familiarity with school activity (prominent teachers, PTA members and Student Council's members). I approached each stakeholder by telephone, and met with those who consented to be interviewed. Five teachers, three PTA members, and five Student Council members (age 16-18) were interviewed. More details about sampling and the nature of the interviews can be found in the Methodology Chapter (pp. 77-84). Demographic details of the participants are presented in the tables below:



### 5.1.3.1 Staff

Alias	F/M	Age	Education	Tenure (at School B)	Comments
Michael	M	62	MA	32 (16)	Head-Teacher
Gabby	F	27	BA	3 (3)	
Deborah	F	45	BA	18 (2)	
Susanna	F	52	MA	27 (18)	Vice Head-Teacher
Rebecca	F	48	BA	22 (20)	
Fay	F	30	BA	2 (1)	

**Table 5.1: Demographic Data of School B's Staff**

### 5.1.3.2 Students

Alias	F/M	Age	Years at School B	Major Subject	Student Council Role	Parents' Education
Daniel	M	17.5	2	Physics, Arabic	Member	Mother - BA Father - High-School Diploma
Dalia	F	18	3	Biology, Film-Making	Member	Father - BA Mother - MA
Avital	F	17.5	3	Talmud, Theatre	–	Mother & Father - High-School Diploma
Meira	F	18	3	Theatre, Biology	Member	Father - BA Mother - MA
Ariel	F	17	2	Theatre, Mathematics, English	Member	Mother - BA Father - High-School Diploma

**Table 5.2: Demographic Data of School B's Students**

### 5.1.3.3 Parents

Alias	F/M	Age	Occupation	Education	PTA	Comments
Gabriel	M	44	Finance	MA	Chairman - 3 Years	1 <sup>st</sup> child at School A
Iris	F	42	Teacher	MA	Member	1 <sup>st</sup> child at School A
Ruth	F	43	Insurance	Professional Certificate	Member	1 <sup>st</sup> child at School A

**Table 5.3: Demographic Data of School B's Parents**

### 5.1.4 School History

The school was established as a private institute in 1920 by two teachers, a literature and Bible teacher and a mathematics teacher. In its first years, the school operated from rented apartments, then moved to a permanent site. 36 students, studying literature, biology and mathematics, were in the first graduating class of 1922. School staff at that time included students on the verge of completing their own academic studies. Many of the teachers and students went on to become prominent figures in the worlds of politics and academia.

A two-year interruption aside, the school functioned as a private institution until 1959, when it was registered as a municipal school. In the 1990s, it moved to its present location, and the present head-teacher has been in office since then. Following a massive building wave, the working-class demographic composition of the school changed, with students now coming mainly from middle socio-economic class families. A small percentage are new immigrants from the Soviet Union, who study in a separate class. School B presently caters for around 800 students in 24 classes. At the time of the research, the school was comprised of high school forms (Years 9-12) only, but was preparing for the gradual introduction of junior-high classes. The data collected for this study refers only to high-school classes.

### **5.1.5 School Facilities**

School B's facilities include a library, six science labs and a lecture auditorium. Sports facilities include indoor basketball and volleyball courts, and outdoor courts for soccer, basketball, handball and table tennis. The school facilities are well-maintained. On the school website, there is information about school activities and the School Vision.

### **5.1.6 School Staff**

School B employs 100 teachers, most of whom work across all year groups. In common with most schools in Israel, 80% of the teachers are female, the male staff teaching mainly mathematics, computer sciences and sport. The vast majority of the teachers are between 30 and 40 years old, and all have academic degrees (BA and MA).

### **5.1.7 School Atmosphere**

Having spent time in the school interviewing a sample of the stakeholders, I was impressed by the distinct atmosphere of the school. The teachers take pride in their school, e.g. Gabby and Rebecca (T), who expressed their love for the school and identification with its culture).

School B's students express their favourable attitude towards their school freely. Meira (S) stated, "[I know] the management would do anything for the students, especially concerning human values." When asked to describe a utopic school, both Avital's and Meira's (S) reply was "my school." Daniel (S), generally quite critical about his school, said: "It is 'A hell of a school,' despite the fact that it focuses on academic achievement."

### **5.1.8 School Curriculum and Culture**

School B gives equal importance to humanities and sciences. Students have the option of majoring in any of the following disciplines: Geography, Arabic, Social Sciences, Computers, Economics, Entrepreneurship and Industrial Orientation, Physical Education, Psychology, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Talmud, Film-making and Multi-media, Drama. Observational and interview data gathered during the present study suggests that the overall orientation of the school is humanistic and value-guided, at the same time focusing on academic achievements. Avital (S) defined the school culture as consisting of 'Leftish' values – love, peace, Arab-Jewish relationship, civil values;" Ariel (S) maintained that, "when excellence and values collide – excellence has the upper hand."

The balance between academic excellence and humanistic values, in the School Vision Statement, was also noted in the parents' interviews. Iris (P) observed the emphasis on "[e]xcellence in learning, still values are not less important." School B's overall final exams success rates are consistently above 90% per annum, making it one of the highest-achieving schools in the country.

The school also offers special programs for new-comers, gifted students, under-achievers, students with communication deficiencies, and an 'excellence class' that combine high-level studies in Mathematics and Physics with university courses. These special classes are open to students from across the city and neighbouring cities.

### **5.1.9 Extra-Curricular Activity**

School B has an array of extracurricular activities, including competitive sports teams, encounters with Jewish and non-Jewish school communities abroad as well as with different population groups in Israel (Arabs, religious Jews), frequent civic-oriented events (field-trips, photography competitions, seminars, knowledge quizzes),

mind-body activities, film-making and more. Moreover, the Ministry of Education's guidelines require high school students to undertake volunteer community service between Years 10 and 12, through a program called "Personal Commitment." School B encourages its students to volunteer above and beyond official requirements.

The modes of communication between the different educational stakeholders, especially teacher-student relationships, create a very special atmosphere. Dialogue between school staff and students is open and friendly. A special program was designed by the school staff "with the intent to create an educational process towards the communication between the students themselves, between them and their parents and teachers, between the Israeli religious and non-religious Jews, between the Jews and Arabs" (quoted from a poster hanging on the entrance hall's wall).

#### **5.1.10 School Achievements**

School B was chosen by the Ministry of Education as a model establishment for other schools regarding its treatment and implementation of its educational vision. From stakeholders' interviews, one understands that School B's management and staff take their School Vision very seriously, the values underpinning it relevant to the school culture and reflecting the organisation's common aim and aspirations.

From a theoretical perspective, several mediating variables have been identified as contributing to the link between organisational vision and performance, including vision communication to employees and stakeholders and leadership style. The data gathered during the research suggest that the head-teacher's leadership style is collaborative, inspiring management and staff of School B to disseminate the values of their SVS and share them constantly with the stakeholders. These two variables (vision communication and leadership style) are described in the research literature as enhancing the implementation of the SVS in everyday school life. Both variables will be referred to in detail later in this study.

### **5.1.11 Head-Teacher**

#### **5.1.11.1 Biography**

In his sixties, School B's head-teacher was born in a kibbutz to a family of European Holocaust survivors. In his twenties, he served in a special navy unit of the Israeli Defence Force. He holds an MA in History, and has 32 years teaching experience, teaching History, Judaism and democracy. For the past twenty-three years, he has served as head-teacher of School B.

#### **5.1.11.2 Educational Perspective**

School B's head-teacher described himself as a keen believer in the promotion of the students' abilities – cognitive, emotional and social: "Our mission does not focus only on grades and matriculation scores, but on creating a vast platform of value-guided education, in which we nurture inquisitiveness, creativity and excellence." The values he supports include promoting students' learning abilities, and inculcating democratic values and human relationships, as well as love of one's homeland.

The head-teacher appears to recognise the need to disseminate the School Vision values every step of the way. The School Vision Statement hangs in every classroom and in most public areas and, as verified by most stakeholders' statements, is discussed in every available forum. As for revising the School Vision Statement – he genuinely regrets his inability to enter changes into it (due to budget restrictions, he says), but assures me that "we change in action, but do not change the written text."

In a broader context, the head-teacher attaches great importance to the non-judgmental acceptance of other people's views - and to bridging of differences between social groups and sectors in the Israeli society via dialogue. To this end he promotes cross-cultural communication, to create platforms for students to share information and views across different sectors in the Israeli society. In the school's website, he states that, "a

central component of our culture is fostering communication with other sectors – the religious, Arabs, Jewish and non-Jewish youth abroad....," reflecting Holliday's (2013) view that, "there is no line between cultures which limits us to understanding and being tolerant of other people's views." Holliday also states, that drawing a line between cultures presents "a dormant potential for conflict and war." (p. 2).

The head-teacher's tolerance and pluralistic beliefs did not seem to contradict his unequivocal patriotism, which found expression in his insistence on inculcating the love of the homeland among the students through relevant school activities. Keen on preparing the students for meaningful military service, he arranges meetings with school graduates who share their army experiences with the students, and keeps close contact with the families of casualties among school graduates.

#### **5.1.11.3 Communication with Stakeholders**

According to the accounts of the school B's stakeholders, modesty and accessibility characterise the head-teacher's leadership style. He habitually avoids placing himself centre-ground, sharing both responsibility and credit with staff, students and parents. As he tended to refer to the school as an organisation, it was necessary to learn from what was said about him by the school's stakeholders, as well as from how things were done at School B. In a 2011 newspaper article (reference omitted due to ethical considerations – N.M.), the journalist noted that, "School B's head-teacher is admired for his friendliness and collaborative attitude."

The students described a lack of distance between them and the head-teacher, mentioning *tete-a-tete* meetings as regular routine. The students mentioned three occasions when they had a chance to discuss the SVS with the head-teacher: In private conversations regarding their initiatives (Ariel – S); in Student Council meetings (Avital – S), and in the head-teacher's talks at school ceremonies (Dalia – S).

The parents also reported feeling connected to the head-teacher. Iris and Gabriel (P) described PTA meetings with him, where SV issues are discussed; Gabriel (P) has "a lot of respect for the head teacher, who, though he seems old-fashioned at times, still his experience and authority keeps the organisation dynamic and active." The head-teacher is described as attentive, giving others the feeling that their views are valuable.

Not only is he himself apparently accessible, but the data suggests that he ensures that communication routines are an integral part of the school culture. For example, periodical feedbacks procedures are a common practice at all levels of school functioning. Student Dalia: "Every 6 months, we are asked to give the management feedback on the school activity – not necessarily concerning the School Vision. But the mere fact of the procedure in itself reflects the SV. This is a check-up for the teachers – we are asked if the school activity is compatible with the SVS." There is also a two-way respectful dialogue between students and teachers. Daniel (S) noted that "teachers are very open to talk with the students. They are really interested in the students' success." Avital (S) remarked that, "responsiveness and the ability to solve problems seem to be the criteria for the selection of staff members in our school." Ruth (P) praised the fact that, "dialogue is done directly with the student and apology is offered when it is due."

School B's staff describe the head-teacher as a source of inspiration to them (as well as to the administrative staff and the students) and synchronisation between the school values and their own, whereas the students (Liat, Ariel – S) talk about the head-teacher's accessibility as if it were the most natural thing. The students and the parents express their appreciation for the way they are treated by the school staff. I myself find the attitude of both students and parents most unusual and commendable.



## **5.2 VISION STATEMENT**

According to the head-teacher, the formal SVS of School B – as presented below (my translation – N.M.) – was drafted eight years prior to my research study, in a structured procedure supervised by organisational consultants. Stakeholder round-tables deliberated over the principles and norms that should constitute the school culture. This concluded with two general sessions, in which the final version of the SVS was formally drafted. The school's declaration of intent is visibly prominent throughout the school. This may be an indication of the school staff's intent on implementing these declarations (to be considered later against the stakeholders' statements).

On the school website, the head-teacher expands on matters concerning the school culture, discussing the mission of the school staff and his expectations of them, as well as of himself: to strive for academic achievement, but also to provide value-guided education and nurture inquisitiveness, creativity and excellence. He goes on to describe the school ethos, entailing the staff's commitment to personal attention to each student, personal example, openness, transparency and fairness, as well as excellence and professionalism. He emphasises the element of dialogue with the various sectors in the Israeli society, and, above all, the actual implementation of these values in everyday school life, as specified in the SVS.

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

The formal version of the SVS opens with a unifying motto, the basis for the school ethos:

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

(Proverbs 22, 6, King James' translation)

The values underpinning the SVS stem from this motto, focusing on learning processes rather than learning outcomes, setting goals of learning mastery rather than performance goals (Dweck, 1986). Most of the values mentioned in the SVS are humanistic and civil values. In fact, the language of the document shows that the latter are more paramount. I have highlighted these values in the following text of School B's SVS.

### 5.2.2 The Formal Vision Statement

Following is a verbatim translation of School B's formal Vision Statement (my emphases – N.M.):

- School B shall promote *moral values* and excellence in learning, as well as cultivate a community of *respectful and supportive dialogue*.
- The school strives to instruct its students in the ways of *good citizenship, contribution to the community, and loyalty to the country*.
- The school will develop *a culture of dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution, gender equality, and regard for the needs of others*.
- The school will teach its students to take *personal responsibility* and engage in *leadership through example*.
- The school will enable its students to *maximize their potential* by addressing their heterogeneous needs.
- The school shall encourage *inquisitiveness and knowledge acquisition* in various fields of learning. The school will equip its students with *learning skills*, stimulate their *motivation for success and desire for excellence*, as well as develop their *life skills*.

- The school will nurture its human resources, as well as maintain a high-quality management system based on values of *cooperation*, *openness*, *professionalism*, *transparency* and *fairness*.

### 5.2.3 Vision Statement Content and Perception

Of the 23 values mentioned and highlighted above, only four are connected with academic excellence, the other 19 representing humanistic and civic values. In fact, the language of the document shows that social values are more prominent than academic excellence values. In interviews with the stakeholders, we find support for this, when they refer both to the content of the SVS and to its implementation.

By and large, School B's SV is perceived by stakeholders mainly as "the future picture of the school" (Fay – T), "the direction which the school is heading to" (Susana – T) and "something that gives direction along the way" (Rebecca – T), reminding us of the metaphors employed: 'compass' and 'lighthouse.' Two parents (Ruth, Iris – P) shared this view, describing the SVS in the context of 'aspiration' and 'promise.'

The statements of School B's teachers and parents suggest that they share this sense of purpose embodied in their SV. The students, however, acknowledge the effort made by the school management to instill moral values, but refer mostly to two purposeful values mentioned in it: Academic achievement (Daniel, Dalia – S), and rules and regulations (Avital, Meira – S). Ariel (S) was the only student who mentioned social values first.

Four values mentioned in School B's SVS were referenced by all the stakeholders, as follows: (1) Excellence in Learning (Realisation of Potential); (2) Respectful Dialogue; (3) Civic Values and Contribution to the Community; and, (4) Allegiance to the Country (with an emphasis on meaningful military service). In what follows, of these values will be discussed in more detail.

### **(1) Realisation of Student Potential (Excellence in Learning)**

When asked about the values underpinning School B's VS, only one parent (Gabriel – P) and four students (Daniel, Dalia, Meira, Ariel – S) mention 'excellence' (in the sense of academic achievement) first. Iris (P) defines the role of school (any school): "...to deal less with instilling of knowledge *per-se* and more with arousing curiosity and at the same time – human relationships and values." All five teachers and the other interviewed stakeholders (one student and two parents) elaborated on moral and civil values first, mentioning academic achievement last, or not at all. It is not that the teachers ignored the issue of academic excellence, but that they referred to it from a different angle, namely: the realisation of each student's potential.

At School B, a lot of thought was invested in developing teaching strategies "to attend to the individual student, to open opportunities for each student to realise her/his potential, academically and personally" (Head-Teacher). In the participants' reports, I found many examples of this (see a detailed report in the relevant section). As one teacher put it, "[w]e have an endless arsenal of assistance tools for under-achievers" (Rebecca – T).

There was some discontent concerning the issue of excellence among the students: Daniel (S) maintained that the main interest of the school was academic excellence, but also acknowledged the effort to instil values. Ariel (S) expressed similar views, stating that "when excellence and values collide, excellence has the upper hand." Dalia (S) partly shared this view: "Sometimes the values of the School Vision are hidden, because there is emphasis on grades and academic achievements." However, she complained: "They are not pushing us towards excellence, but encourage us 'to do our best', which for me is not enough."

## **(2) Respectful Dialogue**

A second prominent value in the SVS, respectful dialogue, is mentioned by teachers, students and parents. This value is interpreted in two ways: It is referred to in the context of the staff-student relationship and, in a more general context, in regard to equality and conflict resolution between different social groups. The SVS mentions 'respectful dialogue' in their two meanings: the broad aspiration "to cultivate a community of respectful and supportive dialogue," and "a culture of dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution and [...] regard for the needs of the other," referring to the culture within the school – as alluded to in the unifying motto mentioned above.

Fay (T) stressed the constant attendance of school staff to students' needs. This statement was corroborated by all the students, who unanimously expressed their appreciation for this. According to Dalia, most teachers acted upon the values of the SVS, and wondered whether they acquired this attitude during their years of service, or were employed because of this in the first place. Avital (S) agreed with this, postulating that "responsiveness and the ability to solve problems seem to be the criteria for the selection of staff in our school." Ariel (S) praised the school staff for their support of students' initiatives – morally and financially. Meira (S) concurred, but also stated that, "there is always a response, although more so on the part of the management than the professional teachers."

The students' perspective reflects a commendable compatibility between the declaration of the SVS concerning student-teacher dialogue and its actual implementation in the school culture. Two parents agreed with the students in this regard. Ruth (P) was impressed with the attention to individual student needs, to the point that, "apology is offered when it is due." Iris (P) mentioned two examples of teacher conduct: "When my son broke his leg, the whole class was moved to the ground floor", and also "teachers voluntarily stay after school to offer help to students with difficulties."

In the broader scope of the term, the school endeavours to introduce the students to an array of social groups in Israeli society, as well as with Jewish and non-Jewish students abroad. The aim is to broaden students' horizons, emphasizing tolerance and the acceptance of the other. Examples of activities towards this end (conferences, seminars, meetings, mutual visits and trips) will be specified in the chapter dealing with the implementation of the values of the SV.

### **(3) Civic Values and Contribution to the Community**

In the Israeli Education System, every high school student must fulfill a set amount, usually 60 hours per year, of community service. At School B, this requirement forms an integral part of the school's culture. This value will be further discussed below (see pp. 179-83).

### **(4) Allegiance to the Country**

According to School B's head-teacher, "a lot is done in our school to strengthen the linkage of the students to their homeland." He maintained that this is one way to educate future citizens. The school entrance hall and corridors clearly demonstrate this statement, decorated with posters, photographs and artefacts representing different facets of Israeli life. The promotion of a meaningful military service constitutes a major part of both values: contribution to the community and the allegiance to the homeland, as it motivates the students towards both ends. School activities intended to stimulate the commitment of the students to their homeland will be discussed in detail below.

#### **5.2.4 Stakeholders' Familiarity with the School Vision**

In order to ascertain stakeholder familiarity with the document, each interviewee was asked to rate his/her own familiarity with the SVS. Subsequently, they were asked to specify at least three values included in the SVS, in order to contextualise the credibility of their assessment.

The average familiarity score of all School B's stakeholders (18 interviewees) with their SVS, based on self-assessment, was 3. This number appears to be rather modest, considering the head-teacher's estimate of 5 - teachers, 4 - students and 3 - parents. However, their answers to the request to specify at least 3 values mentioned in the SVS revealed a different picture. School B's stakeholders demonstrated substantial awareness of the values of the document. Even Deborah (T) and Iris (P), who rated their familiarity with the SVS as 1/5 ("and even that only from hearsay"), and 2/5 ("My son is new at school so I know more about the School Vision Statement of his former school"), seemed to know more than they acknowledged (or perhaps they were being modest – N.M.). It is interesting that SV values, which interviewees overlooked in answer to question 2 (Main Values in SVS), surfaced in their answers to the question about implementation.

The table below sums up the comparison between the perceptions of School B's stakeholders of its formal SVS on the one hand, and the values underpinning it on the other. Column A quotes from School B's SVS verbatim, whereas Column B identifies the themes stemming from the analysis of each phrase. Columns C, D and E specify the stakeholders' statements regarding each theme. It also specifies the number of stakeholders who referred to a certain value, out of the total number of interviewees in each stakeholder group (e.g. 3 of the 5 teachers, 4 of 5 students, and 3 out of 3 parents referred to the value of 'Excellence in Learning').

<b>School Vision Statement</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
School B will propagate moral values and excellence in learning, as well as cultivate a community of respectful and supportive dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral Values</li> <li>• Excellence in Learning</li> <li>• Respectful Dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence in Learning (Deborah, Susana, Rebecca) 3/5</li> <li>• Respectful Dialogue (Rebecca, Fay) 2/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral Values (Daniel – reserved)</li> <li>• Excellence in Learning (Daniel, Dalia, Meira, Ariel) 4/5</li> <li>• Respectful Dialogue (Dalia, Avital, Meira, Ariel) 4/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence in Learning (Ruth, Iris, Gabriel) 3/3</li> <li>• Respectful Dialogue (Ruth, Iris) 2/3</li> </ul>
The school strives to educate its students in the ways of good citizenship, contribution to the community, and allegiance to the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizenship</li> <li>• Contribution to the Community</li> <li>• Allegiance to the Country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizenship (Gabby) 1/5</li> <li>• Social Accountability (Gabby, Susana, Fay, Rebecca) 4/5</li> <li>• Allegiance to the Country (Gabby, Deborah, Susanna) 3/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Values (Avital) 1/5</li> <li>• Social Commitment (Ariel – not enough) 1/5</li> <li>• Allegiance to the Country (Daniel, Dalia, Avital, Meira, Ariel) 5/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to the Community (Ruth, Gabriel) 3/3</li> <li>• Zionism (Ruth, Iris, Gabriel) 3/3</li> </ul>
<p>The school will develop a culture of dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution, gender equality, and caring for the needs of others.</p> <p>The school will teach its students to take personal responsibility and engage in leadership through example.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict Resolution</li> <li>• Gender Equality</li> <li>• Regard to the Needs of the Other</li> <li>• Personal Responsibility</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Personal Example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal responsibility (Gabby) 1/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict Resolution (Daniel) 1/5</li> <li>• Equality (Meira – reservation) 1/5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Equality (Iris) 1/3</li> <li>• Accountability &amp; transparency (Iris) 1/3</li> </ul>

**Table 5.4: Stakeholders' Perceptions of School B's Vision Statement**



The table above indicates that School B's stakeholders are profoundly familiar with their SVS, and that their perceptions are for the most part compatible with its values. Four values are mentioned in the SVS: Excellence in Learning (Realisation of Potential), respectful dialogue, and contribution to the community and allegiance to the homeland (with an emphasis on a meaningful military service). These are unanimously echoed by all the stakeholders.

Nevertheless, it seems important to note that School B's stakeholders in general do not recite the contents of the SV by rote. Not only are they familiar with their SV, but they rather live, consider and reflect on it. It was obvious that each one gave it a personal interpretation, sometimes critically so.

The analysis of School B's stakeholder reports, as well as his own testimony, suggests that School B's head-teacher acknowledges the presence of divergent perspectives among the stakeholders, and allows for them. Some teachers (Gabby, Deborah – T) openly question the validity of the unifying motto ("Train the young person..."), and other values mentioned in the SVS. Also two of the students doubt the genuine implementation of the values 'equality' and 'pluralism' (Meira, Dalia – S). However, in contrast with the above, Meira states that "had the students been asked to draft the School Vision Statement – this is exactly how it would have looked like," demonstrating total identification with the School Vision Statement.

### **5.2.5 Sharing the School Vision with Stakeholders**

School B's stakeholders' intimate familiarity with their SVS can be related to efforts made by the school management to share its contents with them. This creates a joint sense of purpose. The efforts made by the management are manifested in four main features that distinguish School B in regard to its SVS, as they emerge from the stakeholders' testimonies:

**(1) Visibility:** One can learn about the school climate from the feeling one gets upon entering the building, even if only a preliminary impression. I obtained a lot of information from the entrance hall. First, the SVS hangs on the wall at the school entrance and in every classroom. The head-teacher attached great importance to the visibility of the SVS. Despite the fact that he could not enter changes to its content (requiring a costly re-print), he preferred to leave it displayed as is, implementing necessary changes de facto. Three teachers mention the visibility of the SVS, but in different contexts: Gabby (T) felt that the SVS's visibility helped it "penetrate our sub-conscious." But others disagreed. Susanna (T) felt that it was not enough. In her view its content should be re-visited and revised more often. Deborah (T), as well as four students, opined that little attention was paid to it. Daniel (S) testified that for a long time he had not noticed its existence; Ariel (S) said that, "no one reads it," and Meira (S) "[did] not remember anything from it."

The visibility of the SVS is therefore important, but definitely not enough by itself to create familiarity with and commitment to its contents.

**(2) Unifying statement :** The second feature that distinguishes School B in regard to its SVS is the existence of a statement (in this case, a verse from the Bible), serving as a unifying motto for all stakeholders working toward shared goals. The verse, "Train up a young person in his own way" (Proverbs 22, 6), functions as a central guideline to the school staff. Not only did three of the five teachers interviewed quote it word for word, they all explained its meaning, relating it directly to their everyday work at school, in the sense of being attentive to the needs of the individual student's needs and choice.

**(3) Personal Example / Role-Modeling:** The value of personal example and accountability (mainly in regard to respectful dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution), expected from both teachers and students, is a recurring motif in most stakeholder statements, whether explicitly or otherwise. Four of the five teachers mentioned it in their statements.

Setting a personal example is a basic principle at School B: "We try to set an example [...] for the students and their parents, in the hope they will respond in the same way" (Rebecca – T); "The teachers set the example: respect and be respected" (Fay – T). One parent (Iris – P) contended that in School B gender equality is taught through role-modelling; Dalia (S) maintains that, "whatever they [the teachers – N.M.] say or do reflects the SV. She wondered "whether the school recruits this kind of teachers, or maybe they absorb it during their service in it..." Susanna (T) summed the subject up, stating that, "preaching definitely does not help. Personal example and deeds do."

The standard bearer for the expectation of personal example is the head-teacher, reflected mostly by the teachers' conduct and in the statements made by students and parents. The research literature notes the link between the leader's ability to develop warm working relationships with the teachers and their willingness to pursue and implement his vision. Following this line of thinking, the professed commitment of School B's teachers to the SVS and its implementation can be attributed to their relationship with the head-teacher and the example set by him. Not a big talker, he nevertheless dedicates a big part of his daily routine to meeting students and parents, regular visits to all classes, and student feedback. He is extremely accessible to the students, attending favourably to their ideas and initiatives. According to students and parents, the head-teacher endeavoured to inform stakeholder representatives (the PTA and the Student Council) about the SV and its underpinning values. Two parents (Ruth, Gabriel – P) reported that they learnt about the SV in PTA meetings with the head-teacher. Avital (S) recalled a thorough discussion with the school management members

regarding the SV in a Students' Council session. Ariel (S) described a personal conversation with the head-teacher about it when she came to offer a new initiative. Meira (S) adds: "I know the management would do anything for the students, especially concerning human values." The very existence of a management member in charge of 'Education toward Values' can be considered an indication of the head-teacher's approach to this matter.

**(4) Collaboration with Stakeholders:** From the testimonies of School B's stakeholders, the impression emerges that the school management treat the stakeholders as *equal partners* and that the stakeholders appreciate this and collaborate willingly in return. The SVS itself was drafted eight years ago, a joint effort of representatives of all stakeholders.

The parents described a very respectful attitude towards the school (in contrast with parents in other schools, where the prevailing feeling was that of being treated solely as a source of funding). Ruth (P) stated that "Our views are heard and everything is well organised," while Gabriel (P) felt that the school authorities "consider the parents as partners," and Iris (P) described the school staff as "transparent and accountable."

The students referred mainly to the accessibility of the head-teacher and teachers, who they could turn to with problems and complaints, as well as ideas and initiatives, which were always attended to and resolved: Meira (S) stated that "they [the teachers – N.M.] really listen to the students". Ariel (S) emphasised the fact that the management encouraged student initiatives, offering financial and logistic help, while Dalia (S) described a periodical procedure, in which the students were asked to give the management feedback on SV implementation. She commented that not very much done with the feedback, but "the mere existence of such a procedure in itself reflects the SV." Meira (S) summarised the views by saying that she couldn't think of anything the students would like to change in the SVS.

### **5.2.6 School Vision Implementation**

Implementation of its values is the ultimate criterion for a meaningful and viable SVS. If these values do not find expression in the school culture, they become empty phrases. In School B, this notion seems internalised. As Rebecca (T) put it:

It is obvious that here the management and the staff are committed to the values of the SV and create a deliberate correlation between the SV and the daily activity. There is no need to put on masks... the values are really implemented.

School B's VS essentially embodies its head-teacher's personality and leadership style, inasmuch as it reflects the interests and characteristics not only of the stakeholders, but also of the organisation and presents sufficient depth to address the deepest convictions of organisational members. However, the head-teacher's success in making them pursue and implement the SV seems to lie mainly in his ability to develop warm working relationships with teachers as individuals, as well as their shared set of values, an ability which is considered in the research literature as a substantial asset to her/his ability to inspire them.

What makes School B's SVS meaningful and viable is the fact that it is shared with the stakeholders, constantly debated and discussed in various forums, and its salient presence in the school everyday practice.

Staff and parents at School B perceived the concept of 'vision' as a set of guidelines which should serve as a platform for the school activity. They too used terms like 'credo,' 'goals,' 'targets,' and 'direction,' as well as metaphors like 'compass' and 'lighthouse.' The head-teacher stated that every organisation should define its objectives, adding an emphasising paraphrase: "A school which is not concerned with its future has a problem with its present." Being what the research literature describes as a "charismatic leader", he is able to point out the discrepancy between the current state of

the organisation and the future goals it aspires to achieve. He inspires the school staff to acknowledge the gap between the present and the future (or between the "is" and the "ought to be"), in order to generate the creative tension which has been reported as essential for the improvement of school performance. In School B, such a process is performed jointly by the head-teacher and school staff.

From the torrent of examples brought up by all stakeholders, as well as from the compatibility of the answers between the different groups, it was obvious that school management and staff made tremendous efforts to implement the values of their SVS in full.

The tables below (one for each of the four main values in the SVS) present the school activities that correspond with a specific value (e.g. 'academic excellence'), as described by each member of the different stakeholder groups. The degree of fit between the values of the SV (Column A) and the school activities, as seen through the eyes of the stakeholders (Columns B, C and D), provides an indication of the extent of the SVS's implementation and its significance in the school life. It might also be interesting to examine the congruity of views within and between stakeholder groups.

<b>'Realization of Potential'</b>			
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Matching of teaching methods to student needs" (Gabby)</li> <li>• "Classes arranged by achievements." (Gabby)</li> <li>• "Personal assistance and a variety of subjects to choose from" (Deborah)</li> <li>• "Tailor-made yearly plan for each student" (Susanna)</li> <li>• "Reinforcement courses, private tutoring" (Susanna)</li> <li>• "Recruitment of parents" (Susanna)</li> <li>• "Recurring tests and challenging of test scores" (Rebecca)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "In our school, the main value is excellence, mainly science and technology, whereas the humanities are not highly rated" (Daniel)</li> <li>• "The principle of the realisation of each student's potential is carried out to the fullest extent" (Dalia)</li> <li>• "There are many students who feel that the system has given up on them. The demand is not to excel, but 'to do one's best' - which for me is not enough" (Dalia)</li> <li>• "Excellence = realisation of students' potential. Here there is room for improvement. The strongest and weakest students are attended to, but mediocre students are neglected. They say the teachers are good - I partially agree" (Meira)</li> <li>• "Excellence - the school invests a lot of effort in it. But when excellence and values conflict - excellence has the upper hand" (Ariel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "They make every effort to enable the realisation of students' potential to the fullest extent" (Ruth)</li> <li>• "Subject Days; SCT classes for gifted students; Older students mentoring younger one who have difficulties; teachers who stay after hours to offer help" (Iris)</li> <li>• "Realisation of student's potential - academic, personality and values, leadership, giving, etc." (Iris)</li> <li>• "The school aspires to produce students with the highest level in science and technology, and develop up-to-date new subjects like Robotics." (Gabriael)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Academic achievements do not prevail" (Gabby - T)</li> <li>• "Our school invests in education of values more than any other school I know, but still academic achievements are the focus" (Daniel - S)</li> <li>• "Our school is better than other schools - but there is still room for improvement" (Dalia - S)</li> <li>• "Excellence in learning. Still values are not less important" (Ruth - P)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.5: Stakeholders' Views of the Implementation of 'Realisation of Potential'**  
(Excellence in Learning)

None of School B's stakeholders refuted the assumption that a principal objective of schooling is to share knowledge and promote every student towards the realisation of their maximal potential. Nevertheless, there seems to be a difference between the adults' (teachers and parents) perspective and the views expressed by the students. The teachers and the parents commend the school for applying various mechanisms for supporting students' academic achievement, and still keep the balance between academic achievement and humanistic values (Gabby – T, Ruth – P). The students agree with the above, but tend to express more views critical of the school's preferences, raising the following value-guided points:

- (1) A tendency to cultivate the strongest and the weakest students. The average student feels neglected (Dalia, Meira – S).
- (2) Science and technology are given more emphasis (Daniel – S).
- (3) If excellence and values conflict, excellence (i.e. academic achievements) is given priority (Ariel – S).
- (4) The demand is not to excel, but "to do one's best" (Dalia – S).

These views reflect the seeming alignment between students' personal reasons for attending the school and the perceived objectives of the school. Their complaints stem from the assumption that they expect the school to afford them aims which are more congruent with their own aims. In general, students' expectations of schooling were found in the research to be broader than those of parents and teachers. Students expect to be educated, so that they have plenty of choices in ways in which to comfortably realize the autonomy they so envy in their parents.



Nevertheless, to date, little empirical research has been conducted on stakeholders' beliefs about the purposes of schooling, and no study on all three key stakeholders' beliefs. It is worth mentioning that the mere fact that the students express independent value-guided opinions speaks for the fact that the school encourages critical thinking and moral considerations, as stated in the SVS.

When examining the school curriculum, one gets the impression that School B strives to instill humanistic and social values as much as it promotes academic achievements. This aspiration finds expression both in the SVS and in the school culture, and is practiced extensively.

The degree of fit between the value of 'Respectful Dialogue,' which appears in the SVS, and the corresponding activities in the school practice reported by the stakeholders will be explored in the following table:

'Respectful Dialogue'			
Teachers	Students	Parents	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Older students coach younger ones" (Gabby)</li> <li>Dialogue Day" (Susanna)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"The teachers are very receptive to students. They are really interested in the students' success" (Daniel)</li> <li>"Attitude toward students is definitely respectful, and there is an emphasis on tolerance" (Dalia)</li> <li>"Dialogue - meetings between Jewish and Arab students. Also between teachers and students. Most teachers are attentive and responsive... there is always someone to turn to" (Avital)</li> <li>"Enrichment - Body and Soul Day on which every teacher brings something of their own that is outside the curriculum (e.g. belly dancing, meditation)" (Avital)</li> <li>"Dialogue - there is always someone to turn to. They really listen to the students and a response is always given. The management staff is always attentive; professional teachers - not so much" (Meira)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Dialogue with diaspora Jews - Students visited the USA and exchanged views with local students as part of the Young Ambassadors Programme" (Ruth)</li> <li>"Connections with other schools - Settlers, Arabs, and Jewish schools abroad" (Iris)</li> <li>"There is no way a problem would not be dealt with and resolved" (Iris)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Responsiveness and the ability to solve problems seem to be the criteria for the selection of staff members in our school" (Avital - S)</li> </ul> <p><b>Criticism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Equality - On the one hand we deal extensively with the issue of equality and acceptance of the other; On the other hand, there is a new class for immigrants at school, and they are quite segregated... When they wanted to place a 'Yeshiva' on the premises of the school the management did not agree. Perhaps this calls for second thoughts regarding the School Vision" (Dalia - S)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.6: Stakeholders' Views of the Implementation of 'Respectful Dialogue'**

All School B's stakeholders unequivocally agreed that the value of 'Respectful Dialogue,' which is stressed in the SVS, is an essential part of the school culture. It covers both the relationship among the school population and, in a broader sense, between the different sectors of the Israeli society.

The teachers associated the ethical aspects of the SVS (attendance to the needs of the individual student, respectful discourse, personal example) with its practical aspects (academic achievement), as does the text of the SVS itself (moral values, excellence in learning and respectful dialogue, together in the same clause). Gabby (T) stated that, "the students are very different from each other. We try hard to match our teaching methods to each student's needs." Susanna (T) described a process of setting goals, in collaboration with the students and with the help of the parents, trying to "prepare a tailor-made suit for each student, as well as a follow-up plan". Deborah, Rebecca and Susanna (T) provided a list of teaching tools used by the teachers towards this end: "Special reinforcement courses, personal assistance, a variety of teaching methods and a large spectrum of subjects to choose from," as well as "private tutoring [given voluntarily by the school teachers] and recurring tests." Rebecca (T) also mentioned procedures, anchored in the school regulations, which allowed students to challenge test scores, another indication of the respect shown by the staff to the students.

All the students acknowledged the fact that they were treated respectfully by the teachers, and praised the teachers' attendance to their needs. They felt that the school staff (mainly from tutors and management) was really interested in their welfare. Interestingly, Avital (S) mentioned "Mind-Body Day" as an example of lack of distance, teachers allowing the students to be part of their life outside school and its curriculum. Critical thinking is also shown here, Dalia bringing up what to her was an expression of the segregation towards the other (religious) school, not consistent with the tolerance declared in the SV. In the same context, Dalia mentioned that newcomers were placed in

separate classes, although management stated that this was to be taught the Hebrew language before joining regular classes.

As for the term 'Respectful Dialogue' in its broader sense, teachers (Susanna – T), students (Avital – S) and parents (Ruth, Iris – P) testified to the implementation of this value, the school initiating meetings with different sectors of Israeli society (Arabs, religious Jews, West Bank settlers), as well as Jewish and non-Jewish schools abroad.

All the above evidences the implementation of the relevant part of School B's SVS ("The school will promote moral values and excellence in learning, as well as cultivate a community of respectful and supportive dialogue"), and confirms the presumption that in School B, respectful dialogue is given the same priority as excellence in learning. Contributing to the community constitutes another aspect of such a dialogue, explored in the following table *vis-à-vis* stakeholder reports of the school's corresponding activities:

<b>'Contribution to the Community'</b>		
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Volunteering activities" (Fay)</li> <li>• "Voluntary work, over and above the formal requirements" (Gabby)</li> <li>• "Prizes for social activity" (Susanna)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Contribution to the community is done within the formal programme as required by the Ministry of Education, but I think we should do more. It is not enough." (Ariel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Students are encouraged to contribute to the community, and it is really instilled in them (far beyond the formal demand)." (Ruth)</li> <li>• "Contribution to the community - beyond formal requirements. The school is located at the heart of the community and feels like a part of it." (Gabriel)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.7: Stakeholders' Views of the Implementation of 'Contribution to the Community'**

Contribution to the community is an integral part of School B's culture. Two students (Avital, Ariel – S) mentioned "contribution to the community" as a central value of the SV and the school's culture, but only referred to service done under the formal requirements. Ariel (S) maintained that this is not enough, and the students should be required to do more. More interest was shown in various after-school leadership and communication courses, which the school encouraged the students to attend. Daniel, Ariel and Dalia (S) expressed the wish that the school would dedicate more learning hours to these subjects.

Among the teachers, Gabby (T) also stressed in this context the fact that older students help the younger ones. Fay (T) provided an example of her class's visit in an institution for disabled grown-ups, getting acquainted with them and helping them. Rebecca (T) referred to the school commitment to the subject, describing an end-of school ceremony where five students were awarded prizes for social activity [rather than academic achievements – N.M.]. She said that "this indicates the school's preference of values."

School B's parents refer in detail to the issue of contribution to the community. Ruth (P) testified that the students were encouraged to contribute to the community far beyond the formal requirements. Iris (P) maintained that one of the main roles of the PTA is to assist the management with the logistics of community service. Gabriel (P) noted that the school is situated in the heart of the neighbourhood, and is an integral part of community life.

The fourth value of School B's SVS, 'Allegiance to the Country,' is dealt with in the following table:

<b>'Allegiance to the Country'</b>		
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Love of the Country Day" (Gabby)</li> <li>• "Field-trips planned around subjects connected with the country" (Deborah)</li> <li>• "Incorporation of patriotic values in the syllabus" (Susanna)</li> <li>• "Promotion of patriotic values through artistic activities" (Susanna)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Love for one's country with special emphasis on military service" (Daniel)</li> <li>• "Love of the country - ceremonies, field-trips" (Dalia)</li> <li>• "Love of one's country - An annual 'Israel Day'" (Avital)</li> <li>• "Love of the country - a lot! 'Israel Day' which is a great experience." (Meira)</li> <li>• "Patriotism - many lessons and projects concerning Zionism and the military service." (Ariel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "An Israeli culture, which is a-political and a-sectorial. Preparation for the military service as a value. Relationships with alumni and the families of the fallen soldiers." (Iris)</li> <li>• "Many discussions, projects and field-trips revolving round history and a meaningful military service." (Gabriel)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.8: Stakeholders' Views of the Implementation of 'Allegiance to the Country'**

A majority of the stakeholders (three teachers, three parents and five students) confirmed the head- teacher's statement. The teachers provide detailed information about school activities in connection with the love of the homeland, as detailed in the table above. "We set aside the academic curriculum to study subjects connected with the love of the country," Susanna (T) said. All the interviewed parents praise the school management for their efforts to instill civic values and loyalty to the country, which they sum up as 'Zionism.' Iris (P) emphasises the fact that the students are exposed to Israeli culture, which is neither political nor sectorial. Gabriel (P) counts the measures taken for this end, such as seminars, discussions, field trips and meetings with various social groups.

All the students mention the value of 'Allegiance to the Country.' The students' opinions in this matter were unanimous: Meira (S) thinks that the annual "Independence Day" is a great experience and appreciates the emphasis on the love of the country, though the

engagement with the preparation for the army service "is sometimes too much." Dalia, Avital, and Ariel (S) describe many related activities: courses ceremonies, field-trips, and artistic projects on the subject. They all view the preparation for a meaningful military service, following their graduation, as a part of the value of 'Allegiance to the Country.'

<b>'Meaningful Military Service'</b>		
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Meetings with soldiers from various army and navy units." (Head-Teacher)</li> <li>• "Military history" (Head-Teacher)</li> <li>• "National Memorial Day" (Deborah)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Emphasis on the importance of military service" (Daniel)</li> <li>• "Emphasis on meaningful service in the army" (Dalia)</li> <li>• "Extensive preparations for the military service (sometimes over the top)" (Meira)</li> <li>• "Many lessons and projects about Zionism and the military service" (Ariel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Lots of activities regarding a meaningful military service" (Gabriel)</li> </ul>

**Table 5.9: Stakeholders' Views of the Implementation of 'Meaningful Military Service'**

Military service is compulsory in Israel for most 18-year-olds, but does not always prove valuable for their development. In School B, very much due to the educational philosophy of the head-teacher, military service is considered an educational tool. The promotion of *meaningful* military service is a central part of the school culture, both as a part of the curriculum and extensive extra-curricular activities. As demonstrated in the table above, most of the stakeholders mention activities concerning this matter.

From the analysis of the implementation of the four main values of the SVS in the school activity, as described by the stakeholders, one might see clearly the compatibility of School B's activity and the values, which constitute its VS. Such a degree of compatibility is defined in the literature regarding organisational vision as the ultimate criterion for a meaningful and viable VS.

## **5.2.7 Leadership Style**

### **5.2.7.1 Role Perception**

The most salient characteristic of School B's head-teacher's leadership is that he rarely places himself at the front. He perceives himself rather as an organ of the organisation, responsible for coordinating school activity and shaping its culture, in collaboration with the school stakeholders, especially school staff. This is evidenced throughout his interview, during which he used the first-person pronoun 'I' only once (and even that in the context of self-criticism). In his view, running the school is a joint venture, which he himself is only part of, and prefers to use 'we' in regard to school activity and its decision-making process. When asked about his educational vision, he refers mainly to the school's organisational culture rather than to himself. He describes his stance, when interviewed by a journalist, in the following words: "It is my privilege to be first among equals as a member of the school management staff" (XXX, 2011 – full reference omitted due to ethical considerations – N.M.).

Like the majority of head teachers surveyed recently in the US by Stemler et al. (2011), who "viewed the mission statement as a powerful tool for facilitating conversation among stakeholders and providing direction" (p.24), School B's head-teacher attaches great importance to his SVS in his relationship with stakeholders. He appears aware of the need to practice what he preaches. In his interview, he described the need to nurture the individual student's abilities as the main role of the educational system. He describes numerous staff meetings devoted to finding ways to open progress routes for each and every student. All School B's stakeholders describe their head-teacher as a leader who



inspires an air of acceptance and care by teachers towards the students and their parents. In the above mentioned newspaper article about School B and its head-teacher, titled "One of a Kind" (XXXX, 2011 - full reference omitted to preserve anonymity – N.M.), the students are quoted as saying that, "our head-teacher is rather strict in matters of discipline, but still we love him. He is like a father to us."

#### **5.2.7.2 Head-teacher's Leadership Style**

Based on the head-teacher's own interview and the stakeholders' descriptions of his conduct, it seems safe to typify him as a transformational leader (Antonakis et al., 2003). The traits that feature his leadership style are:

- **Collaborative:** Shares decision making process with stakeholders; Accessible and communicative; Encourages feedback from stakeholders; Attentive to new ideas and initiatives.
- **Inspirational:** Stimulates his followers to independent thinking and creativity in problem-solving; Motivates followers to an optimistic view of the future, projecting an idealized and achievable vision, and stressing ambitious goals.
- **Charismatic:** Admired by the school stakeholders, who show total commitment to him as well as to the school; Contributes to followers' satisfaction by giving advice, support, and attention to each individual's needs.
- **Value-Guided:** Emphasises human values and their implementation; appointed a management member (Susanna – T) in charge of the inculcation of values in the school culture; His actions centred on values, beliefs, and a sense of mission.

School B's head-teacher's leadership style can also be defined as 'responsible leadership,' based on his aspiration to create a balance between academic achievements and civic values , as well as his relentless effort to develop relationships as an equally important part of his leadership, not instead of but alongside strategies for improving academic achievement for all students. He promotes the well-being of his educational stakeholders and concurrently regards fairness, justice and equity, as well as democratic learning that promote civic engagement and understanding as no less important than academic performance. All these contribute to positioning him also as an ethical or moral leader. The high achievements of School B can therefore be attributed, inter-alia, to the leadership style of the head-teacher. Schools are deemed to be effective when head-teachers share a set of values that emphasize caring as their core.

The research literature maintains that leadership style is shaped, among other things, by the national socio-cultural context the school operates in. This notion is based on the assumption that different socio-cultural contexts evidence different value sets as well as norms of leaders' behaviour across different societies.

#### **5.2.8 School Context**

Scholars maintain that in order to achieve results, leaders must adapt their leadership styles in ways that are consonant with the prevailing values and norms in their different socio-cultural environment. Educational leadership is therefore embedded in its cultural context, and improved results are gained through the combination of the strengths of leadership, structure and culture. The characteristic leaders who choose to focus on the socio-cultural context are the ones who are value-driven and achieve results through people.

The data gathered from School B's stakeholders suggest that these two traits characterise their head-teacher's personality and leadership style. Being a responsible leader, he does not lead by himself, but with and through others. He himself testifies –

and his statement is corroborated by the stakeholders' testimonies - that he feels responsible for developing relationships with all stakeholders, an important part of his leadership. His professed goal is to benefit all the stakeholders by way of instilling democratic, social and moral values, in the way they are interpreted in the Israeli society, as an inherent part of the school culture.

The prevailing values School B's head-teacher focuses on are expressly rooted in Israeli society and its culture: Pluralism and tolerance, good citizenship, contribution to the common good, and loyalty to the country (see p. 162). His proclaimed patriotism (probably shaped by his biography, see p. 157), as well as his value-guided collaborative leadership style may explain his choice to focus on the national socio-cultural context and the values it entails: Pluralism, Tolerance, and Respectful Dialogue. Israel is an immigrant state, and its population comprises distinctly different national and religious sectors (e.g. Jews and Arabs, Jews, Christians and Moslems, Europeans and Orientals, religious and non-religious Jews), forming distinct social groups often detached from one another. Loyalty to the country finds expression in many of the school's activities: Seminars, field trips, artistic projects, and meetings with various social groups. Moreover, the school management seeks to prepare the students for a meaningful military service through meetings with school graduates, who share their army experiences with the students, and through keeping close contact with the families of casualties among the school graduates.

The national-contextual factor the head-teacher primarily responds to is therefore not the dictate of the educational authorities, but the values and norms which constitute the socio-cultural ethos of the Israeli society, which he upholds.

Moreover, the head-teacher's distributive leadership practice encourages the participation of the stakeholders in planning, setting goals and sharing the decision-making process. He provides open channels of communications that encourage debate and free expression of views, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Such

transformational ethics are considered as fostering the school community to reach beyond self-interest for higher social and civic values.. The combination of the head-teacher's personality, his responsible leadership style and his choice to respond primarily to the socio-cultural context has indeed engendered within School B a community that excels in academic achievement, yet is also value-guided.

### **5.3 Analysis: Striking Features of School B**

#### **5.3.1 Commitment and Identification**

As noted above, researchers across the board, in business as well as in education, maintain that a meaningful vision has the power to inspire, motivate and engage people. The creation of a joint vision statement that gives voice to the aspirations and interests of the stakeholders fosters communication and commitment to a shared organisational purpose.

Based on the research literature and on the testimonies of School B's stakeholders, one can state that the management's relentless effort to disseminate the values underpinning the SV explains the remarkable commitment of the stakeholders towards it and their positive attitude towards the school. Most of School B's stakeholders testify to their whole-hearted identification with the SVS, and the desire to implement it to the maximum in the school culture and to instill the values underpinning it in the students.

Four of the five teachers, as well as the head-teacher, used expressions which reflect their unequivocal commitment to the SVS, to the verge of identification with it. The head-teacher states that, "[e]very organisation should think what its objectives are", clearly referring to the school management and staff. The teachers embrace their responsibility to instill and implement its values. Fay (T) states clearly that "the teachers are the ones who represent the School Vision Statement. Gabby (T) explains that "I love the school because its values synchronise well with mine"; Rebecca (T) says: "The SVS reflects my personal values as well as the school culture" and Fay (T) declares that "Our

school is a model of the school I would like my children to attend". Susanna (T), the only staff member who took part in the drafting of the SVS a few years earlier (both in the teachers' circle and in the management circle) contended that the drafting procedure is based on the principle that the vision should reflect the perceptions of all its drafting partners, i.e. school stakeholders.

The only teacher who felt unattached to the SVS (despite the fact that she is part of the management) was Deborah (T): "After two years I myself still feel a bit detached from the school and its vision. Maybe it's my fault as I never took the time to read the written SVS." At the same time, she hypothesized that she was not the only one, "so that one is bound to conclude that it is the fault of the system, which does not inform the staff about the SVS." She claimed that, "in fact, the SVS reflects directives from the state and the beliefs of the grown-ups who run it." She refuted some of the values of the document ("Train up a young person in his own way – who judges whether or not the young person's way is the right one?"; Emphasis on meaningful military service). Though she admits that the school staff makes every effort to implement the values of the SVS, she suspects that it is partly for PR purposes. She concludes her criticism saying that "The SVS is OK [hanging] on the wall – but to my mind, [it] has to be revised [...] nevertheless the end result seems satisfactory: the students, parents, staff and the authorities are satisfied, so there is no real problem." Both the head-teacher and Susanna (T) share her view, that the SVS ought to be revised more often.

The way parents describe their position at School B seems to indicate that they feel an integral part of school life. Gabriel (P) conceives the SV as a sort of an agreement between parents and school management. Ruth (P) is happy with the fact that (as opposed to other schools her children had attended) the parents were not "treated as an ATM machine, where their sole role was to finance the school activities," but rather as equal partners: "We are treated with respect. Our views are heard and everything is well organised." PTA meetings are the arena for deliberations about the SVS values (Iris, Ruth – P), and all parents are well versed in them. They embrace the values of the SV,

and do not see the need to enter any changes, except maybe to have the students and the parents more involved, as well as an annual review (Iris – P).

As for the students, a variety of views can be found in School B. They are well-informed on the values embodied in their SVS (see details in relevant chapter above). Most thought that the SV is "good" (Ariel – S), or even "excellent" (Meira – S), though some questioned the preference of values over academic achievements (Ariel, Avital – S); Meira (S) stressed that, "had they let the students draft the SVS, this is exactly what it would look like." The only student with a different attitude is Daniel (S), who maintains that "the term 'School Vision' sounds bombastic." But even he admits that the teachers are keener on the inculcation of values than any other school he knows. All the interviewed students seemed comfortable in their school, and appreciate the fact that management staff and the teachers, as well as the head-teacher himself, are always attentive to them and do their best to accommodate their needs. They unanimously express the wish to take part in the drafting of the SVS: "It is most important to have the students participate in the process of drafting the SV – who else should they listen to?" (Dalia). Even Daniel (S) expressed this desire "in the name of democracy". Ariel (S) states that "students have views that are worth listening to," but she also wished that the students were part of its implementation.

To sum up, not only are School B's stakeholders well-informed about their SVS and the values underpinning it, they also embrace it and identify with it.

The stakeholders' attitude towards their SVS characterises School B and distinguishes it from other schools. Another way to gain insight into the school's character and institutional life is the examination of its organisational culture, as explained below.

### **5.3.2 School Culture**

As it is the intention of this research to study the three schools it focuses on, an attempt has been made to find out what distinguishes each one of them and to identify the similarities and differences between them. To this end, the examination of a school's internal culture which has been recommended by educational researchers as defining the school's character has been adopted in this research. The theoretical aspects of school culture have been dealt with in the Literature Review Chapter, pp. 55-8).

As expanded on in the Literature Review (see pp. 18-24), the criteria which were suggested by the educational research for the evaluation of a viable SV are similar to those which define the school's culture: content, homogeneity, and strength. Such similarity is understandable, as the school culture is rooted in its SVS and its underlying values. The SVS and the school's culture are therefore interwoven under the leadership of the head teacher to define the character of the school. The corresponding three main criteria that define a viable School Vision are referenced in the research literature: Clarity and coherence; Stakeholders' familiarity with the SV, and the implementation of the values underpinning the SVS. Based on the testimonies of the stakeholders presented above, all three criteria are, broadly speaking, met by School B.

To recap, the examination of the alignment of the components of the SV and the school culture therefore presents a way to learn about School B's unique traits. School B's stakeholders describe the organisational culture of their school as demarcated by a chain of compatibilities between stakeholders' views and various components of the SVS and the school culture.

### 5.3.2.1 What is Declared vs. What is Meant

As mentioned earlier, the research literature defines coherence and clarity of the SVS, focusing on providing direction and specific goals, as one of the criteria for its meaningfulness and effectiveness.

School B's SVS is clear and coherent, articulated in simple terms, neither too long nor too abstract.. Most of the stakeholders are familiar with it and accept it as a reference point for school activity. The SVS is straight forward enough to be understood, appealing enough to evoke commitment, and credible enough to be accepted as realistic and attainable. The common use of the term 'realisation of student potential' is an example that when School B's stakeholders formulate their goals, meaning exactly what is stated in their SVS. Compatibility as such is likely to breed confidence and adherence.

From stakeholders' testimonies, it is clear that the SVS presents a strong sense of purpose, which they share, and a view of a better future (Burns, 1978; Nanus, 1992), associating it as they do with the terms 'lighthouse' and 'compass.'

The head-teacher is unequivocal about the two main roles of his school, as is the text of the SVS:

- To enable every student to complete the final exams (*Bagrut*) to the best of their ability.
- To inculcate human values in students.

Most of the stakeholders are familiar with the SVS and agree with the values and the goals specified in it, but some of them are not sure about the priorities it champions.



They describe it like a seesaw – sometimes the moral values prevail, but often academic excellence has the upper hand (Ariel, Meira, Avital – S). Nevertheless, School B's SVS seems clear, coherent and attainable to the majority of its stakeholders.

#### **5.3.2.2 School Values vs Stakeholders Values**

The second attribute of a meaningful SV is, according to the research literature, a vision shared by stakeholders. A shared organisational vision is one that all members of the organisation are committed to, as it reflects their personal vision. Thus, it enables them to bring their own desires, values and standpoints together with the goals of the organisation and its future directions of development.

The majority of School B's stakeholders testified to their identification with the SVS's values. Most of them, especially the teachers, stated that their personal worldview synchronised with the SV. The parents shared the teachers' view, expressing admiration for the way the school is run and the values it represents. The students noted that the teachers considered themselves as representatives of the school ethos, responsible for the dissemination of the school values. The research offers two explanations for the importance of stakeholders' involvement: The desire to feel needed and appreciated, and the need for a sense of ownership. The collaboration with the school stakeholders concerning matters of value bind them together and establish group ownership of school vision and a sense of self-worth, which characterises School B's culture. The communication of the SV and direction contributes to the well-being of the stakeholders, as well as to school effectiveness.

#### **5.3.2.3 Testimonies by Different Stakeholder Groups**

It is not common to find similar views expressed by the different stakeholder groups concerning their institution like we do in School B. It seems that members of all three stakeholder groups felt very much at home in their school and (except for one teacher) unanimously expressed a most favourable attitude towards it. This is not to say

that there was no criticism on the part of the stakeholders. On the contrary – they do criticise openly certain aspects of the school conduct, but overall the positive attitude and the involvement was maintained.

The students and the parents felt attended to and respectfully treated. The teachers were perceived by the students as fulfilling an important role in the organisation, as agents of the SV's values. The concept of role-modeling is prevalent among the head-teacher and the staff members of School B. Research has shown that modeling can be an effective way to teach knowledge, skills, and behaviour, motivate students to learn, and help students develop values. The impact of role modeling is enhanced by a nurturing attitude, one of the main traits of School B. It appears that the combination of the convergence around the values of the SV, the respectful dialogue between the stakeholders, and the role modeling are the basis for their compatible views regarding the school and its ethos.

#### **5.3.2.4 What is Said vs. What is Done**

In the research literature, the assumption is that a SVS is valuable if, and only if, its values are inculcated in everyday and are relevant to the school's activity. It should reflect the organisation's common aims and aspirations and serve as a platform for the decision-making process in the organisation. Moreover, inconsistency between declarations and practice has confused students and decreased both the likelihood of emulation and educational effectiveness.

As demonstrated above, a lot of School B's activity is consistent with the values constituting its SVS, and the stakeholders are fully aware of the linkage between the two. Both teachers and students point out the degree of fit between what is said and what is done, and bring a lot of examples of the salience of the SVS's values in everyday activity. In their interviews, most of them clearly express the notion that their SVS is viable, feasible and relevant to their lives (see section on 'School Vision Implementation,' pp. 172-83). It is important to note the unanimity of stakeholders'

position towards the issue of implementation. All three groups mention similar examples of how the values of the SVS are realised, which adds to the credibility of their testimonies.

### **5.3.2.5 Head Teacher's Leadership Style and Strategies**

Two major characteristics stood out from the stakeholders' statements regarding their institution and its School Vision Statement:

- The head-teacher's personality and leadership style.
- His effective stakeholder management.

School B's head-teacher's personality has been previously discussed (see pp. 157-9 above). As for his leadership style, the combination of strong academic aspirations with social values creates a culture which balances collaboration with achievement orientation and commends attention to the individual needs of the stakeholders. This is the basis for the definition of his definition as a 'caring leader,' a source of inspiration for school achievement.

### **5.3.3 School Climate**

Analysis of the interviews with School B's stakeholders in regard to their SVS allowed the portrayal of a comprehensive description of the school climate, sometimes defined as the 'organisational personality of the school', which distinguishes one school from another.. School climate entails the total environmental quality of the organisation and is, as such, broader than culture and in fact encompasses the latter. Whereas school culture is defined as 'a set of shared assumptions,' the school climate is based on 'a set of shared perceptions'. Climate was used in this study to describe the school in its entirety, including the relationship between individuals and groups, the physical surroundings and the characteristics of individuals and groups participating in the organisation.

The impression one gets from School B's stakeholders' perceptions of their school, as detailed in the analysis of their interviews above, is that there is an air of confidence and complacency among the stakeholders. School B's staff members show affection towards their school and genuine care for their students, and the students (as well as their parents) feel it and appreciate this. The parents testify that, as opposed to what is common in other schools, at School B they are treated as partners. The students point out that school staff is attentive and helpful.

The reports of the students are most significant in this respect, as they are known to be sensitive to routinized or meaningless practices disguised as caring. Therefore, one of the most impressive findings emerging from the analysis of School B's stakeholders' reports is the position taken by the students towards their school. It is not a common phenomenon for students of this age to acknowledge what the school does for them and to be genuinely grateful for it. Most of School B's students embrace the values of their school, and express appreciation for the way they are treated by school management and staff. They feel that what is declared by the school authorities is actually rooted in the school culture and implemented in its everyday practice. According to their testimonies, the school teachers (though not all of them) attend to their needs and ideas, encourage their initiatives and do their best to improve the students' academic achievements as well as their sense of belonging. Despite some reservations on their part, School B's students generally consider SVS relevant and applicable. This is a point which will be dealt with in the cross-case analysis of the three schools.

#### **5.3.4 Conclusion: A Complete School Experience**

The data gathered from School B's stakeholders confirms the contention that a collaborative culture or community, such as that of School B, leads to higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues, improved professional satisfaction, improved instructional practices, and better outcomes for all students and school change that is maintained over time. The school is held responsible, as a living and learning

environment, for creating a favourable climate where students are supported by teachers and feel psychologically and physiologically well. The research literature mentions a couple of factors which are perceived as contributing to the well-being of the school stakeholders: A shared vision (the presence of shared objectives), shared leadership (as many participants as possible involved in decision-making process), effective communication strategies (support and trust), responsiveness towards stakeholders' expectations and views, capability of coping with changes and innovations and reflectivity on the part of the school staff.

Having analysed the interviews of a sample of School B's stakeholders, my conclusion is that all the indicators mentioned above can be found in its organisational culture, thus creating a favourable climate, distinguished by the integration of well-being values with subject knowledge imperatives. As explained above, such climate may provide an explanation for both the high academic achievements and the sense of well-being of its educational stakeholders.

Next, I will discuss School C. Whereas the population of School B is homogeneous in composition, at School C we find a highly heterogeneous population. Such diversity presents a challenge for the school staff to create a collaborate vision, which attends to the various needs and expectations of its diverse population. However, School C strives (and succeeds) to reach a similar level of achievements and well-being among the students as the other two schools, despite its difficult starting point, as will be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS FROM SCHOOL C**

### **6.1 Background**

#### **6.1.1 Introduction**

The third school examined in this research is the institution henceforth referred to as School C. School C is situated in an impoverished neighbourhood in the south-western part of Tel-Aviv and caters for its local, low SES population.

#### **6.1.2 Sources of Information**

Information about School C and its head-teacher was obtained from school publications, stakeholder interviews, the school's website, local press and the internet. Information about the head-teacher was also deduced from his overt conduct. Concepts and theories specifically relevant to School C were expanded on in the form of an index (see Appendix B, pp. 361-8).

#### **6.1.3 Demographic Details of School C's Participants**

As was the case with at the other two schools, a list of potential interviewees (teachers, students and parents) was suggested by School C's management. I subsequently approached all interview candidates, and of those, the head-teacher, five prominent teachers, five students also serving as members of the Student Council, and three active PTA parents, were eventually selected and interviewed. The data provided by these participants constituted a prime source of information for this study. The participants' demographic data is presented in the following tables.

### 6.1.3.1 Staff

Alias	F/M	Age	Education	Tenure (at School C)	Comments
Jacob	M	60	BA+ Head-Teacher Training	20 (17)	<b>Head-Teacher</b>
Zoe	F	42	MA	17 (16)	Vice Head-Teacher
Aaron	M	35	MA	12 (8)	
Olivia	F	59	MA	33 (31)	
Andy	M	33	BA	1 (1)	
Emma	F	50	BA	26 (26)	

**Table 6.1: Demographic Data of School C's Staff**

### 6.1.3.2 Students

Alias	F/M	Age	Years at School C	Major Subjects	Student Council Role	Parents' Education	Comments
Etan	M	17	4	Physics, Biology, Spanish	Member	Mother & Father - High-School Diploma	Newcomer (S. America); Catholic
Amelia	F	16	6	Biology, Chemistry	Member	Mother - BA Father - High-School Diploma	Newcomer (Uzbekistan); Jewish
Mia	F	17	5	Biology, Chemistry	Member	Mother - BA Father - High-School Diploma	Jewish
Sofia	F	17.5	6	Biology, Spanish	Member	Mother & Father - High-School Diploma	Arab; Moslem
Lily	F	16	4	Biology, Chemistry	-	Mother & Father - High-School Diploma	Newcomer (Uzbekistan); Jewish

**Table 6.2: Demographic Data of School C's Students**

### 6.1.3.3 Parents

Alias	F/M	Age	Occupation	Education	PTA	Comments
Sarah	F	43	Welfare worker	BA	Member	3 <sup>rd</sup> child at School C
Lea	F	49	Welfare worker	High-School Diploma	Member	3 <sup>rd</sup> child at School C
Caleb	M	45	Bookkeeper	High-School Diploma	Member	3 <sup>rd</sup> child at School C

**Table 6.3: Demographic Data of School C's Parents**

### 6.1.4 School History

The school was founded in the 1940s as a Palestinian institution. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1949 it became an elementary school, part of the Israeli education system. After 1957, it functioned as a high school, described in the local press (nrg, 2010, full reference omitted due to ethical considerations – N.M) as entirely distinct from what it is today: an elitist establishment, prestigious, serving top Jewish students from the neighbouring cities. Over the last 20 years, prosperous Jewish residents gradually left the neighbourhood for "better" parts of Tel-Aviv, leaving behind an impoverished Arab and Jewish population. Concurrently, immigrants, mainly from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia, settled in the area. Consequently, the school's composition changed completely. It has both junior-high and high-school classes, with a mixed population, Arab and Jewish, studying together in the same campus.

### 6.1.5 School Facilities

The campus contains a modern library, with an advanced computer centre, music equipment and sitting areas; a modern sports centre, indoors and outdoors; up-to-date science laboratories; and a state-of-the-art projection room. The premises are



impressively maintained: they are clean and well-preserved, and tastefully decorated both inside and out.

A school publication, distributed among the families of potential students, describes what the school offers to the new students:

- Small study groups
- An after-hours learning centre offering academic support
- A selection of individual learning plans
- Special classes: Communications, Sports, Geography, Art, and Science
- An academic class for excellent students in every age-group
- A remedial teaching centre in Mathematics, Language, and Emotional Support via Music and Art
- A supportive and encouraging staff

#### **6.1.6 School Composition**

School C is an Israeli-Jewish school by definition, situated in an impoverished neighbourhood in the south-west part of Tel-Aviv, and caters for the local population. The high school's population is 70% Jewish (including a fair share of immigrants, mainly from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia) and 30% non-Jewish (mainly Arabs, Muslims and Christian, but also Armenians) as well as students from mixed Arab-Jewish families. This is reflected in the school's deprivation index (termed in Israel "care index") which is very high (6). The index is comprised of four parameters (parents' level of education; income per person in a family; school location; and percentage of immigrants) and guides the allocation of resources, compensating deprived populations for perceived educational deficiency. The mixed population and its low SES are the two characteristics which, for the most part, determine the school culture.

### **6.1.7 School Staff**

School C employs approximately 80 teachers, most of who work across all grades. Seventy five percent of the staff members are female. A third of the teachers are fairly young (aged between 30-40), and all hold academic degrees (BA and MA). The school staff members display devotion to their work at school, describing it as their vocation. The head-teacher attaches great importance to the quality of school staff. He defined his own role in the following words: "At the optimistic crossroad between the problems and their solutions, the head-teacher is the gate keeper who decides who is qualified to work in a school like ours." Andy (T) agreed, saying that "it is most important that the teachers will be high-quality in our school and in the whole country." Zoe (T) stated that, "teachers lead the way and naturally are in the focus of the school activity." The same sense of self-worth was expressed by Aaron (T): "The teachers in our school are first and foremost educators. They all speak the same educational language, inspired by the leadership of the head-teacher." According to the head-teacher, academic competence is not enough. "To be able to serve in our school, one has to be sensitive and responsible for the learning process. Those who lack these characteristics cannot survive."

It is worth mentioning that at the time of the study, over 65% of the teachers had been teaching in School C for more than five years, whereas the average rate of teachers who have been teaching for more than five years in the Israeli education system, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2017), is approximately 24%. The 65% rate may suggest that these teachers have stayed because they cannot get employment elsewhere; but from their interviews, one understands that they are content and even proud and this is why they stay put.

School C teachers see themselves as an elite unit. Aaron (T) defined the teachers as the backbone of the school. When asked how he selects the teachers for his school, the head-teacher identified their professional abilities as the main criterion. Regarding

caring, he relies on a natural process of selection: "Those who lack empathy do not last in our school", because caring is one of the main values of the school culture. A feedback procedure conducted by the municipality supported the teachers' self-assessment: 90% of students and parents rated the teachers and teaching level in the school at 4.22 out of 5 – higher than the municipal average (4.06%). All the teachers testify to total commitment to the school and its School Vision (SV), to the extent of devotion and identification: "If the teachers did not live the school values, our work would be futile." (Zoe – T).

### **6.1.8 School Achievements**

The school's culture is the intersection where interests of the students (and their families) meet those of staff and management. All interviewed stakeholders accept the assumption that education is a key to social mobility and work together towards this goal. Such collaboration supports impressive results: An 80% matriculation pass rate – earning the school a prize from the Prime Minister – on the one hand, and graduates who take pride in helping others and contributing to the community, on the other.

School C's success came through a process of gradual growth, as described by the head teacher. As matriculation scores improved (from 50% 10 years prior to the research, to 65% later on, and eventually, to 80% in the year prior to my study), demand for the school increased, as did the school population, from 390 students, 10 years before the study to 600 students. Similarly, the number of high school students increased, from 30 students eight years before the current study to 200 students in the year before; the number of students studying Physics and Chemistry at the highest level grew from 5 students eight years ago, to 60 students. The gradual growth, together with students' and parents' content, testifies to the success of the school management and staff in achieving their goals.

Three organisational school properties are expected to predict the achievements of students from a low SES: The academic emphasis of the school, the collective efficacy of the faculty, and the faculty's trust in parents and students. At least the first two properties are evidenced in School C. As for the third (i.e. faculty's trust in parents) the efforts of the management and staff in this direction have not yet borne the expected fruit, but staff is not discouraged and continue to seek ways to incorporate parents in school activities.

### **6.1.9 Head-Teacher**

The head-teacher is a prominent figure in School C, and a source of inspiration to staff, students and parents, his guidance demarcating school culture. According to his own testimony (corroborated by most interviewees), he keeps in close touch with all stakeholders. As will be seen from the analysis of interviews conducted in School C, he is respected (e.g. "All is made possible because of the head-teacher, who is super-sensitive and caring, and therefore the most suitable person for a population like ours" – Emma (T)) and trusted ("It is clear that he will back me up in everything I do; He is a caring leader of the first degree!" – Zoe (T)).

#### **6.1.9.1 Biography**

In his mid-sixties at the time of the study, School C's head-teacher was born in North Africa to a family that immigrated to Israel when the head-teacher was a child. He grew up on a Kibbutz, a peripheral settlement in the south of Israel, later attending a boarding school in Jerusalem. His first career was in the Israeli Defence Force, where he became a high-ranking officer. However, his passion was always education ("Since I was 20 years-old, I knew that I want to be an educator or a school head-teacher"). After retiring from the army, he studied for a teacher's license and graduated from a head-teachers course, through a retraining procedure offered by the army to retired officers. For three years, he served as head-teacher in an elementary school situated in a very poor neighbourhood, which served as preparation for his current position: 17 years as

head teacher of School C. He holds a BA in History, and teaches History and humanity-enrichment classes.

#### **6.1.9.2 Educational Perspective**

The head-teacher views his job as most important, as it is a position which enables him to influence the community, participate in changing educational processes, and serve stakeholders. "A head-teacher does not operate in void. He listens to the needs of the community, and collaborates with its members towards improvement." To this end, he maintains constant communication with teachers, students and parents, as well as with community establishments. At the beginning of each year, he convenes personal conversations with all the students, in the presence of relevant staff members, where a contract is signed with each individual student. The "contract" consists of the student's personal plans and aspirations for the coming year, combined with the school expectations and follow-up procedures on the implementation of the plan. This procedure creates an additional source of information for the school to learn about the students' CCIs (Claims, Concerns, and Issues), and to support them.

All the stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) mentioned frequent conversations with the head-teacher, whether on personal or public issues. There are plans to turn the school into a comprehensive school incorporating elementary, junior high and high school wings. This is probably due to the school's contemporary success. Parents were concerned with the impact of this decision on their children, uncertain whether the change would be in their best interest. The head-teacher, faithful to his ways, arranged numerous talks with them, attempting to recruit them as partners to the process. He maintains that the ability to implement changes depends on the cooperation between school and home, and invests tremendous efforts in building such partnerships. As for the teachers, he testified that he probably did not communicate enough with the teachers. Having been made aware of complaints about this shortcoming, he reported trying to make amends. His openness to their criticism and subsequent reflection and action supported his, and others, descriptions of a sensitive, caring leader.

### **6.1.9.3 Purpose of Schooling**

The head-teacher thinks that the role of a school is to prepare the students for their future, offering them a better life than that at home – a view shared by all stakeholders. He assumes that poverty has a negative impact on student achievements, and that lower levels of academic achievement and educational attainment contribute to lower levels of economic success and social mobility. Another consequence of an impoverished school surrounding described by him is a lack of parental guidance, creating a gap that only the school can fill. "In a school like ours", he says, "with its low socio-economic status of the parents, two things are essential: A great number of grown-ups who are meaningful to the students, including the school administrative staff (guards, librarians, laboratory technicians) and students from the neighbouring college, as well as a lot of devotion and good will on the part of the grown-ups." Following this line of thought, support is continuously on offer to the students. The head-teacher uses his networking abilities to create partnerships with a neighbouring college (87 college students offer help to the students), the municipality, the Ministry of Education, donors, community institutions, and parents.

Education, for School C's head-teacher, is the key to a better future, in common with the army service (or national service, the alternative for non-Jewish students). In School C, time and energy is invested in the preparation of students for army (or national) service: "Towards the military service, we bring in a lot of lecturers on the subject, and the community responds favourably" (Zoe – T). The head-teacher is pleased with the outcome of these efforts, the number of Arab students enlisting for army service on the increase in recent years.

#### **6.1.9.4 Stability**

School C's head-teacher further believes that stability and a sense of safety are essential for his students. Thus, he waits for the students every morning at the school gate (and has done so for 17 years) to greet the students. He strongly believes in role modelling, and never fails to be courteous, fair, attentive, and punctual. He also leads an effective campaign against violence in school, the school coming first in a national anti-violence competition held by the Ministry of Education. The students indeed feel safe, and define the school as their "safety net" and "shelter."

Nevertheless, the most prominent indications of his headship are his sensitivity and his collaborative leadership style. It thus seems reasonable to describe him as a caring leader, as he emphasises academic aspirations and concurrently promotes the well-being of his educational stakeholders.

A comprehensive discussion of the school context and its relationship with the head-teacher's leadership style will be presented below (see Cross-Case Analysis Chapter, pp. 246-92).

## **6.2 VISION STATEMENT**

### **6.2.1 The Formal Vision Statement**

Following is a verbatim translation of School C's formal Vision Statement (my emphases – N.M.):

**Main Role:** To enable the growth of an educated, value-guided graduate, self-aware and contributing to society.

**Basic Values:** Pluralism, accountability, responsibility, solidarity, camaraderie.

***The School Platform:*** Hebrew education, and respectful communication in a multi-national and multi-religious classroom.

***Core Principles:***

- The school is a state high school which maintains a climate of *courtesy, mutual respect, equality, acceptance of each pupil regardless of religion, race or gender*, of personal and group *responsibility, of caring, creation of trust and friendship*. These are the foundations of the school's way of life.
- The school formulates a value-based infrastructure, which suits *citizens in a Jewish-Democratic country*. The school nurtures *a feeling of belonging and involvement of each pupil with the land, the state and the community, while honoring each pupil's culture and acceptance of his differences*.
- The school develops in each pupil a *social-community commitment and a readiness to give and to accept help as part of their social commitment*. The school will act to create *a caring community*, where pupils feel valued and belonging to the school and the community.
- The school strives to provide *a solution for each pupil, while relating to their individuality and the differences in each and every one of them*. It will encourage and foster *the potential that is inherent in each pupil*, will direct them towards excellence, and will give them tools and skills for realizing the unique potential of each pupil. While doing so, it will develop *skills for the educated and enlightened use of knowledge and advanced technologies*, will *train pupils capable of independent, intelligent and moral thinking, responsible for their positions and actions*.



### 6.2.2 Vision Statement Content

According to the research literature, the first criterion of a meaningful School Vision Statement is the clarity and coherence of its content. As aforementioned, a clear and coherent vision reflects the core values and core purpose of the organisation, and provides guidelines for decision-making. Four traits define the quality of the SVS's content:

- (1) Not too general
- (2) Practical and feasible
- (3) Not too long
- (4) Drafted in collaboration with stakeholders and reflects their interests

To my mind, School C's SVS meets each of these criteria. Moreover, the head teacher chose to display a concise list of the values underpinning the SVS in the teachers' lounge, making it even easier to remember and implement:

- Solidarity
- Camaraderie
- Pluralism
- Responsibility
- Accountability

The basic values (Pluralism, Accountability and Responsibility, Solidarity and Camaraderie) count more than aspirations or goals. They constitute the *raison d'être* of the school, as stated by the head-teacher and corroborated by all stakeholders. I have chosen to combine accountability and responsibility, and solidarity and camaraderie, as

individual categories, as they are closely related; the stakeholders do not differentiate between them, and refer to each set of values as one.

As specified in the Literature Review Chapter (pp. 25-7), despite some variations found in the research literature regarding the content of vision statements, vision (in both business and educational settings) tends to include future oriented/optimistic statements, to emphasize intrinsic values, challenges and opportunities, as well as focus on providing direction and specific goals. School C's SVS content includes all the above.

School C's SVS expresses trust in the competence of each student, while considering and accepting their individual traits. The school ambition, to "train pupils capable of independent, intelligent and moral thinking, responsible for their positions and actions," is both future-oriented and optimistic. The endeavour to encourage academic excellence, together with the strengthening of the sense of belonging, self-esteem and commitment to the community, all constitute specific goals and direction. The text also relays the belief that friendship and mutual respect are viable options, despite the complexity of the school's composition.

As to intrinsic values, School C's SVS is comprised of *inter-personal values* (Courtesy; Mutual Respect; Equality; Acceptance of each pupil regardless of religion, race or gender; Caring; Personal and Group Responsibility; Creation of Trust; and, Friendship); *social values* (social-community commitment and readiness to give and to accept help, to create a caring community, where pupils feel valued and belonging to the school and the community); *civic values* (citizens in a Jewish-Democratic country, involvement of each pupil with the land, the state and the community); *educational/academic values* (encouraging and fostering students' potential, while relating to their individuality and the differences, developing skills for the educated and enlightened use of knowledge and advanced technologies and directing them towards excellence by providing them with tools and skills for realizing the unique potential of each pupil).

School C's SVS clearly defines direction and specific goals. All the stakeholders expressed unanimous conception of the challenges the school sets out to meet: raising a graduate who is educated, value-guided, self-aware and able to contribute to society, under the umbrella of the Israeli education system. The final objective is to promote student socioeconomic mobility. The underlying principle is the separation of state affairs from religion: each student is entitled to their own religious belief and culture, but the school is an Israeli school by definition, aspiring to inculcate Israeli culture and values.

### 6.2.3 Stakeholders' Familiarity with the School Vision

The second criterion of a viable SVS is the extent that it is shared with the stakeholders. One way of assessing this was to explore their familiarity with the contents of their SVS. The stakeholders were asked to provide a numerical estimate of their familiarity with their SVS, and to then mention three examples of the values that underpin it. The average rate of School C stakeholders' familiarity with their SV (according to their own estimate) is 4.1 – significantly higher than the average rate in the other two schools investigated in this research. The table below sums up the number of stakeholders in each group who mentioned a certain value out of the total number of the group members (e.g. 5/6), and the table demonstrates the comparison between the stakeholders' perceptions of their SV and the values underpinning the formal SVS of School C as a whole:

School Vision Statement	Categories	Teachers	Parents	Students
School C is a public high-school that maintains <i>de-facto</i> a climate of courtesy, mutual respect, equality, and inclusivity, regardless of religion, race or gender.	Pluralism, Equality, and Tolerance	(Head-Teacher, Andy, Zoe, Aaron, Olivia) 5/6	(Sarah, Leah, Caleb) 3/3	(Sofia, Lily, Etan, Amelia) 4/5

**Table 6.4: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Their SV and Its Underpinning Values**

<b>School Vision Statement</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Students</b>
The school will also promote independent thinking by its students based on intelligent and moral judgements, as well as foster their accountability with respect to their views and actions.	Accountability, Responsibility, and Credibility	(Head-Teacher, Andy, Emma, Aaron) 4/6		(Sofia, Lily, Etan, Amelia) 4/5
The school strives to encourage its students to realise their potential, guide them toward excellence, and equip them with the necessary skills and tools to maximise their individual abilities. Concurrently, the school will develop in its students appropriate skills to enable the enlightened utilisation of progressive knowledge-bases and technologies.	Academic Achievements and Success	(Head-Teacher , Andy, Zoe, Aaron, Olivia) 5/6	(Sarah, Leah, Caleb) 3/3	(Sofia, Mia, Lily, Etan, Amelia) 5/5
School C creates an infrastructure suitable for citizens in a democratic Jewish state. It cultivates in each of its students a sense of belonging to, and involvement in, to the country, the state and the community, while respecting their individual culture and uniqueness as human beings.	A Sense of Belonging	(Head-Teacher, Andy) 2/6	(Leah) 1/3	(Etan) 1/5

**Table 6.4: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Their SV and Its Underpinning Values (Cont.)**

The degree of fit between the values underpinning the SV and the ones specified by the stakeholders is clearly shown in the table above, more so among the teachers (average rate 4.25 per value) and the students (3.75 per value), less so among the parents. This result is consistent with the assumption that low-SES parents tend to be less involved in their children's schools than high SES parents (Smith, 2006; Ferguson, 2007), as well as with the testimonies of teachers and students regarding their parents' involvement as well as their own.

Apart from the mastery of the teachers regarding the values underpinning the SV, what is most impressive is the way each one of them embraced it and interpreted it according to their role in the school and their own worldview.

Andy (T) presented himself as an idealist who believes in social responsibility. A reserve pilot in the Israeli Air force, he chose to become a teacher – specifically at this school – because he believes in education as a means to break the vicious circle of poverty and ignorance. He observed that "it is essential that the teachers will be value-guided people of quality. It is a national interest." Andy was less interested in the verbal conceptualization of the SV values, more their presence in the everyday culture of the school. His choice of preferred values reflected his views: "equal opportunities, equality, pluralism and success, as well as personal and social accountability."

Aaron (T), the school's Mathematics coordinator interpreted the SV in the terms of his profession (as well as the other way round). When asked about his immediate association with the term 'vision,' he responded with a series of questions as follows:

- How do we encourage the love for learning?
- Excellence = Academic achievements or moral and social values?
- Contribution to the community?
- The ideal graduate: Matriculation scores or also human values?

Aaron (T) reflected deeply about the SV, and how it should find expression in mathematics lessons. He says: "I am very familiar with the School Vision, and have constructed the vision of mathematics learning in compatibility to its values: The nurture of excellence among the students and the promotion of learning skills."

Emma (T), the school counsellor, sees the SV through her own prism: emotional development, support and care. She mentions the inculcation of personal accountability and self-trust in the students as the main challenges of the school, especially because of the tendency of the students to regard themselves as deprived victims. Emma believes that unstinting support of the school and the expectation of accountability might be the stimulus for hard work, motivation and success on the part of the students. Her choice of preferred values was "Accountability, respectful communication, solidarity and care."

Zoe (T), in charge of pedagogical issues, placed emphasis on the awareness of the correlation between hard work and success, via academic achievement. She took pride in the fact that School C, despite its poor operating conditions, had a relatively high matriculation pass rate, and a fair percentage of graduates who enter higher education. All this, she contends, is due to "the high awareness of the students to the connection between academic achievements and success in life." This is also her preferred value in the SV.

Olivia (T), the social activity coordinator, testified that she constructs the social activity plan of the school on the basis of SV values: "One cannot build a social education plan without being familiar with the School Vision." She describes a manual, specific to each age group, which contains a detailed plan for the school citizenship classes. A follow-up feedback form must be completed by each form tutor, specifying the subject of the lesson, who has responsibility for it, time span, and – last but not least – the SV value the lesson emphasised. Her preferred values were: "Israeli identity [not included in the SVS - NM], multi-culturalism and social involvement."

Every staff member chose her/his own angle of interpretation of SV values, putting it to action in their own way. The integration of the different outlooks creates an apparent synergy, enabling school staff to work as a unified group, gathered around the values of the SV.

Three values mentioned by the stakeholders are not part of the actual SVS. These values clearly reflect the issues that preoccupy each of the interviewees: the head-teacher and Olivia (T), the social activity coordinator, mentioned "Israeli identity," reflecting their effort to maintain the hegemony of Israeli culture in the school, despite the difficulties this goal entails. Etan and Mia (S) express their worry about the dangers of the neighbourhood the school is situated in, describing the school as providing them a "safe environment." "In school you are safe. You are not on the street," says Etan (S). Caleb (P) echoes the students' worries and mentions "less violence," a value implied, but not explicitly mentioned, in the SVS.

Nevertheless, for the most part, School C's VS reflects the views of the stakeholders as well as their concerns and interests, and in this sense sustains a major dimension of a meaningful VS: A unifying motto for members of the organisation working toward shared goals.. Such a unifying motto creates a sense of purpose that binds the school's stakeholders together to reach for ambitious goals, and they are encouraged to contribute their own views and values in developing a vision of what the future should be like.

The deep involvement of the stakeholders with their SV can probably be partly attributed to the constant debate of the SV in various school forums and non-formal conversations. The extent to which it is shared with the stakeholders is another criterion of a viable SV, as specified in the Literature Review Chapter.

#### **6.2.4 Sharing the School Vision with Stakeholders**

A second attribute which defines a viable vision is its dissemination among stakeholders. A shared organisational vision is one that all members of the organisation are committed to, as it reflects their personal vision and enables them to bring their own desires, values and standpoints together with the goals of the organisation and its future directions of development. The development of a shared vision is often viewed as vital to channeling energy toward a unified goal. The importance of vision lies, *inter alia*, in the way it relates to basic human needs: to feel needed and appreciated and to believe that one can contribute to a meaningful change in the world.

With regard to educational institutions, however, vision should not be construed merely as a tool for motivating teachers. It is – or at least, it should be – projected to students, parents and the community, at the same time reflecting the needs, interests, values and beliefs of the school community. From the reports of School C's stakeholders, one learns that the SV is not only thoroughly shared with stakeholders, but also reflects their interests, beliefs and concerns.

##### **6.2.4.1 Communication of the SV**

According to School C's stakeholder testimonies, the SV is constantly debated in school forums of students and parents, but less so in teachers' meetings. However, it is unanimously described as an integral part of the current discourse in the school.

Three of the five students (Sofia, Mia and Amelia) mentioned discussions of the SV in the Student Council meetings. Lily (S), to take another example, described "many conversations with the students in which the head-teacher and the teachers refer to the School Vision." Etan (S) corroborated Lily's statement, saying that, "mainly, it is in the air." Amelia and Etan (S) identify the beginning of the year as a time of more intensive discussions of the SV and its values, and (not less important) the SV is displayed in the teachers' lounge (Amelia – S). In general, all five students thought it very important that



the students be familiar with the values that comprise the SV. "The students have to be aware of the School Vision so that they internalise its values" (Mia, Amelia – S). Sofia (S) added that, "the fact that I chose to study in this school means that I want to be part of the school's aims." All of them express the wish to take part in drafting the School Vision, "because our views and preferences need to find expression in it." (Mia – S). To sum up, the efforts invested by the school management and staff to inculcate the values of the SV in the students are evidently successful: Not only are the students profoundly familiar with the SV, they consider it important and relevant to their life at school.

As for the teachers, most of them do not seem to attach too much importance to formal occasions of discussing the SV. They prefer to regard SV values as intertwined in the everyday discourse and action. Andy (T) noted that "I cannot recall a formal discussion of the School Vision as such (maybe because I am often absent from teachers' gatherings due to military service), but informally I encounter it a lot – via the pedagogic coordinator and the head-teacher, their initiatives and their actions." In general, teachers highlighted the incorporation of SV values into their everyday activity, including classes and meetings (Aaron, Zoe – T). There is little verbal conceptualization of the School Vision (Andy – T), and the most part of discussing the School Vision occurs "while dealing with value-guided dilemmas, like the problem of copying in a test. Then there will be a reference to the School Vision Statement" (Emma – T).

#### **6.2.4.2 Drafting Procedure of the SV**

The procedure of drafting the SVS was reported mainly by the teachers taking part in this research, probably because it had taken place before the interviewed students and their parents joined the school. In this context, the head-teacher describes a structured process. Preliminary phases, in which "a series of lectures [were] offered to the School staff regarding a variety of values, of which the values of the School Vision were selected." Subsequently "stakeholders' groups (teachers, students, parents) were organised, and teachers led discussions regarding themes that seemed important to them. In this way we managed to have the whole team take part in the process." Aaron (T), who took part in drafting the SV, expanded on the procedure. "There was a variety

of partners: The teachers, the parents, students, representatives from the college, the municipality etc. A couple of meetings took place, and all the partners together drafted the School Vision, contributing their views to it." Only then 'round table' deliberations took place, leading eventually to an ensemble session, in which the draft of the School Vision was finalised" (Olivia – T). Both Olivia and Zoe (T), who took part in designing the School Vision, described the same process in similar words. Olivia (T) remarks that the process "started out as a formal requirement, but then we got carried away and the School Vision became a list of values we act upon – no connection to formality."

Four staff members out of six participated in drafting the SV. Andy (T), a new teacher, did not take part in it, whereas Emma (T), the school consultant, reported that she "sees herself as part of the team that drafted the School Vision Statement, though she was not present in the actual drafting itself." She testified to working on a regular basis with the social activity coordinator, to work out the social-emotional work plan. Naturally, she says, this called for constant reference to the SVS. All the above supports the notion that the process of drafting of the SV added to the collaborative character of the school, and its relevance to school culture.

Four measures of an organisational shared vision are specified in the research literature: that all the stakeholders are committed to it; that it reflects the stakeholders' personal vision; that the common energy is channelled towards a unified goal; and that the stakeholders believe that it contributes to a meaningful change in the world. All four criteria mentioned above are met in School C. There is a consensus among all the stakeholders, staff, students, and parents that the main goal of the school is to facilitate change, opportunities for social mobility via education. To this end the staff strive, far beyond the standard, to create a positive climate which enables the students to abandon their original social identity (low SES population group) and become a part of another social group that they identify with: the school. The parents and the students share the aspiration for mobility, the latter experiencing a change in their self-esteem and self-trust.

### **6.2.5 School Vision Implementation**

Implementation of its values is the ultimate criterion for a meaningful and viable School Vision Statement. On the other hand, if these values do not find expression in the school culture, they become empty phrases. It seems that resourceful implementation of the values underpinning its SV is one of the major strengths of School C. The head-teacher and staff attach more importance to the practical performance of the SV values than their verbal articulation. When asked about parents' familiarity with the SV, the head-teacher hesitated: "Parents? Maybe three... difficult to assess... but surely they are aware of our investment in pluralism, belonging, achievements and success. These are values you cannot miss as they are practiced all the time." Etan (S) expressed similar sentiments: "There is not a lot of discussion of the School Vision, but there is certainly lots of implementation." The interviews with the teachers, the students and the parents verify the head-teacher's assumption, citing ample examples of activities and the SV values they relate to, and constant reference to the correlation between the two. Olivia (T) described an "education book" kept for every age level, compiling the school activities for each month. Each form tutor reports activities held in class, subject, time frame, who was responsible and which value of the SV it referred to. Emma (T) summed it up in a simple sentence: "In fact, the School Vision is the basis the school activity and the school culture."

In the following table, one can see the complete picture of stakeholders' conceptions of the school activity in relation to the SV values:

<b>School Vision Core values</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<b>Pluralism, Equality, and Tolerance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "School test timetable" (Head-Teacher , Zoe)</li> <li>• "Lessons on the three religions" (Head-Teacher)</li> <li>• "All students take part in school activities" (Andy, Zoe)</li> <li>• "School radio" (Andy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The atmosphere is one of acceptance and tolerance" (Lily, Amelia)</li> <li>• "In all my years at school I never felt any kind of discrimination" (Sofia , Mia)</li> <li>• "I do not see the difference between the students" (Etan)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Despite the fact that the school is Jewish by definition, there is full consideration of students from other religions" (Sarah, Caleb)</li> <li>• "The school policy is equal treatment of all students, regardless of their religion or ethnicity" (Leah)</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability, Responsibility, and Credibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Scholarships conditioned by national service" (Head-Teacher, Emma)</li> <li>• "Meeting with pilots" (Andy)</li> <li>• "The student is expected to take responsibility for his conduct and cope with daily difficulties" (Emma)</li> <li>• "Because of the lack of parental backing, we expect our students to be extra-responsible, and at the same time to develop self-trust" (Aaron)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Help is rendered to those who show good will and motivation" (Sofia)</li> <li>• "Every student is responsible for his own assignments and progress" (Lily)</li> <li>• "The teachers push us – but eventually it is our responsibility" (Amelia)</li> <li>• "At first they help, but eventually they show you that what matters is you, and what you are willing to invest" (Etan)</li> </ul>	
<b>Solidarity and Camaraderie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Private tutoring of students by students" (Aaron)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The strong students help the weaker ones to keep pace" (Etan)</li> </ul>	
<b>Contribution to the Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Collaboration with significant community bodies" (Head-Teacher, Aaron)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "A lot of encouragement to volunteer" (Sofia, Mia, Etan, Amelia)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "They [teachers] encourage the students to volunteer and contribute to the community" (Leah)</li> </ul>
<b>Respectful Inter-Personal Dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Respectful communication on a daily basis" (Emma, Aaron, Olivia)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "A lot of personal communications with the teachers" (Lily)</li> </ul>	

**Table 6.5: Stakeholders' Conceptions of the School's Activity in relation to the School Vision's Values**

<b>School Vision Core values</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
<b>Support and Encourage- ment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The students are helped in and outside the school" (Emma, Zoe, Aaron)</li> <li>• "Inter-personal committees regarding student help" (Emma, Zoe)</li> <li>• "Recursive testing" (Zoe)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "They attend to the strengths of each student" (Mia)</li> <li>• "When there is a problem – there is always someone to turn to. No pity – just support" (Lily)</li> <li>• "Personal empowerment and development" (Mia)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Care for the weak – scholarships, tutoring (in collaboration with the college)" (Leah)</li> <li>• "They give the students all the support they need: and help them overcome difficulties. There is always a response to every problem, even financially, if needed" (Caleb)</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Achievements and Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We struggle to enable each student to graduate" (Emma)</li> <li>• "Special academic classes" (Emma)</li> <li>• "Awareness of the connection between studying and achievements" (Zoe)</li> <li>• "Military service – a key to success" (Zoe)</li> <li>• "We cultivate academic excellence and learning skills among the students" (Aaron)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "They wouldn't let any student quit. They push through until they succeed" (Lily,</li> <li>• "My school drives me towards success, lends a helping hand, backing, a feeling of safety" (Lily)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Lots of help to the students, diagnostic procedures in order to fit the syllabus to the individual student, resources available, collaboration with the college and its students" (Sarah)</li> <li>• "The school drives the students towards achievements, not in order to please anybody but for themselves, as value-guided human beings" (Caleb)</li> </ul>
<b>A Sense of Belonging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Graduate talks" (Head-teacher, Emma)</li> <li>• "Intensive preparation for the military service" (Zoe)</li> </ul>		

**Table 6.5: Stakeholders' Conceptions of the School's Activity in relation to the School Vision's Values (Cont.)**

The degree of fit between the values underpinning School C's VS and their implementation, based on the testimonies of the stakeholders, is striking. It is also worth noting that there is compatibility between the activities reported by the different groups, and among and between the stakeholders, which adds to the credibility of the information gathered. According to the stakeholders' testimony, the main values of School C's SVS are pluralism, accountability & responsibility, contribution to the community and respectful dialogue. The following paragraphs comprise a description of the way the stakeholders conceive the implementation of the SVS values in the school life. Later, in the Analysis chapter, an analytical discussion will be applied to the same issues.

#### **6.2.5.1 Pluralism**

Obviously, with a population like the one in School C, 'pluralism' is a central value of school culture. The teachers mention the various measurements taken in order to keep pluralism and equality among the students: (1) The test timetable is drawn in consideration of holy days of all religions; (2) Lessons concerning the values of the three main religions; and, (3) all the students take part in all activities, regardless of ethnicity (Head-teacher; Zoe – T).

All interviewed students describe the atmosphere in the school as usually calm and peaceful. As Sofia (S) put it: "In all my years at school I never felt any kind of discrimination. I never felt different." Zoe (T) expressed a similar notion: "There is a very sensitive attitude to political and historic events." The only ones who disclose cracks in the idyll are the parents. They acknowledge the fact the school policy is pluralistic, but are still worried about interactions between the Jewish and the Arab students (Leah, Sarah and Caleb – P).

### **6.2.5.2 Accountability and Responsibility**

Another main value in the School Vision Statement comprises accountability, responsibility and credibility. The teachers describe the relentless efforts made by the school staff to install self-trust and accountability in the students (Head-teacher, Andy, Emma, Aaron) by way of pastoral care on the one hand, and by stipulating conditions for getting help and support on the other. Some students (Etan, Amelia, Sofia) agree with Lily's (S) words: "Every student is responsible for his own assignments and progress." Sofia (S) added: "Help is rendered to those who show good will and motivation." Parents (Caleb, Leah, and Sarah – P) also mentioned the support offered to the students, but did not connect it to any conditioning. This can probably be attributed to the exact same reason that responsibility and accountability became a central value in the SV: As is often the case in underprivileged neighbourhoods, the school finds it hard to count on parental support. The parents are either too busy or too preoccupied to devote energy and time to their children.

Poverty therefore tends to impair parenting skills, and disengaged or negative parenting impairs children's school performance. School C chose, therefore, to fill in the gaps left by the students' parents. Amelia (S) observed that, "The school provides me with everything my parents are unable to provide." Aaron (T) presented this as the most difficult challenge faced by school staff: "Most of the students come from low-income families, many of them dysfunctional, where the parents do not assume responsibility for their children. [...] That is why we expect our students to be extra-responsible, and at the same time to develop self-trust."

On the other hand, school stakeholders unanimously conceive the role of the school as to create a safety net for the students and help them realise their potential. Hence support is offered within various aspects of school life:

- **Academic Support:** Tutoring and complementary lessons; a special syllabus suited to each individual; peer teaching; cultivation of academic excellence and learning skills among the students, inter-professional committees; (Aaron, Zoe, Emma – T; Sarah – P; Etan – S).
- **Social and Psychological Help:** Graduate talks with the head teacher and other staff members for each student (Head-teacher); Role modelling (Andy – T), as well as unlimited availability of the teachers: "When there is a problem – there is always someone to turn to" (Lily – S). The teachers express their aspiration: "We want each student to know that the school cares for him." (Emma – T).
- **Discipline and Civic Behaviour:** There was vandalism at school, so staff stopped providing equipment – and the vandalism stopped, "and so we learned to appreciate what we get." (Lily – S). Etan (S) states that, "here they deal less with achievements and more with human values."
- **Financial assistance:** scholarships, an allowance to buy books (Head-Teacher; Etan – S; Emma – T).

### 6.2.5.3 Contribution to the Community

Another value the stakeholders agreed upon unanimously is the contribution to the community. Mia (S) and Aaron (T) connected the drive to contribute to the community with gratitude for the help School C students are given: "Because our school is in a poor neighbourhood, many people come and help us. We reciprocate by helping our community." Other students seemed to have internalised the emphasis attached by the school to this value (Etan, Mia, Lily, Sofia – S), as Amelia (S) and Leah (P) put it: "In our school there is an atmosphere that encourages contribution to society." Examples cited included volunteer work in hospitals, help to the elderly, neglected kids, fire



fighters and other community help. Contribution to the community is also connected to the instilment of self-trust and confidence (Aaron – T): "To be the ones who give, rather than receive."

#### **6.2.5.4 Respectful Dialogue**

School activity, as described above, is made possible by the respectful dialogue between school functionaries and stakeholders. "There is always a response to every problem, even financially, if needed," says Leah (P). To which Lily (S) adds: "A lot of personal communications with the teachers. We can call a teacher, send an e-mail, we can ask for private tutoring." As for the teachers, they all declared their commitment to the restoration of students' abilities and confidence: "We express caring, trust in the student, commitment of the school towards each one of them also after they finished school." (Emma – S). They do not give up on any student (they would go to the student's house and drag him out of bed if needed...), and Lily (S) stressed that all of this is offered as support, not pity.

#### **6.2.6 Leadership Style**

##### **6.2.6.1 Transformational / Charismatic Leadership**

The leadership style of School C's head-teacher is, first and foremost, distributive and collaborative in nature. He expressly stated that he sees the school (and its surrounding neighbourhood) as a community whose various members share the same aspirations and goals, and work together towards their implementation. He explained that what his students need is a great number meaningful adults, for support and guidance. The various stakeholders of School C feel recognized and trust the head-teacher's leadership: "I believe that each time I offer something on a subject to do with the School Vision, I will be taken seriously." (Emma – T). Similarly, during their interviews, students and parents frequently mentioned private or group conversations with the head teacher. Much like the collaborative drafting procedure of the SVS, these testimonies point to a routine of open communication between the head-teacher and School C's stakeholders.

On the spectrum of leadership styles (i.e. transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership), the head-teacher leans towards a transformational and/or charismatic management style. Both these styles stress the importance of vision. The head-teacher indeed believes in abiding by a common school vision that is task-oriented (expressing direction and process, focused and bottom-line-oriented), inspiration-oriented (generates enthusiasm, inspires, expresses values), and communication-oriented (declarative, detailed, and easy to explain). By doing so, he provides meaning and a strong sense of purpose that motivates school staff to act.

Another characteristic of a charismatic/transformational leader, manifested by the head-teacher, is the ability to point out the discrepancy between the current state of the organisation and the future goals it aspires to achieve. For example, eight years earlier he initiated the addition of "academic classes" for outstanding science students. At that time there were only five(!) students who qualified for such classes in the whole school; it took a strong visionary perspective to imagine reaching the current number of outstanding science students (60), and the impressive growth of matriculation scores (80%).

Transformational leadership in schools may be identified by a number of core leadership activities: setting directions (includes vision building, goal consensus and the development of high performance expectations); developing people (includes the provision of individualized support, intellectual stimulation and the modelling of values and practices important to the mission of the school); organising (culture building in which colleagues are motivated by moral imperatives and structuring, fostering shared decision-making processes and problem solving capacities); building relationships with the school community. All these activities are carried out by the head-teacher on a regular basis, as they are an inherent part of school culture.

#### **6.2.6.2 Caring Leadership**

While the above holds true, the head-teacher's most salient leadership characteristic is caring. In accordance with contemporary views on the purpose of schooling. "[S]chools with strong [academic] press can still prove inadequate if they do not also create sufficient academic and social support for students." (Hoy et al., 2006), and with regard to School C's population traits (mixed and impoverished), the head-teacher strives to find an optimal balance between academic achievement and social support. The key to this balance is caring, that is, promoting the general development, welfare, and well-being of others; addressing particular needs of others; and, developing the capacity for caring among self and others.

The combination of a strong preference for academic achievements (as demanded by the educational authorities), with a stress on social matters and the attendance to the particular needs of others is perceived in the literature as most beneficial for the students. The literature on caring in education suggests that addressing the immediate needs of students, teachers, and families, may also promote the longer term outcomes of belonging and engagement, a sense of personal well-being, and academic success. All the above constitute focal goals of School C's VS, which underlie the teacher-student relationship in the school.

Through enacting an ethos of care, School C's head-teacher promotes strong and meaningful teacher–student relationships. Following the recommendations in the literature, he also focuses on several likely expressions of caring, notably various personal and academic supports extended to students: emotional, social, financial and academic support. Such support is important in general, but for students lacking a strong social support network outside of school, it can be critical..Support for the characterization of School C's head-teacher as a caring leader was elicited from:

- (1) His self-professed commitment to the values of the School Vision concerning care.
- (2) The reports of the stakeholders, which indicate the engagement of the school community in the vision and challenges of being a caring school.
- (3) The school organisational culture, based on supportive structures, social relationships, politics and reinforcement of the norms and values that constitute a school's organisation.
- (4) Large networks of caring relationships, such as parent partnerships, and partnerships and projects with community organisations.

School C's head-teacher's main (perhaps only) concern is the best interests of his students. In everything he does he acts towards this end, displaying devotion, integrity and fairness. The data gathered in School C, as presented above, stands as evidence of all the above: the head-teacher is responsible, caring, moral and ethical.

### **6.2.7 Conclusion: Caring Leadership and Community Context**

The analysis of School C's stakeholders' testimonies confirms that School C's head-teacher's leadership style is first and foremost distributive and collaborative in nature. He himself expressly states that he sees the school (and its surrounding neighbourhood) as a community whose various members share the same aspirations and goals, and work together towards their implementation (see pp. 204-5). It can thus be anticipated that the primary context he attends to is the community.

The community context (sometimes referred to as external intake context) emerges from features such as the socioeconomic status of parents, parent and community involvement in the school, geographic location, e.g. urban/suburban/rural, and - in the case of School C – the complex composition of the school population and the relationship between the school and its local community. Generally, community contexts vary widely with respect to the needs, opportunities, resources and constraints they present to school leaders. Head-teachers whose schools are located in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities face a greater range of challenges – including staff commitment and retention, student behaviour, motivation, and achievement – than those in more advantaged communities. Success in seizing opportunities, working with and expanding available resources and managing constraints impact the ability of leaders to meet the needs prioritized by a particular community. Thus, even though school leaders in all contexts can achieve and sustain successful pupil outcomes, optimal leadership strategies are crafted in a community context.

Judging by stakeholders' testimonies, as well as by observable facts, School C's head-teacher has for the most part been successful in meeting the list of challenges characterizing disadvantaged communities and beyond. The key to his effective coping seem to lie in both his personality and life experience, and leadership style. Being a caring leader, he allocates resources to promoting the general development, welfare, and well-being of others; addressing particular needs of others; and developing the capacity for caring among self and others. He strives for academic success, but at the same time makes every effort to meet the students' needs as required, reaching for long-term outcomes of belonging and engagement, self-worth and confidence. All these are regarded by him as means to achieve his ultimate goal: the social mobility of his students, and their extrication from the poverty-ignorance circle.

Some of the strategies he employs, founded in the implementation of the values of School C's VS, are:

- (1) **Extending emotional, social, financial and academic support to all students:** He managed to create a sense of purpose that binds the school staff (in fact, large parts of the community) together (Greenfield et al., 1992; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Ylimaki, 2006; Kurland et al., 2010). For students who lack a parental support and caring outside of school it is crucial (Stone-Johnson, 2014).
- (2) **Accessibility, dialogue and respectful communication:** are another trait of the head-teacher's leadership practice. Despite being situated in a conflict area, with a somewhat violent culture, the head-teacher and his staff have managed to create a peaceful, non-violent, safe shelter for their students.
- (3) **Accountability and responsibility:** The students are required to be accountable for their actions, and are taught to accept the fact that support has to be earned, rather than given for free.
- (4) **Equality and pluralism:** the potentially explosive mix of Arab and Jewish students is neutralised by means of total equality and respect for the other. The school is by definition a Hebrew school, its curriculum dictated by the Israeli Ministry of Education, but this presents an equal opportunity for the future success of all students, regardless of national or religious affinity.

All this is achieved by the inclusion of the community (in the broadest sense of the term) in implementing the values underpinning School C's VS, enhanced by the combination of the head-teacher's personal traits and his choice to attend primarily to the community context of his school.

## **6.3 Analysis: Striking Features of School C**

### **6.3.1 Low SES and Academic Achievements**

As demonstrated above, the two most prominent characteristics of School C are the composition of its population and their underprivileged status. Thus, to understand School C's vision and culture, we must consider the relations between low SES and academic achievements (see p. 46). The ambition to subdue the influence of the composition of the school population and its low SES mark School C culture, climate and activity; the School Vision plays a major part in the process, as the main values underpinning it seek to pave a way for the students out of the poverty cycle and its impact on their future life.

### **6.3.2 Pluralism vs. Tolerance**

Pluralism as a way of life (i.e. as opposed to an abstract concept) is essential to School C's existence, mainly due to its heterogeneous population. Not only are the interests of the population groups different, these interests often conflict, (e.g. Arab-Israeli political conflicts, sometimes encouraged by the media and/or by extremist elements in the population, or cultural conflicts between immigrants from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia). School C is part of the Israeli education system, but caters for Jewish and non-Jewish students. School C management and staff, for the most part, succeed in keeping the potential conflicts outside the school premises. Nevertheless, the objective circumstances create a challenging situation for the school management with regards to pluralism. As the school functions as a representative of the state, it is expected by the authorities to transmit a (supposedly unique) cultural heritage, a task which makes it by definition an ethnocentric institution. This presents a fundamental dilemma: On the one hand the school is required to abide by state policy (which supports the hegemony of the Israeli culture), while on the other hand it strives to maintain a pluralistic climate of acceptance and tolerance. The dilemma is inherent, as most pluralistic perspectives identify cultural myopia and cultural homogeneity as negative values.

### **6.3.3 Pluralism in School C: The Stakeholders' Perspectives**

#### **6.3.3.1 Management and Staff**

Pluralism appears a genuinely important concept to School C's head-teacher and his staff, as they consider it beneficial to the students' identity as Israeli citizens. The SVS observes: "The school nurtures a feeling of belonging and involvement of each pupil with the land, the state and the community, while honouring each pupil's culture and acceptance of his differences."

While School C's head-teacher actively seeks to treat all his students equally ("pluralism represents equality"), at the same time he maintains the hegemony of the Israeli-Jewish culture, as required by the authorities. When confronted with a demand from Arab activists to teach in Arabic, he quoted functionaries from the Ministry of Education and the Municipality, stating that "School C is a Hebrew School and the teaching language in it is Hebrew." He therefore accepts the directive of the authorities as a given, apparently in concordance with his own patriotic stance. However, School C's management and staff strive to treat all students equally by way of fostering a sense of belonging and involvement among the non-Jewish student population. In his interview, the head-teacher stated that he preferred the term 'pluralism' to 'tolerance:' "Tolerance has a condescending flair to it, as the strong accept the weak. Pluralism represents equality of value." This distinction raises quite a few questions, both ethical and logical, regarding school policy (e.g. how can one achieve pluralism and avoid mere tolerance?). These questions deserve particular attention when considering the relevant literature (see Appendix B, pp. 364-5), and the information about the implementation of this value in the school culture (see pp. 218-24 above).

School C's management and staff under his leadership appear to have chosen to circumvent this difficulty by granting all the students the same opportunities and support, regardless of ethnicity or race, showing respect and consideration to different religions and cultural values, mainly in the administrative domain. (E.g. the head-



teacher and Zoe (T) mentioned the school test schedule; Andy (T) and Zoe (T) referred to the practice that all students take part in school activities, regardless of their religion or ethnicity). This policy is apparently central to the school culture, as it is mentioned (and commended) by the majority of stakeholders in their interviews. However, according to the head-teacher, the cultural hegemony in terms of curriculum is distinctly Israeli and Jewish, except for relatively few lessons covering the basic values of the three religions.

### **6.3.3.2 Students**

Judging by their answers to the interview questions, the students have internalised the concepts of equality of worth and tolerance, in the sense of acceptance of other students' beliefs as legitimate. Sofia (S), of Arab origin, Lily (S), an immigrant from the Soviet Union and Etan (S), an immigrant from South America, represent the diversity of the school population. As mentioned above (see Table 6.5, pp. 219-20 above), they all appeared to support the head-teacher's idea of pluralism (in the sense of acceptance and tolerance). Etan's answer to my question about his religion was particularly compelling: "I guess [!] I am a Christian..." he said nonchalantly, attaching very little importance to the issue of religious belief. All three described friendly relationships between students from different sectors. None expressed any expectation from the school to include their separate values and practices in its curriculum. From the students' interviews, one may learn that they do not categorise themselves as belonging to a certain religious group or nationality, hence, religious or national membership is not perceived as a salient social identity trait. The mere fact that the Jewish and Arab students meet each other on equal footing (most Israeli students do not meet Arabs in person throughout their school years) constitutes a sound basis for the diffusion of religious/national conflicts and the creation of an alternative social affiliation. (see more about this issue in the next section, 'Social Identity and Self-Esteem,' pp. 235-7).

### **6.3.3.3 Teachers**

The same notion, quoted in one of the school publications, was expressed by one of the teachers (not interviewed for this research): "I believe that a student, who studies in a school together with students from different backgrounds, naturally develops a more enlightened world view and a more profound understanding of the reality he lives in." The teachers who were interviewed seemed with the heterogeneous nature of the school population as a given. Zoe (T) remarked: "The mere fact that Arab and Jewish students study together by choice speaks for itself [...] there is a very sensitive attitude to political and historic events." Andy (T) described a situation where such sensitivity was necessary, concerning the school radio station: "When a Jewish student wants to quit, it is alright with us. But when a non-Jewish student wants to quit, we make great efforts to keep him, as this might be a rare opportunity for his cultural voice to be heard, and who knows when such an opportunity will come up again." The rest of the teachers, including the head-teacher, referred to pluralism from a more practical aspect. They mentioned the means used by the school to create what they define as "a pluralistic culture" and to keep the peace between the different sectors (as detailed in the Section on 'Implementation,' pp. 218-24).

### **6.3.3.4 Parents**

Parents see the issue quite differently from both students and teachers. Whilst they "talk the talk," they find it difficult to hide their reservations, especially toward Arab students (reminding us of the head-teacher's definition of tolerance vs. pluralism). Sarah (P) described a situation of acceptance and tolerance, emphasizing the consideration shown towards Muslim and Christian holidays. Caleb (P) shared Sarah's views and took it further, saying that, "the school is by definition a Jewish school, and the Arabs who choose to study in it have to accept that [...] The atmosphere is generally peaceful, but one cannot say there are no issues." Leah (P) concurred: "The school policy is equal treatment to all students, regardless of their religion or ethnicity... but this does not mean that there are no problems." In the context of 'problems' and 'issues,' parents

mention random incidents like disturbances created by Arab students during a memorial service ceremony (in memory of Israeli war casualties), or social media talkbacks opposing friendly relationships between Jewish and Arab students. From the parents' interviews, one senses a constant undercurrent of tension between the Jewish and the Arab populations, occasionally interfering with the atmosphere of co-existence. Interestingly, the students and the teachers did not mention similar incidents, possibly out of loyalty to the school, and perhaps because they share the SV more than the parents.

#### **6.3.3.5 Summary and Recommendation**

What we find in School C is the choice of a narrower interpretation of the concept of pluralism: a compromise between the extremes of segregation and assimilation, advocating a more enlightened form of cultural hegemony. Not only is the minority students' culture practically ignored, they are also expected (though not coerced) to participate in school activities which are clearly part of the dominant culture, e.g. memorial services for Israeli war casualties. Moreover, there are no non-Jewish teachers on the staff; the Arabic language is not studied, and the only thing that demonstrates the declared pluralism, according to the stakeholders' testimonies, is the consideration of Moslem and Christian holidays in the test schedule, as well as occasional lessons about the three main religions – hardly enough to justify the aspiration for pluralism (see more examples in the section dealing with implementation, pp. 218-224).

Considering all the conflicting views described above, both in the research literature and in the stakeholders' statements, it would be difficult to accept School C's perception of pluralism in its deeper sense as one of its basic values, and definitely not in the multicultural sense.

There is no doubt in my mind that School C staff are sincere in their interest in minority students, but 'equality' seems to me a better choice of term for the school to use in its VS, rather than 'pluralism.' What we do find at the school are ample opportunities, along

with empathy, good will and support, offered to all students alike, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or social status, creating a sound basis for an alternative social affiliation. The students interviewed expressed their satisfaction with their treatment at school. One can only speculate what their reaction would be, had they been presented with the option of multicultural education, but in the current Israeli education system such an option is not feasible. The literature does not support the head-teacher's distinction between pluralism and tolerance (see p. 230 above; Appendix B, pp. 362-3 below), well-meaning as it may be. It rather points out a different interpretation regarding the implementation of a pluralistic approach in education: A civic education that privileges the perspective of the other, rather than sticking to the perspective of the state. Following this line of thought, especially in current times when the world is becoming global and minorities are demanding that their perspectives be included in the curriculum, perhaps it would benefit School C to reconsider their perception of pluralism and add more pluralistic perspectives to their curriculum.

#### **6.3.4 Social Identity and Self-Esteem**

In a school like School C there is an emotional significance to the individual's identification with a group, as self-esteem is bound up with group membership. The high level of identification expressed by students in the interviews led me to believe that the school functions as a social group the students feel they belong to. The norms of this social group, accepted by the students, are hard work, responsibility and solidarity. This is consistent with the assumption, that the belief system of social mobility is most likely to occur in a society which is flexible and permeable; School C strives to constitute such a society.

Unlike the students, the parents seem to categorise themselves mostly as Jewish and Israeli, differentiating themselves from their Arab neighbours, and even from "new" Jewish migrants (Sarah – P). Caleb (P) and Leah (P) share Sarah's views. They acknowledge the school's tolerance and equal treatment towards minorities, but at the same time their preference for an all-Jewish ("Arab Free") school seems to emerge from

their statements. One can assume that the moderating effect of school culture applies to the teachers and the students, but that the parents stick to their ethnocentric social identification.

As explained above, the basic conditions (the positioning of the school as an Israeli-Jewish school accommodating a variety of social and national groups) do not allow for the practice of pluralism in its theoretical sense. Nevertheless, in School C we find commendable tolerance towards minorities on the part of the teachers and the students, reducing the impact of low SES and facilitating self-esteem and a belief system of social mobility.

Moreover, the head-teacher and the staff members of School C are very much aware of social and psychological impacts of this specific neighbourhood: The students' want for self-trust and confidence, as well as a constant feeling of being victims. They reject the belief that personal attributes, such as capabilities and intelligence, are stable and tend to not change much over time - a fixed mindset, and adopt the assumption that personal attributes are relatively malleable – a growth mindset (Dweck, 1986). One tends to assume that one of the critical factors determining people's response to a situation, and their self-esteem, is their mindset: fixed or growth. The ones who believe in the possibility of change are more likely to actually succeed, as they perceive failure as a learning opportunity, rather than using defensive mechanisms which impede success and lower self-esteem.

The head-teacher and his staff members obviously believe in a growth mindset. Together they strive to instill self-esteem and self-respect in the students, by treating them with respect, on the one hand, and by requiring responsibility and accountability from them on the other hand. Each student is required to be responsible for his/her achievements and failures, and help is offered only to those who show motivation and ambition, i.e. the ones with the growth mindset. The students are grateful for the help

they receive, and express their appreciation for the way the staff treats them (as borne out by the students' testimonies).

### **6.3.5 Toward Student Empowerment**

The emphasis on accountability can also be explained by the characteristic of the school population – their low socio-economic status and the absence of parental responsibility. As stated above, students from disadvantaged households tend to perform less well in school on average than those from advantaged households. Moreover, there is the danger that they will internalise low self-esteem as a result of their social identity, thus impeding their belief in the possibility of change: "Students in impoverished neighbourhoods may question their self-efficacy, due to the difficult structural conditions they face. There is always the danger that the students will internalise a wider social evaluation of themselves as 'inferior' or 'second class', attributing their life conditions to forces beyond their control. Having grown up in an underprivileged environment, the students of School C (as well as their parents) tend to see themselves as victims. They undervalue their strengths, and are in desperate need for empowerment.

The school staff indeed sees the inculcation of self-trust in the students as one of the main roles of any school, but more so in their school, where the objective conditions and the lack of parental guidance create a gap that has to be filled by the school. Emma (T) stated that, "the expectation is that the students will take responsibility for their conduct and cope with daily difficulties. Especially in our school, where many children feel deprived, the issue of personal responsibility is very important." The school staff believed that the combination of support and personal responsibility will create a positive school climate, promoting cooperative learning, group cohesion, respectful dialogue and mutual trust. Such a climate constitutes an important factor in student academic outcomes, beyond the influence of student and school demographics. .

Following this line of thought, the students get a lot of help from the school (academic, financial and emotional support); but school policy is that no benefit is rendered unless reciprocated by a contribution on the part of the student. Every member of the school staff has chosen their own way to increase student accountability. The head-teacher refers to the financial help: "As the school population is rather poor, quite a lot of scholarships are offered to the students – but they are conditioned by community or national service." Emma (T) corroborates this, saying that, "the students are helped in and outside the school. They get scholarships for continuing studies, on condition that they graduate and/or contribute to the community. This creates leverage to both the students' connection with the school as well as their motivation. All this is done on the level of the individual student." Emma is also convinced that incorporating the students in the process of planning their studies will produce both better academic achievement and more self-trust. She describes "personal conversations with graduates held in head-teacher's room. In these conversations each student gets positive feedback not only about his studies, but mainly as a person."

In this context, the head-teacher also mentions what he calls "graduate talks," but he concentrates more on the student's contribution to the process: "Each graduating student is invited to a private talk with the head-teacher and the relevant staff members, where he is asked about his ambitions and dreams, a personal progress plan and follow-up measures – has he been deprived or hurt in any way at school, what will he take with him from school." Zoe (T) considers the awareness of the students of the correlation between hard work and academic achievement as another aspect of accountability, a suggestion that is corroborated in the research: "Even in such [impoverished] neighbourhoods, students also understand mainstream ideas about the centrality of hard work for success, and they likely see examples of individuals who were able to overcome difficulty circumstances through individual action " (Merolla, 2016). Andy (T), a reserve pilot in the Israeli Air force, prefers the role-modelling approach. He has brought pilots and administration staff from his squadron "to discuss matters central to the SV: tackling difficulties, choices in life, a meaningful civil service." Aaron (T) sums up, saying that "accountability is the most difficult challenge for our students", whose

parents do not assume responsibility for their children. "The students who come to us are far behind the standard in English, math, language and general knowledge, and our aim (challenge) is to close this gap, restore their abilities and instill confidence and accountability."

The students acknowledge their need for empowerment as well as the efforts invested by the school staff. Mia (S) diagnosed the situation clearly: "Because our school is in a poor neighbourhood many people come and help us. We reciprocate by helping our community". All interviewed students (Sofia, Lily, Etan, Amelia), mentioned that they are required to take responsibility for their achievements and conduct, as well as consequences and failures. They have also internalised the price of refusal to take responsibility. Sofia (S) states that, "help is rendered to those who show good will and motivation. If there is no cooperation – you do not get help." Etan (S) fully agrees: "The teachers push the students to take responsibility. At first they help, but eventually they show you that what matters is you, and what you are ready to invest." Lily (S) describes a process of reward and punishment: "There is no vandalism any more. When there were damages – they stopped supplying, and so we learned to appreciate what we get." Amelia (S) sums up the end result: "The teachers push us – but eventually it is our responsibility."

The parents who were interviewed for this research did not refer directly to the SES of the school population. One can learn about their view only indirectly, as they criticise the passiveness of the (other) parents on the one hand, and express their expectations from the school on the other. The parents' conception of the school role is most indicative of their understanding of the situation: All three of them saw education and academic achievement as the key to mobilisation and the school as the means to achieve it. They hoped that their kids would be more successful than they themselves. Both Caleb and Leah were born in the vicinity of the school, and attended it as students. They feel they were not given the opportunity to study properly (Leah completed her matriculation at the age of 50, and Caleb was sent to a vocational school, regardless of



his abilities). This might be the reason why they contend that the school's role is "to prepare the kids for life... [and help them become] educated people, with values and the motivation to study" (Leah – P), and "to drive the students towards achievements, not in order to please anybody but for themselves, as value-guided human beings" (Caleb – P).

At School C a distinct emphasis is placed on school climate, to the end of improving the students' educational outcomes and self-concept. When asked about the main role of schooling, all the stakeholders identified the preparation for life in the sense of their belief in the possibility of social mobility via education.

The basic conditions (the positioning of the school as an Israeli-Jewish school accommodating a variety of social and national groups) does not allow for the practice of pluralism in its pure version. Nevertheless, in School C we can see commendable tolerance towards minorities on the part of the teachers and the students, which reduces the impact of low SES and facilitates self-esteem and a belief system of social mobility.

### **6.3.6 Comradeship and Contribution to the Community**

Comradeship and contribution to the community constitute another means of empowering students and bolstering their self-trust. Some of the students (Amelia, Lily, Mia, Etan – S), when asked to expand on this value, described an atmosphere that encourages students to contribute to the community – both inside the school (solidarity) and outside it. This statement is corroborated by teachers: "We encourage the students to contribute: older students tutor younger students, strong students are coupled with weaker students, private tutoring of college students to school students. There are also lots of activities after school in community establishments like a club for elderly people, scouts, the community centre" (Aaron T).

From the students' testimonies we learn that, in their view, the contribution to the community serves three purposes: To allow the students be in the position of 'givers,' as

opposed to their constant state of being "given", which is doubt empowering (Etan – S: "In my class the strong students help the weaker ones to keep pace, as suggested by our teacher"); to reciprocate and express their appreciation for the support they get (Mia – S: "Because our school is in a poor neighbourhood, many people come and help us. We reciprocate by helping our community"); and to improve the situation of the environment they live in, especially its weaker sectors: the sick, the elderly and the children (Lily – S).

Among the parents, Leah (P) was the only parent who addressed the issue of the contribution to the community: "The school staff encourages the students to volunteer and contribute to the community". They seem to be interested more in the welfare of their own children, and take no part in their children's social commitment. To some extent, this echoes the observations made by the parents themselves about their lack of involvement. Due to their detachment, the parents are less affected by the school culture, preferring to maintain their individual and ethnocentric perspective.

### **6.3.7 Conclusion: The Role of School Vision**

The five main values in School C's SVS – Pluralism, Accountability, Solidarity, Comradeship, and Contribution to the Community – are directly connected to two main facts which characterise the school profile: the mixed population, and the low SES of the majority of the students' families. The values of the SV serve as guidelines for every aspect of the school activity: "The core values of the School Vision find expression in mathematics, literature, bible lessons; in the dialogue with the parents; in the communication of teachers-students and between teachers. All this is done on a daily basis," says Olivia (T). The teachers and the students are profoundly familiar with the SV, and identify with the values underpinning it. The unifying motto is the ambition to open a gate to an improved life for the students.

In the literature, we find both pessimistic and optimistic predictions for the future of students from low SES families (see Appendix B, pp. 364-8). School C's staff is fully

aware of the problems that entail the composition of the school population, but choose to adhere to an optimistic perspective. All staff members accept the assumption that education is a major key to the students' rescue from the vicious circle of poverty and ignorance, so they offer the students excessive academic support, to allow each student realise their potential to the fullest extent: Recursive tests, private tutoring, peer teaching, plenty of enrichment programs and personal training. Constant diagnostic tests are held each year for the mapping of each student's knowledge – and the adaptation of teaching techniques to each student following it. All this is very fruitful, and students' progress is impressive.

One of the main problems is the absence of parental involvement. The school staff seeks to fill the gap of parental dysfunction, and provide the students with whatever is needed to enable them to grow up to become "educated, value-guided people, with self-esteem and confidence, who are able and willing to contribute to the community" (Head-Teacher). For the sake of promoting the students' achievements and sense of belonging and stability, the teachers knowingly take it upon themselves to fill in the deficiencies created by parental neglect. The means used by the school include recruiting help from wherever available: scholarships from donors; professional volunteers (educators, social workers, psychologists and education ministry officials) participating in multi-discipline committees, which gather every week to discuss individual students' situations and offer solutions and 87(!) students from the neighbouring college attend the school regularly to tutor the students.

School C's teachers also cater for the psychological and social shortcomings of the students, including parental inconsistency (with regard to daily routines and parenting), frequent changes of primary caregivers, lack of supervision and poor modeling. All these can impair a student's sense of self-worth and confidence. The staff members of School C try to make up for these deficiencies by conducting a respectful – and at the same time informal – dialogue with the students, to convince them that they are cared for and that the teachers consider the students' success as their own interest. "In general, this

school could not exist without the constant informal dialogue between the teachers and the students. It is vital, considering our students' background," says Olivia (T).

The head-teacher and teachers endeavour to create a pleasant atmosphere, projecting stability and tranquility. One way to contribute to it is the immaculate school premises – always sparkling clean, well maintained and tastefully decorated. Another way is the limitless availability of the staff to the needs of the students. The involvement of the teachers in the school is far beyond the standard. Both teachers and students mention numerous occasions when they wake students up to get to school on time for a test, initiate contacts with the students' relatives for help in cases of crisis and, of course, personal sessions with the students themselves. Modelling is also used by some staff members to help the students tackle difficulties.

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School C's students are aware (and grateful) of the way they are treated. They can tell the difference between the empathy shown by the teachers, and pity – which they detest. Some of the students (Lily, Etan – S), emphasise the feeling of safety which they experience at school, as opposed to the dangerous environment they live in. Concurrently with the help rendered to the students, the school staff upholds a policy of "no free lunches." To be helped, every student has to show accountability, responsibility and motivation. Emma (T) explains the rationale for this attitude: "The expectation is

that the student will undertake responsibility for his conduct and cope with daily difficulties. Especially in our school, where many children feel deprived, the issue of personal responsibility is very important". Aaron (T) shares this view, saying that "because the families are often dysfunctional, we expect our students to be extra-responsible, and at the same time to develop self-trust." The head-teacher emphasises that scholarships given to the students are conditioned by army and/or national service.

Students also seem to have internalised the requirement for accountability. Lily (S) reported that, "every student is responsible for his own assignments and progress, and Sofia (S) expands: "To come on time, not be late to classes, not to miss tests. Every student is responsible for his achievements and the consequences of his failures. Help is rendered to those who show good will and motivation. If there is no cooperation – you do not get help." Most of the stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) commended the school for constantly urging the students to contribute to the community, both as a token of appreciation and as a boost for their own self-esteem and confidence.

All this leads to the main educational-social goal common to all the school stakeholders: to draw the students out of their current living conditions, and offer them an option of mobility, or, in a word, a better future. The head-teacher defined the school role as to help the student become educated, value-guided, self-trusting, and giving. This definition is more or less echoed by all stakeholders. Sofia (S) maintains that the school should, "bring the student to a level of education as a key to his becoming an independent, educated citizen who can contribute to society." One by one they talk about preparing the students for real life, and pushing them towards success.

The SV plays a vital part in the process. In schools where parental care can be counted on, the school can choose to adopt the SV values or to ignore them. In School C this is not an option. Each and every value in the SV is an existential necessity: had there been no pluralism (or, for that matter accountability and solidarity) the school would not be able to function. For them, the preparation for real life has nothing to do with 21<sup>st</sup>

century skills. For School C's students, it is the opportunity to improve their income and life conditions. And they seem to do very well in accomplishing this ambitious goal: A very high matriculation rate, national prizes and positive feedback to the interview questions of this research testify to it. Oftentimes the SV is perceived by the stakeholders as irrelevant to the school's everyday practice. This is not the case with School C. The school stakeholders find the SV extremely relevant and know exactly where the organisation is going. The immense success demonstrated by School C in improving academic achievement and value-guided behaviour proves the positive impact of a meaningful vision, which is relevant to the basic traits of the school population, shared with stakeholders and consistently implemented.

## CHAPTER 7: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I presented three case studies (high-schools) and their visions through the lens of their stakeholders' views. In telling their stories, I focused on the particular, unique identity of each case, as well as common issues across them, with the help of rich descriptions. I endeavoured to provide a comprehensive profile of each school, to the end of familiarising the reader with aspects of each school's identity and context. A thorough analysis of the dimensions constituting the viability of its vision followed, together with a discussion of its stakeholder value and extent of vision-ownership. The effect of the head-teacher's leadership style and context were considered, in line with the conceptual framework presented earlier (see pp. 91-2 above). An interim summary of the unique traits of each school concluded each school's profile, laying the grounds for further comparison.

In the following chapter, I draw a comparative cross-case analysis of the three schools, using the emergent themes from the analysis to develop broader insights into the stakeholder-vision relationship, and their function in determining the identity of each school and the extent of its success. I explore patterns and highlight contrasts and commonalities, using the key constructs and the research questions (first introduced on p. 3 above) as the framework around which the chapter is structured:

(1) *What makes a School Vision viable?*

Dimensions of vision: Content, attributes and role in the organisation

(2) *What constitutes the educational stakeholders' role within the school system?*

Stakeholder ownership of their SV and their value in the organisation

(3) *What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision?*

Head-teachers' leadership style and school context, both internal and external

(4) *How do stakeholders' ownership and value affect their entire school-experience?*

Ownership induces a positive school culture, which contribute to the stakeholder's well-being, towards creating a favourable school-experience

## **7.2 Vision Statement's Viability at the Three Schools**

*Research Question no. 1: What makes a School Vision viable?*

As aforementioned, a preliminary analysis of the School Vision Statement for each of the three schools was reported in the separate case studies above, in relation to the three dimensions offered by the extant literature for the measurement of a viable vision:

(a) Content

(b) Attributes (Simple, Appealing, Credible)

(c) The role it plays in the organisation

These dimensions, as presented in the form of a chart in the Literature Review Chapter (Figure 2.1, p. 31), constitute the basis for the following comparison between the three schools with regard to their vision.



### 7.2.1 Vision Statement Content

For the sake of comparing the vision statement contents for the three schools, the following table offers a concise reminder of the values underpinning each of the three School Vision Statements:

Values	School A	School B	School C
Moral Values	Tolerance, Open-Mindedness, Impartiality, Fairness, Trustworthiness	Equality and Thoughtfulness, Regard for the needs of others	Pluralism, Acceptance, and Equality regardless of race, religion or gender
Knowledge	Knowledge and Learning Skills	Inquisitiveness and Knowledge Acquisition; Learning Skills and Motivation	Enlightened use of Knowledge, Learning Skills
Cognitive Skills	Independence, Curiosity, Creative-Thinking, Long-Term Planning, Mnemotechnic Faculties	Enable students to maximise their potential by addressing their heterogeneous needs	Tools and skills for the realisation of potential
Realisation of Potential		Realisation of potential by addressing their heterogeneous needs towards Excellence	Realisation of Potential towards Excellence
Emotional Development	Attending to the emotional needs of students; Nurturing of Emotional Intelligence		
Stimulating Environment	Stimulating and Rich Environment that inspires all values mentioned above		

**Table 7.1: Values Espoused in the Three Schools' SVS – Comparison**

<b>Values</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>
Social Setting	The school as a setting for social interaction		
Civic Values		Contribution to Society; Loyalty to the Country; Good citizenship	Good Citizenship and Social Involvement; A caring social-community commitment and a sense of belonging
Personal values	Cooperation, Self-Esteem, Self-Image, Self-Reflection	Personal Responsibility and Leadership through Example; Life Skills	Train independent, Intelligent and Moral students, responsible for their Views and Actions
Management Ethics		High-Quality, Value-guided Management System: Cooperation, Professionalism, Transparency, and Fairness	

**Table 7.1: Values Espoused in the Three Schools' SVS – Comparison (Cont.)**

Ostensibly, the contents of the three School Vision Statements seem quite similar. As anticipated, based on the fact that the primary purpose of a school is the learning and fostering the achievements of its students, along broader outcomes such as emotional and civic development, all three statements mention cognitive, emotional and social values. However, a more careful examination of the data presented in the above tables (see Tables 4.5, p. 127; 5.4, p. 167; and, 6.4, pp. 210-1), raises some insights about the commonalities and differences between the contents of the three SVSs:

- Knowledge and learning skills, or closely-related terms, are mentioned in the SVSs of Schools A, B, and C.
- School A is the only one to specify the cognitive skills, the emotional intelligence faculties and the moral values which it aspires to instill in its students. For the other two schools, the more general titles 'Moral Values,' 'Learning Skills,' and 'Life Skills' seem to suffice, and the emphasis lies in the social and civil arena.
- Schools B and C add the principle of 'realisation of potential towards excellence,' whereas this is absent from School A's SVS, though (as will be demonstrated later in this chapter) it plays a significant role in the school culture.
- All values underpinning School A's SVS, including social and civic values, refer to the individual student, whereas there is hardly any mention of social commitment and good citizenship values. In Schools B and C, the humanistic and civil values are more salient.
- Pluralism and equality are mentioned only in Schools B and C's SVSs, but not in School A's – perhaps because of the differences in school population between them. The population of School C comprises a variety of nationalities, races and religious beliefs, whereas the populations of Schools A and B are homogeneous. However, at School B it seems the emphasis on pluralism and on a respectful dialogue stems, according to the staff's testimonies, from a paramount philosophy of human relationships. Both Schools B and C highlight 'respectful communication' as a significant part of their school culture, between teachers and students, among students and between racial and religious sectors. "Attending to the students' emotional needs" (mentioned in School A's SVS) may imply a respectful dialogue, but is restricted to the way teachers treat students, and is not extended to other domains.

- As for the role of schooling, Schools A and C consider themselves as platforms (or in the case of School A, 'a rich environment') to enhance the inculcation of the values the school upholds in the students. Only School B expresses a commitment on the part of the management itself to values of fairness, value-guidedness and transparency.

#### **7.2.1.1 Values and Educational Perspective**

In summarizing, all the three SVSs allow us to speculate about how the elements suggested in the literature as essential for a vision statement's contents apply to them: the intrinsic values each school emphasises, its future orientation, its specific goals and directions, as well as a fourth element, implied but not specified: the way each school's management perceives the objective of schooling in general. As for intrinsic values, whereas School B tends to emphasise civic and social values, School A focuses mainly on academic achievements. School C, probably due to the low SES of its intake, does both: it accentuates its students' academic success, which is perceived as a key to social mobility, but at the same time, underlines social values and good citizenship in its SVS.

#### **7.2.1.2 Communication**

The salience of communication and dialogue in the SVSs of School B and C supports the above statement. In contrast to School A's SVS, which ignores the issue altogether, both Schools B and C attach great importance to respectful communication between the school's members, as well as among different sectors of society. The care for the students' well-being and attending to their needs also finds expression in the emphasis on communication.

### **7.2.1.3 Student Preparation for the Future**

All three schools are clearly aware of their obligation to prepare their students for their adult life, but express different perspectives about it. School A aims mainly at the future of the individual student, aspiring to equip its students with the necessary skills for their individual success. School B demonstrates social responsibility and recognises its role as a social agent. Its vision statement reflects its concern for social justice and fairness in society as a whole, by way of educating its students towards moral and civic values along academic success. At School C, they focus most of all on opening doors for the students' social mobility, striving to enable them integrate in society and improve their lives with the help of better education.

### **7.2.1.4 The Role of Schooling**

The role of schooling, reflected in each school's vision statement, is focused on cognitive achievements, and at the same time is perceived differently by each of the three schools: School A could be described as being individual-focused, as it strives to foster the success of the individual students; School B appears to be community-focused, as it aspires to contribute to society by educating its students to become worthy citizens; and School C can be characterised as individual-community focused, as it exposes the wish to enable its students to enjoy better life in a better society.

All of the presumptive notions above are based on the content analysis of the SVSs of the three schools. They will later be checked against the testimonies of the stakeholders within the framework of the stakeholder-related attributes of a viable vision.

### **7.2.2 Vision Statement Attributes**

As noted above, three attributes define a viable vision statement: (a) *Simple* enough to be understood (articulation); (b) *Appealing* enough to evoke commitment (inspirational contents); and, (c) *Credible* enough to be accepted as realistic and attainable (implementation).

In the following section, Schools A, B and C will be compared with regard to the degree of viability of their respective School Vision Statements, based on these attributes:

#### **7.2.2.1 Clearly articulated and coherent content**

#### **7.2.2.2 Stakeholders' involvement in their School Vision Statement**

#### **7.2.2.3 Implementation of the values underpinning the School Vision Statement**

#### **7.2.2.1 Clearly Articulated and Coherent Content**

Every school's vision statement is expected to give voice to its stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues. Hence, the SVS has to be first and foremost clearly articulated and simple enough to be understood and shared by all stakeholders so as to invoke their commitment.

In order to clarify the terms 'well-articulated' or 'simple' (see Literature Review Chapter, pp. 20-2), four groups of more particular definitions were drawn from dictionaries and thesauri and from the literature, as well as a few added by me (based on common sense): Brief, Clear, Structured, and Consistent. These four sub-definitions were used to guide the examination of the articulation of the three SVSs, and their appeal to the stakeholders, as a basis for the comparison between them in regard to the first of the three attributes, i.e. clearly articulated and coherent content.

- **Brief and Clear** (*working definition*): The three SVSs are approximately the same length (6-7 statements), specifying a manageable number of ideas (Kose, 2011). By clarity, I refer to communicative statements, which are simple enough to be easily understood by a wide range of people (Holmes, 1993; Kantabutra, 2008).

School A's SVS might seem less communicative to stakeholders, as it contains professional terminology (e.g. information management; mnemotechnic faculties; socialisation agent) that the stakeholders might not be familiar with, and may even find deterrent. It seems also rather complicated, as its statements are overly general and equivocal (e.g. lack of symmetry between what the schools aspire to impart and what the students are expected to have acquired). A detailed account of instances supporting this critique is available in the chapter regarding the general description of School A (see pp. 119-24). By the same token, School B specifies similar goals in much simpler, commonly used terms (e.g. knowledge acquisition; learning success; motivation for success; desire for excellence), as does School C (e.g. foster potential; develop skills).

- **Structured** (*working definition*): The term 'structured' implies mainly coherence and logical order of presentation, where the ideas are distinguishable yet interconnected.

The structure of School A's SVS could be questioned. The listed values are presented in an order that leaves room for confusion. Values from different domains are grouped under the same statement in a questionable manner. 'Independence,' for example, might be considered to be closer to emotional intelligence aptitudes; the link between "long term planning proficiencies, mnemotechnic faculties and time-planning capabilities" and either 'curiosity' or "independence" might not be clearly explicit to everyone – Statement no. 4. The structure of School B's SVS appears to be more logical, as each statement deals with one definite class of values: moral values, citizenship, interpersonal, empowerment of students etc., all expressed in an apparently straightforward, clear manner.

Of the three statements, School C's SVS seems to be the clearest and best structured, as each segment of it refers to a certain group of values (universal, social, community, and school values), and the whole statement is constructed in a way that leads the reader through the values constituting its vision, from the general to the school-specific.

- **Consistency** (*working definition*): Consistency means showing the compatibility of messages across various publications.

School A's SVS appears to be characterised by lack of consistency. The mere existence of two rather incongruent versions of the SVS brings about some misgivings regarding the genuine intentions of the school's management. Moreover, comparison between the text of the formal, written SVS and a number of school publications points out the discrepancy in the ideologies declared by the management (see pp. 119-24).

Schools B and C demonstrate a larger extent of compatibility. At School B, the values espoused in the SVS reflect those of most stakeholders, who align with them and collaborate with the school management in implementing them in the school's day-to-day conduct (see pp. 172-3). At School C, despite exhibiting less parental involvement, we find teachers and students who share the aspiration to succeed in their education and thus improve their prospects for a better future. Therefore, the SVSs of Schools B and C may be considered consistent.

To summarise, even at this early phase of this analysis, the articulation of School A's SVS, in contrast with the other two schools, appears to foretell the reciprocal attitude of the stakeholders towards their school vision, as suggested by the relevant research literature. Schools B and C emphasise communication and societal values, and refer to the stakeholders' interests in a way that might inspire their collaboration. However, School A's SVS is articulated more as a statement of the management, reflecting its educational philosophy, regarding the stakeholders as passive recipients. The content of



School A's SVS does not refer either to society or to the stakeholders' actual needs, and there is no apparent effort to invoke stakeholders' commitment.

The different characteristics of content and articulation between the three schools can be expected to have an impact on the stakeholders' alignment with their respective school visions). The following section will therefore deal with stakeholders' involvement in their school vision. An attempt will be made to find out whether the practice of the three schools supports the expectations of the research literature and theory concerning the connection between the extent of the stakeholders' involvement and the way their SV is articulated. Given the contents of School A's SVS, as well as the fact that it is less clearly articulated than the SVSs of the other two schools, it seems safe, at this point, to assume that it will be less appealing to the stakeholders and evoke less involvement on their part.

#### **7.2.2.2 Vision Statement and Stakeholder Involvement**

*Research Question no. 2: What constitutes the educational stakeholders' role within the school system?*

Researchers across the board maintain that a meaningful vision has the power to inspire, motivate and engage people. However, stakeholders' familiarity with their SV, especially if its values are consistent with their own personal views, could lead to more commitment on their part. The issue of stakeholder engagement will be examined in this section across the cases through four sub-sections concerning different aspects of familiarity:

- (1) How do they perceive the term 'vision' in general, and how they assess their own familiarity with their own SV? (Self-awareness)
- (2) What do the stakeholders actually know about their SV? (Actual familiarity)

(3) What are the procedures practiced by the three schools toward the alignment of their stakeholders with their SV?

(4) To what extent are the stakeholders committed to their SV?

**(1) How do the stakeholders perceive the term 'vision; in general, and how they assess their own familiarity with their School Vision? (Self-awareness)**

In order to understand the stakeholders' perceptions of their SVS, it seemed beneficial to establish first their views of the term 'vision' in general. To this aim, the stakeholders were asked to define their view of the function of organisational vision statements. In their statements regarding this issue, the teachers and parents of all the three schools shared the perception that a school vision represents a set of guidelines, constituting a value-guided platform for school culture and activity. The common metaphors used by most of them were 'lighthouse,' 'compass,' and 'road map.'

The majority of the students in Schools B and C (except for a single student in School B) expressed an affirmative view (e.g. Sofia from School C, who said: "I want to take part in my school's aspirations, so I constantly check myself against them"). School A's students stood out however, presenting a totally different view quite possibly based on their own experience in School A. They regarded vision as a PR device full of catch-phrases, designed to please the authorities and with nothing to do with reality. They maintained that the statements were fake, and that the talk about values and guidelines was just a euphemism.

However, much of the stakeholders' understanding of the term "vision" and its role in the culture of the organisation aligned with its definition in the research literature: to provide direction and specific goals (Berson et al., 2001; Sosik & Dinger, 2007); to depict the future image of the organisation (Kurland, 2006; Foster & Akdere, 2007); and

to guide decision-making (Barett, 2006; Allio, 2006). Nevertheless, when confronted with their actual ability to cite their school's SVSs, the differences between the three schools continue to stand out.

Based on their proven understanding of the term 'vision' in general, it seemed interesting to learn about the stakeholders' awareness of the extent of their familiarity with their SVS. Awareness, in this case, may provide a tentative explanation for the stakeholders' attitude towards their SVS. To this end, each stakeholder was asked to roughly quantify their familiarity-rate with the SVS on a scale of 0-5 (0 = Not Familiar; 5 = Highly Familiar). The comparison between the stakeholders' average estimates, in and between the three schools, based on the stakeholders' reports regarding this issue, is presented in the following table:

<b>School</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>HT's Expectations of Their School's Stakeholders*</b>
<b>A</b>	3.5	0.6	3.5	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>B</b>	3.2	2.8	3.3	<b>3.07</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>C</b>	4.25	3.75	4	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.75</b>

**Table 7.2: Stakeholders' Self-Assessment of Their Familiarity with the SVS**  
(0 = Not Familiar; 5 = Highly Familiar; \*HT = Head-Teacher)

Despite its simplicity, certain insights can be elicited from the above table. These include:

- The overall average assessment of School A's stakeholders of their familiarity with their SVS is significantly lower than the other two schools.
- Whereas School A teachers and parents are equally familiar with their SV, it seems that the students have been lost somewhere along the line, as School A stands out for very low familiarity by students.
- School C stands out for the consistency of high estimates across the three stakeholder groups, thus creating a sense that the whole community is highly involved.

It is important to bear in mind that insights based on the above table may provide a snapshot rather than a whole picture. The findings should be considered cautiously, as they are based on a very small sample size. However, when combined with the additional qualitative data, they can indicate a direction for further investigation.

As explained, all the above estimates will be compared and contrasted with the actual knowledge demonstrated by the participants in their ability to mention a minimum of 3 values underpinning their SVS. The combination of the two kinds of data might provide a clearer understanding of the stakeholders' genuine familiarity with their SVS. The analysis of the stakeholders' testimonies uncovered several factors which seem to play a major role in the sharing of the SV among the stakeholders.

## **(2) What do the Stakeholders Actually Know about Their School Vision?**

Table 7.1 (see pp. 248-9) presents the values that comprise each of the three SVSs. The examination of the data indicates that School B's and School C's participants are profoundly familiar with their SVSs, and their perceptions are for the most part compatible with its values. A slight difference between the two schools lies in the parents' testimonies. Whereas in School B all three groups reports reflect a similar degree of familiarity with the contents of the document, in School C we find more knowledge reported by the teachers and the students (four of five teachers and four of five students mentioned each value), and less among the parents. This result is consistent with the assumption that low SES parents (such as those whose children attend School C) tend to be less involved in their children's schools than high SES parents. This statement is corroborated in the testimonies of teachers and students regarding their parents' faltering involvement in the school life, as well as in the testimonies of the parents themselves. Nevertheless, the tremendous effort made by the school staff to increase parent participation seems to leave its mark.

As for School A's stakeholders, despite their relatively high self-assessment of their familiarity with their School Vision Statement, for the most part they were unable to mention three values from their SVS when asked to do so. The degree of fit between the values attributed to School A's SVS by the parents, students and teachers, and the values that actually underpin it, is rather poor. Nevertheless, the two main values that all the stakeholders mention ('excellence' and 'realisation of student potential') do not appear in the written, formal SVS. This finding will be further explored later in this section. What determines the extent of the stakeholder engagement in the school's vision and activity is oftentimes the leadership orientation of the head-teacher, and the procedures applied by the school's management towards this aim.

### **(3) What are the Procedures Practiced by the Three Schools Toward the Alignment of Their Stakeholders with Their School Vision?**

The head-teachers' willingness to share the SV with the stakeholders, and the procedures taken in the school towards it seem to have a major contribution to the alignment of the stakeholders with the School Vision. Each of these procedures, as reported by the interviewees from the three schools, will be discussed below.

#### ***Collaboration with stakeholders in the drafting process of the Vision Statement***

A collaborative drafting process can provide the stakeholders with the opportunity to express their own values and integrate them in the organisational vision. This can be expected to start an on-going process that will encourage a feeling of community, and contribute to the establishment of group ownership of the SV. The basic premise is that people connect more to values that are congruous with their own. The following table sums up the character of the drafting process at each of the three schools:

<b>School</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>A</b>	Head-Teacher and management staff	A series of management staff meetings	Top-Down	Ostensibly, to please the authorities	No impression left
<b>B</b>	Representatives from all Stakeholder groups (Head-Teacher, Teachers, Students, Parents)	Round-table deliberations; Voice given to each stakeholders groups' perspective towards a final draft in a summative ensemble session	Collaborative; Supervised by organisation professionals	To establish a value-guided platform for the school's culture and practices	A formative event; Referred to by all stakeholders
<b>C</b>	Representatives from all Stakeholder Groups (Head-Teacher, Teachers, Students, Parents), as well as Local Community Representatives	Round table deliberations; Voice given to each stakeholders groups' perspective towards a final draft in a summative ensemble session	Collaborative; Supervised by organisation professionals	Establish a value-guided platform for the school's culture and practices	A formative event; Referred to by all stakeholders

**Table 7.3: Vision Statement Drafting Process in Schools A, B, and C**

Based on the data provided by the stakeholders, it seems that the drafting process can be seen as a milestone, delineating a path of on-going collaboration with the stakeholders in Schools B and C, whereas it has no bearing on future management conduct in School A. It seems safe, therefore, to predict that vision statement drafting process in both schools, as well as the head-teachers' attitudes, will have a positive impact on the stakeholders' familiarity with and commitment to their SVS – a suggestion that will be examined in the following passages.

***Making the contents of the Vision Statement available to stakeholders in every possible way***

In both School B and School C, the head-teachers acknowledged the need to share the SVS and declared that they were committed to the distribution of its values among their stakeholders. School B's head-teacher mentioned measures like the display of the SVS in every classroom and in public areas of the school. In School C, the SVS is also displayed in public areas (entrance hall, teachers' lounge), but not in every classroom. In School C, the SVS is not displayed in public areas. However, all three head-teachers tend to cite their SVS in school publications, speeches, formal letters to parents and mass communication media.

***Constant debates with the school community regarding School Vision values***

The head-teachers of both School B and C attached great importance to the constant exchange of views with their stakeholders regarding the SV. School B's head-teacher mentioned frequent meetings where the SVS values were discussed – a statement corroborated by all stakeholders. School C's head-teacher described constant communication with all stakeholders regarding the values of the SVS. Based on the stakeholders' testimonies, as well as their own, both head-teachers were accessible to teachers, students and parents alike, allowing for frequent debating of the SVS's values with the school management and taking part in the decision-making process.

School A's head-teacher, on the other hand, is described by her colleagues as totally different, in terms of her managerial stance and role perception. There is very little evidence, if any, of communication routines with stakeholders, both in the head-teacher and the stakeholder interviews. Although she did mention in her interview deliberations with stakeholders concerning the SVS, none of the interviewees was able to come up with an example of a forum where such deliberations took place.



To summarise the above, in light of the differences between the three schools in terms of the stakeholders' familiarity with their respective SVSs, it remains to be seen whether the extent of their identification with and commitment to the document reflects the differences between the degrees of their familiarity with it.

#### **(4) To what extent are the stakeholders aligned with their School Vision?**

Indeed, different degrees of stakeholder alignment with their SV exist between the three schools. In School B, all of the stakeholders who participated in the research reported identifying with the values of the SVS and expressed their commitment to it. Most of the teachers mentioned the synchronisation between the SVS values and their own, and the parents reported that the SVS for the most part represented their own perspectives. The efforts of the management to share the SVS with the stakeholders possibly contributed to these perceptions. The same is the case with School C, where the teachers testified to being committed to the SVS, and identified with it. The aforementioned problem with the parents' lack of engagement in the school life is evident here as well. School B and C's stakeholders' testimonies of their remarkable involvement with their SV may be considered an indication of their sense of a high degree of ownership.

School A's stakeholders, and especially the teachers and the parents, seemed to find themselves in an awkward position in regard to their attitude towards their SV. Both groups declared their devotion to their SVS; but it turns out that the SV they were referring to is not the formal SVS of their school, but rather an alternative, oral SV, focused on two main values: academic excellence and the realisation of student potential, both very far from the written SVS.

Nevertheless, the main difference between School B and C on the one hand and School A on the other seems to find expression mostly in the students' testimonies. School A's students recognised this gap between the formal SVS and the alternative, oral version,

and pointed it out rather bluntly. The students of School B and C described trusting the school system's intentions, and believed that the management and the teachers mean what they declare, even when they criticise it. In contrast to this attitude, School A's students were rather resentful, and denounced their SVS as a bluff. They seemed to have figured out what lay beneath the catch-words that, according to their reports, were designed to find grace in the eyes of the authorities. The students also insisted that management and staff appeared to focus on the pursuit of academic achievement. Such a dissonance can breed resentment and alienation on the part of the students towards their school. They considered the formal SVS as detached from and irrelevant to school life and activity. The compatibility (or lack thereof) between what is said and what is done in the three schools appears to constitute another parameter by which they differ from each other.

In the following section I will elaborate on a third attribute of a viable School Vision, namely: Its implementation in the school practices.

### **7.2.2.3 Vision Statement Implementation**

Implementation of values is considered as the paramount criterion for a meaningful and viable School Vision Statement (see Literature Review Chapter, pp. 224-5). At the same time, this also presents the ultimate indication stakeholders' ownership of their School Vision. In order to estimate the part taken by each school's stakeholders in the implementation of their SV, all the stakeholders of each school were asked to mention the values applied and acted upon in their school practice, and to support their testimony with actual examples of activities consistent with the SVS values. The degree of fit between the values mentioned in the SVS and the activities described by the stakeholders was intended to constitute a measure for the extent of the latter's involvement in the decision-making process of each school, in line with its guiding statements.

Information gathered from the various stakeholders of each school (in addition to the information provided solely by the head-teacher) has the potential to serve as a useful and corroborative tool for considering the extent to which the school is vision-guided, i.e. the actual implementation of values underpinning the SVS in the school's day-to-day conduct.

Despite its evident importance, too often educational practitioners describe a situation in which stakeholders are not involved in the implementation of their SV, or worse, it is totally ignored. The investigation of School A brought up a third option: The written, formal VS is ignored, but another VS prevails.

The analysis of School B and C's stakeholders' testimonies regarding the issue of implementation demonstrates yet another distinction between Schools B and C vs. School A. The stakeholders of School B testified to a high degree of fit between what was said and what was done, and brought an impressive number of examples of the salience of the SV values in guiding everyday school activity. All three stakeholders' groups in School B, like both teachers and students (less so parents) manifested rich familiarity with the values of the SVS, considering them viable and relevant, and easily came up with many examples of school activities which contributed to the realisation of these values. As noted before, this unanimous position demonstrated by all three stakeholder groups towards the issue of implementation added to the credibility of their testimonies.

As for School A's stakeholders, they did not testify to any degree of compatibility between the formal SVS and what they described as school practice. The activities described by all the stakeholders drew a picture of the constant pursuit of academic achievement (the 'alternative School Vision'), scaling down the enactment of the other values mentioned in the School Vision Statement. Whereas the teachers seem to find it difficult to acknowledge the existence of the gap between the formal SVS and the actual

conduct of the school, the students acknowledged this openly, and declaring that the formal SVS was not relevant in any way to school life. All three stakeholder groups in School A emphasised 'academic excellence' and 'realisation of students' potential' (both absent from the formal SVS) as the main values which found expression in the school practice. All the above can be seen as an explanation for the significantly lower degree of School A's stakeholders' ownership of their formal SV, in comparison with the stakeholders of the other two schools.

The comparison of the three schools, despite its limitations in scope, highlights the connection between the involvement of the stakeholders in their respective SVSs, and the implementation of the values. The analysis above adds support to the assumption regarding the central role of the stakeholders in developing the identity of their school. Still, additional factors which influence the viability of an SV and the degree of stakeholders' involvement need to be explored for further support – as will be done in the following sections.

### **7.3 Vision Statement Content and Ownership by Stakeholders**

*Research Question no. 3: What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision?*

#### **7.3.1 Introduction**

The analysis of the data gathered from the stakeholders of each of the schools examined in this research has engendered the understanding that all three schools are similar in terms of their students' successful academic performance (see Table 7.4, p. 268). Nevertheless, it has also become clear that each of the schools maintains a unique culture and practice. It seemed beneficial to examine the differences between the three schools' culture and practice in light of the suggestion made in the research literature,

that such differences may be explained, inter alia, by the different strategies each head-teacher uses to respond to the context her/his school operates in.

The contextual factors identified in the stakeholders' testimonies included both external (e.g. geographical location, size, community profile, staff characteristics, head-teacher's tenure, deprivation index, matriculation scores) and internal (e.g. SES of school's intake, parental involvement, leadership style, staff-student relationship, connections with the community) contextual factors. I will start with a short review of the three schools' external contexts.

### 7.3.2 External Contextual Variables

The following table presents a summary of the external contexts that each of the three schools operates in, as expanded on in the separate case descriptions. The list of variables (sometimes referred to as 'context indicators') has been retrieved from the relevant research literature:

School	Geographic Location	Size	Community Demographic Profile	Staff Characteristics	Head-Teacher Tenure	Deprivation Index	Matriculation Score
<b>A</b>	Centre of Tel-Aviv	1500 Students 140 Teachers	Upper-Middle Class; Homogeneous	High Academic Level (mostly postgraduates) Average age: 42 Gender: 75% Female	23 Years	1	95%
<b>B</b>	A suburb on the outskirts of Tel-Aviv	800 Students 100 Teachers	Middle Class; Homogeneous	High Academic Level Average age: 40 Gender: 75% female	23 Years	1	90%
<b>C</b>	Impoverished neighbourhood in Tel-Aviv	500 Students 80 Teachers	Low SES; Diverse nationalities, religions and races	High academic Level Average age: 30-40 Gender: 75% female	17 Years	6	80%

**Table 7.4: External Contextual Variables of Schools A, B, and C**

The table above makes it clear that Schools A and B operate in a rather similar external context, whereas School C's contextual factors stand out as totally different. Nevertheless, the comparison of all three schools' achievements, whether academic and/or affective and social, based on their external contexts is merely partial, and calls for further exploration of their internal contextual variables.

### 7.3.3 Internal Contextual Variables

The following table sums up the internal contextual variables of Schools A, B and C, which are partly congruent with the external context variables:

<b>School</b>	<b>SES of School's Intake</b>	<b>Parental Involvement</b>	<b>Head-Teacher Leadership Style</b>	<b>Staff-Students Relationship</b>	<b>Relations with the Community</b>
<b>A</b>	Upper-Middle Class; Deprivation Index: 1	Limited to administrative matters	Instructional, Top-Down, Goal-Oriented	Mostly formal; Attending mainly to learning issues; Support offered: mostly academic	Mostly getting material help from authorities and community institutions
<b>B</b>	Middle Class; Deprivation Index 1	Identification and commitment; Sharing decision making	Collaborative, Inspirational, Responsible Value-guided	School policy leading attendance to students' needs; Respectful dialogue	An ideology of communication and dialogue with others, both within and without the school.
<b>C</b>	Low; Deprivation Index: 6	Poor parental involvement	Collaborative, Caring	Teachers make up for parents' deficiencies; Support offered: academic, social, emotional, and financial; Respectful dialog	Reaching out to community establishments for all kinds of help: academic, social, and financial

**Table 7.5: Internal Contextual Variables of Schools A, B, and C**

I will start the analysis of the difference between the internal contextual factors of the three schools with some insights derived from the table above:

**(a) Parental Involvement**

As suggested in the literature, the extent of parental involvement reflects the difference between the high SES intake of Schools A and B, which is described as significantly lower in School C.

**(b) Staff-Student Relationship**

According to the stakeholders' testimonies, the managements of Schools B and C emphasise the value of communication among all their stakeholders. The school staff is guided to be attentive and responsive to the students' needs, whether academic or emotional. Respectful dialogue constitutes a salient value in the culture of both schools, as described by teachers, students and parents. At School C, this principle has added value, as the teachers perceive themselves as committed to replacing the parents, providing the students with a safety-net lacking due to poor parental involvement. At School A, the issue of communication between teachers and students seems to be somewhat neglected. The guidelines to the teachers emphasise the emphasis on excellence, while there is no mention of personal relationship. School A's students confirm this notion, as they testify to personal relationships with specific teachers, but note that there is no school policy or ethos regarding this.

**(c) School-Community Relationship**

All three head-teachers maintain a developed network of relationship with their community. The head-teachers of Schools A and C consider both the local authorities and the community as a source of resources to support their schools' activities. Whereas the support needed by School A is mainly material, School C's head-teacher also gets help from neighbouring educational establishments, to the

end of magnifying the volume of support offered to his school's students, whether educational, moral or financial. School B's head-teacher keeps in contact with a broad range of sectors, inside and outside Israel, with the objective of instilling democratic and moral values in his students. All three head-teachers encourage their students to contribute to society, but more so Schools B and C. At School A, the emphasis seems to be more on personal success and achievement.

Almost all the contextual indicators mentioned until now involve the status of the stakeholders in the school, whether in relation to their contribution to it, or to the extent of their integration in school life. Another significant factor contributing to the identity of the school is the leadership style of its head-teacher, as perceived by the stakeholders in their testimonies.

As agreed upon across a wide range of research, the strategies selected by school leadership to meet the external and internal contextual factors the school operates in is significantly influenced by the head-teacher's leadership style. Leadership style has the potential to determine the extent of stakeholder involvement with their SVS and its implementation, as well as with all other aspects of the school culture. A comparison between the three schools concerning this suggestion follows.

#### **7.3.4 Leadership Style and Strategic Practice**

Given the consensual notion among educational researchers, that school leaders play a crucial part in the success of their school and their effectiveness, or lack thereof (see pp. 46-8), the following section will focus on the similarities and differences between the head-teachers of the three schools, especially in regard to their educational philosophy, and its implications on their relationships with the stakeholders and their School Vision.



Evidently, when we examine head-teachers' perceptions and conduct, as seen through the lens of the stakeholders, it would be reasonable to expect that in each one of them we will find more than one perspective constituting her/his leadership style. Nevertheless, the findings at the basis of the comparison between the three head-teachers bore out four main aspects which indicate the differences in their leadership styles:

- (1) Educational Perspective
- (2) Role Perception
- (3) Leadership Style
- (4) Strategies Employed by the Head-Teacher

### **(1) Educational Perspective**

Based on the three head-teachers' interviews and conduct, as well as the testimonies of the stakeholders and the publications of each school, it seems safe to say that there is yet another difference between what the head-teachers of Schools B and C consider valuable education and the educational perspective of School A's head-teacher. As was established throughout the analysis of her school practice, School A's head-teacher (despite the impressive, value-guided text of her school's SVS) stressed academic achievements above all else. In contrast, the head-teacher of School B held what seems to be a much broader spectrum of goals. He acted upon the belief in value-guided education, which includes cognitive, social and civil values. He aspired to instill inquisitiveness, creativity and excellence, as well as inculcate democratic values and human relationship and, notwithstanding, love for one's country (see pp. 157-8). School C's head-teacher had a similar educational perspective, as he also maintained a balance between academic press and social and civic values. Considering the challenges presented by his school's intake, he also invested in developing trust and confidence in his students, to foster their agency.

## **(2) Role Perception**

As for the issue of the head-teacher's role perception, the data (e.g. the head-teacher's statements as well as her choice of wording) suggest that School A's SVS, and specifically its drafting process, clearly reflects her views. The head-teacher defined the SVS as *her* vision (see pp. 116-7, 138), in the sense that it is *her* school, and the stakeholders are not considered as partners, but rather as employees (teachers) or customers (students and parents). Such a stance suggests a self-centred, top-down (rather conservative), perception of the head-teacher's role: The head-teacher is the engine that sets every aspect of school life in motion. Unlike School A's head-teacher's stance, both Schools B and C's head-teachers saw themselves as service providers, and their position as first among equals. School B's head-teacher, for instance, refrained from using the first person singular, preferring to use "we," indicating his perception of his role as head-teacher: consultative rather than instructing, collaborative rather than dictating, practicing rather than preaching. The decision-making process is mostly democratic, taking into account the views of the stakeholders (see pp. 158-9, 204).

School C's head-teacher appeared to see himself as an intermediary between two worlds, the world of the privileged and the world of the deprived. He motivated his staff to encourage the students to trust themselves in order to foster their ability to extricate themselves from their deprived present and progress towards a better future. He believed that the combination of advanced education, values and self-trust is the key to social mobility. He therefore perceived his role as instrumental, considering education as a vehicle for promoting social change (see pp. 204-5).

## **(3) Leadership Style**

A distinct difference between the three schools lies in their head-teachers' leadership styles. School A's head-teacher's educational perspective and her role perception define her leadership style as instructional, as she is goal-oriented, involved in planning the curriculum as well as in the evaluation of teachers and teaching and

focusing primarily on students' measurable outcomes. Under her instructional leadership, a rather dominant and consensual culture of academic pressure appeared to thrive at School A, beneath the value-guided, formal statements of the SVS. Resources were allocated primarily for the enhancement of academic achievements. At the other end of the spectrum, School B's head-teacher and School C's head-teacher seemed to have a lot in common in regard to their leadership style. Both of them are collaborative, inspirational, charismatic and value-guided. These characteristics portray both their leadership styles as distinct transformational leadership.

School B's stakeholders portray their head-teacher as a responsible leader (see pp. 185-7), one who aspires to create a balance between academic achievements and the inculcation of social and civic values and democratic learning, no less important than academic performance in his opinion. To this end, he has invested relentless efforts to develop relationships, alongside strategies of improving academic achievements – a practice which characterises responsible leadership. In accordance with his SVS, School B's head-teacher succeeded in focusing on social justice, democratic and human values, beyond academic achievements, and weaving these all together as a single outcome, highlighting the importance of benefit to all stakeholders as the ultimate goal.

School C's head-teacher's educational philosophy depicts him as a *caring leader*. Caring leadership is defined in the research literature by the perception that the pursuit of academic achievements alone does not attend sufficiently to the quality of social relations required for effective education. Alongside their strong preference for academic achievements, caring leaders stress communication and the attendance to the particular needs of others. School C's head-teacher described his role at school as promoting the general development, welfare and well-being of the students, addressing the immediate needs of students, teachers and families. He focused on the long-term outcomes of belonging and engagement, a sense of self-worth and confidence. All these, for him, are keys to a better future for his students.

Despite the similarity between the leadership styles of School B and C's head-teachers, it appears that their point of departure is different, probably because of the different contexts that their schools operate in. Both head-teachers seemed to be guided by a moral stance. School B's head-teacher believed that it is the responsibility of every school to instill values such as pluralism and tolerance, and to nurture value-guided good citizens. School C's head-teacher shared the same moral stance, but was driven by additional motivation: his determination to strengthen his underprivileged students' self-trust and confidence, enabling them to improve their future prospects. For him, therefore, the combination of academic achievement and social/civic values is a means to enhance the social mobility of his students.

The above comparison of the leadership styles of the three head-teachers highlights the fact that relationships with the stakeholders constitute a major component of each head-teacher's leadership style. The following table sums up a comparison of the leadership styles of the three head-teachers.

<b>School</b>	<b>Core Value</b>	<b>Core Ideology</b>	<b>Role Perception</b>	<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>Special Traits</b>	<b>Stakeholders' Role</b>
<b>A</b>	Academic press	Coping with 21 <sup>st</sup> century life challenges	Centralistic	Authoritative Instructional	Goal-Oriented	Employees, Passive clients, Not partners
<b>B</b>	Balanced: Academic values and social-civic values	Value-guidedness	Service rendering; First among equals	Transformational, Responsible	Collaborative Accessible	Partners, Taking part in decision-making process
<b>C</b>	Balanced: Academic values and social-civic values	Social-Mobility	Service rendering; First among equals	Transformational, Caring	Collaborative Supportive	Partners Taking part in decision-making process

**Table 7.6: Characteristics of Head-Teachers' Leadership Styles**

The table above clarifies the interrelationship between the stakeholders' status and the leadership style of the school's head-teacher: The more collaborative the head-teacher, the more involved and committed the stakeholders. The stakeholders' role seems even more protrusive in the strategies applied by the head-teachers to manage the contextual constraints of their schools – as will be shown in the next section.

#### **(4) Strategies Employed by the Head-Teacher**

With regard to the strategies used by head-teachers to tackle challenges embedded in their school context, it seems that although much has been written about successful or effective leadership, few publications have examined the processes and the ways in which head-teachers manage the dynamics of internal and external school contexts over time. However, it seems important to bear in mind that the fact that successful leaders are sensitive to context does not mean that they use qualitatively different practices in every different context. It means, rather, that they apply contextually sensitive combinations of the basic leadership practices described earlier.

The following table presents the basic strategies, listed in the left column of the table, frequently used by head-teachers. This list has been compiled from various relevant studies. The table sums up the repertoire of strategies used by the head-teacher of each school, and how they find expression in the SV and its ownership by the stakeholders.

<b>Head-Teacher's Strategy</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>	<b>Implications re Stakeholders' Ownership of SVS</b>
Developing the school vision, consisting its core values and core aims	Non-collaborative drafting process; Focus on academic achievements	Collaborative drafting process; Focus on core values and norms	Collaborative drafting process; Focus on core values and norms	The School Vision as a set of guidelines to the school ideology and practices, reflecting both the school's and stakeholders' perspectives
Aligning people towards the school vision	Disregard for the underpinning values of the formal Vision Statement; Focus on achievements	Sharing the School Vision with stakeholders and constant debate on its values	Sharing the School Vision with stakeholders and constant debate on its values	Collaboration with stakeholders fosters a feeling of partnership and motivation among stakeholders toward school goals
Establishing clear procedures for management performance	Procedures for monitoring mainly teaching practices and academic achievements	Clearly articulated social and behavioural norms	Clearly articulated social and behavioural norms	Stakeholders' contribution to the implementation of the School Vision and its viability
Promoting an inclusive ethos of a safe and friendly culture	A safe environment, yet not necessarily friendly	Maintaining extensive communication and respectful dialogue with all stakeholders	School as a buffer against the violent neighbourhood; A climate of acceptance and tolerance toward all	Attending to the immediate needs of all stakeholders creates a sense of belonging and commitment
Adapting school practices to the school's particular context	Institutional context: Abiding by the authorities' expectations	Socio-Cultural context: Democratic, social and moral values embedded within the Israeli culture	Community context: The aspiration to collaborate with the community toward social mobility	Responding to the needs and expectations of the community

**Table 7.7: Head-Teachers' Strategies re Their School Vision and Its Ownership by Stakeholders**

<b>Head-Teacher's Strategy</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>	<b>Implications re Stakeholders' Ownership of SVS</b>
Sharing leadership with stakeholders	In general, stakeholders are not included in decision-making processes	Accessibility of management and staff; Feedback channels for the inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making processes	Accessibility of management and staff; Feedback channels for the inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making processes	Shared leadership with stakeholders encourages cooperation, partnership and accountability
On-going communication with stakeholders and the community	Communication with parents and students only in administrative matters; Top-down management style	Constant deliberation with stakeholders regarding pedagogical, moral, and social matters	On-going communication in an effort to collaborate with all stakeholders, including parents	Openness to stakeholders' expectations and feedback
Offering support to students	Support is offered to students mainly in regard to learning towards excellence and realisation of potential.	Academic and emotional support to students is an integral part of the school's ethos	The school extends emotional, social, and financial support to encourage trust and self-confidence among students	Creating an ethos of trust and confidence; Enhancing commitment of stakeholders

**Table 7.7: Head-Teachers' Strategies re Their School Vision and Its Ownership by Stakeholders (Cont.)**

Stakeholders' testimonies in regard to the practices used by their schools' respective managements confirm the suggestion of the literature (see Appendix B, pp. 361-2), that different combinations of strategies are applied by the different head-teachers, and the application of these combinations eventually affect the design of the school culture.

The combination of strategies applied by each of the three head-teachers can be clustered around several issues: the core purpose of the school; the relationships between the stakeholders; stakeholders' ownership of their SV; attendance to stakeholders' needs; and the kind of support offered by the school concordantly. Each combination of strategies, all of them relating to the stakeholders' status, creates the unique culture of each school.

Exploration of the various schools' context variables, both external and internal, as well as the strategies applied by the head-teachers to meet them, supports the notion that both school vision and the stakeholders' degree of ownership of it leave a mark in every area of school life – its culture, climate and its stakeholders' well-being.

#### **7.4 Stakeholders Ownership of Their SV**

As expanded on in the research literature (see pp. 252-3), the stakeholders' degree of ownership of their School Vision comprises:

- Their familiarity with the values underpinning the Vision Statement.
- Their identification with, and commitment, to these values
- Their involvement in the implementation of these values in school culture and practice.

Two factors which are expected to have an impact on stakeholders' ownership of their SV have been explored in this research: stakeholders' management and vision viability, as well as the dyadic relationship between the two concepts. This assumption is based on the fact that the parameters of a compelling vision and a clearly articulated Vision/Mission Statement are all stakeholder-orientated. These parameters are inter-related



with stakeholders' alignment with their SV, their involvement with its design and its implementation in their school's life. Each of these parameters is in fact a mirror reflection of a corresponding function on the part of the stakeholders:

- **Clearly articulated** – understood by stakeholders
- **Appealing** – inspiring alignment and commitment by stakeholders
- **Credible** – fostering recruitment of stakeholders to accomplish its goals

Hence, the corresponding factors of SV viability and the stakeholders' alignment with it in the three schools have been examined for their contribution to the extent of stakeholders' ownership of their SV.

Given the different degrees of viability of their SVs, as well as each school's stakeholder engagement practice (as described through the lens of their stakeholders' views), the three schools examined in this study seem to achieve stakeholder ownership of their SVSs to differing extents. To help summarize my comparisons between them, I shall recap the components of stakeholders' ownership, as reflected in the stakeholders' testimonies, in tabular form (see Table 7.8, p. 281). I also chose to add a mediating factor (each school's management's efforts to disseminate the SVS and its values among the stakeholders). I contend that its similarity with the other findings might provide support for the statements presented here. Such comparison will be followed by an assessment of each school's stakeholders' relative ownership of their SV, and whether what we see in practice is reflective of what the research and theory expect.

The analysis of data gathered from the head-teachers, teachers, students and parents of each school (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6 above) enabled the comparison of the three schools with regard to the components of their stakeholders' ownership of their school vision as follows.

<b>Ownership Components</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>
Familiarity with the underpinning values of the School Vision Statements	Poor familiarity of stakeholders with the formal School Vision Statement; References to a different, informal Vision.	Profound stakeholders' knowledge of values in School Vision Statement.	Profound teachers' and students' knowledge of values in School Vision Statement. Less so on the part of parents.
Stakeholders' identification with, and commitment to, the School Vision	School A's SVS appears to be just a façade. Teachers and parents align with a totally different Vision, while students ignore it.	Most stakeholders identify with the SVS and are committed to it. The values of the SVS synchronise with their own values.	Teachers and students identify with SVS's values and are committed to it. Parents less so.
Involvement in implementation	Stakeholders testified to the implementation of values other than those mentioned in the formal SVS.	All three stakeholder groups unanimously confirmed that the SVS values are constantly implemented in school practices.	Teachers and students testify to constant realisation of SVS values in the school's day-to-day activities. Parents less so.
Management's efforts to disseminate the values of the School Vision among stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visibility of the School Vision Statement</li> <li>• Scarce debating on SVS values</li> <li>• Poor collaboration in SVS drafting process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide visibility of SVS</li> <li>• Frequent debating on SVS values</li> <li>• Comprehensive collaboration in SVS drafting process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility of SVS</li> <li>• Intensive debating on SVS values</li> <li>• Comprehensive collaboration in SVS drafting process</li> </ul>

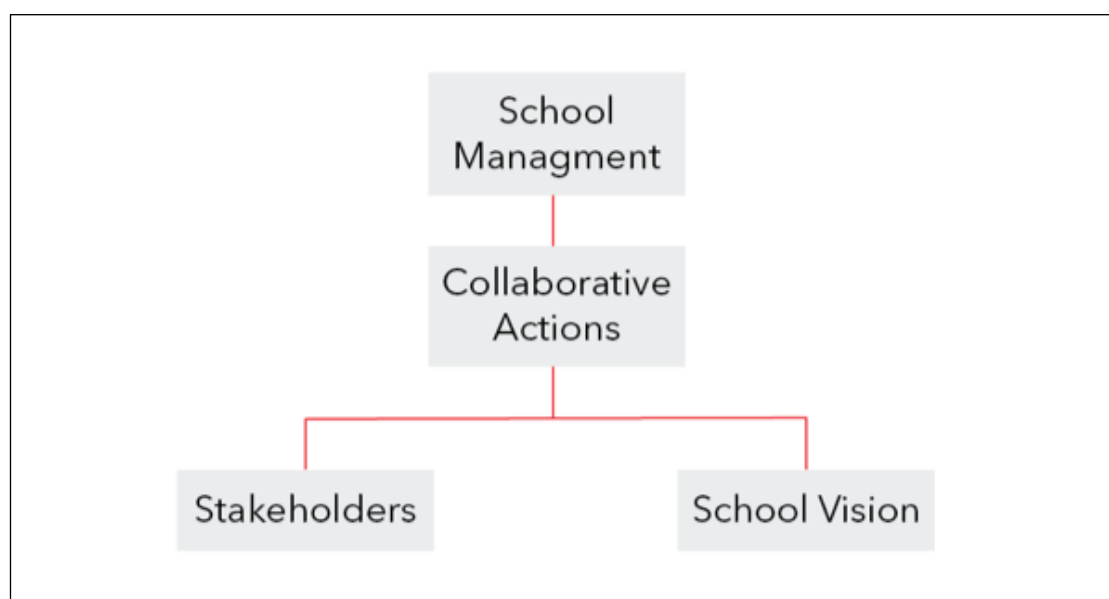
**Table 7.8: Comparison between Schools' Ownership Components**

The comparison between the three schools presented in the table above points to the processual nature of stakeholders' ownership of their SV, as presented in Figure 7.1 on the next page:



**Figure 7.1: Stages of Developing Stakeholders' Ownership of Their SV**

Familiarity leads to alignment and commitment, which in turn enhances the active involvement of the stakeholders in school life and culture. In School A, we find poor familiarity of the stakeholders with the school's formal SV, while they align with an alternative, oral SV and are involved in its implementation. This seems to be a product of the lack of efforts on the part of School A's management to disseminate and instill the SVS among the stakeholders. In Schools B and C, on the other hand, we find a high degree of all three elements of stakeholder engagement, probably resulting from the strategies applied by the head-teachers of Schools B and C towards the collaboration of stakeholders in the design, maintenance and implementation of their SV. School management is therefore considered accountable for the interrelations of the stakeholders with their school's SV, through the level of collaborative actions practiced in the school:



**Figure 7.2: The Role of School Management in Stakeholders-SV Interrelationship**

Two insights have emerged from the stakeholders' testimonies regarding their ownership of their SV:

- (1) Stakeholders' alignment with their SV is developed through a process of growing engagement with it.
- (2) The nature of the actions taken by the school management (whether more or less collaborative) has a direct impact on the development of such a process.

All this leads to the understanding that it seems recommendable to consider stakeholders' ownership of their SV in its processual entirety as one of the factors that determine school's identity, i.e. its culture and climate. For a more profound exploration of this notion, though, it is imperative to examine the impact of stakeholders' ownership of their SV on the school culture, climate and stakeholders' well-being, which define the school identity and practice, as well as its effectiveness and success. Hence, the following sections provide a comparison between the three schools in relation to these three concepts: 'culture,' 'climate,' and stakeholders' 'well-being.'

#### **7.4.1 School Culture**

*Research Question no. 4: How do stakeholders' ownership and value affect their entire school-experience?*

The cultures of the three schools have been examined and compared in the framework of three parameters suggested in the literature:

- **Content:** norms, values and basic assumptions underpinning school activity
- **Homogeneity:** the extent these values and norms are shared with stakeholders
- **Strength:** implementation of these norms and values in the school's activity

All three abovementioned parameters pertain to what is often referred to as 'school integrity' [or its opposite – 'school hypocrisy'], both reflecting the extent of consistency between different elements of the school's culture.

From School A stakeholders' statements, one may infer that their school's culture is characterised by a series of discrepancies. As detailed above (see pp. 141-9), gaps were found between stakeholders' perceptions of the ideal SV and reality; between the content of the SVS and the values actually pursued in the school's practice; between the rhetoric regarding the relevance of the SV and the stakeholders' involvement (both barely corroborated in the stakeholders' reports), and their scarce presence in daily school activity. Most stakeholders (and specifically the students) pointed out that the dominant value which constitutes the school culture and practice is 'academic press,' and that the decision-making process is centralised rather than collaborative contrary to its SVS. The culture of School A, as described by its stakeholders, may therefore be considered as lacking integrity, as its practice shows a low degree of fit between statements and their implementation within the school, a low extent of sharing in the decision-making process, and limited commitment to the school's professed vision, ethical principles and values.

Contrary to School A, School B and C's stakeholders describe their schools' cultures as maintaining consistency between the values espoused in their SVS and their managerial conduct. Both schools' practices, as described in stakeholders' interviews, are characterised by a series of traits which appear to predicate the distinct integrity of their culture (see pp. 187-94, 218-24 above):

- (1) Compatibility between what is said and what is meant: The wording of the SVS seems clear, coherent and attainable to the majority of its stakeholders.
- (2) Genuine collaboration with the stakeholders in the drafting process of the SVS and its implementation.
- (3) Compatibility between what is said and what is done – the school's management is determined to disseminate the values of the SVS and ingrain them in school routines.
- (4) Compatibility between school's values and stakeholders' personal views.
- (5) Considerable compatibility between the views expressed by members of the different stakeholders' groups regarding the values of their school's Vision Statement, especially at School B.

Based on the above, Schools B and C's cultures may be characterised by their integrity, while School A's culture may be defined as hypocritical.

Another difference between the schools lies in their attitude towards their stakeholders. At Schools B and C, a majority of the stakeholders testified that the values 'collaboration' and 'respect' are translated into behavioural norms, which are visualised and practiced, and thus made dominant in the school culture. School A's stakeholders did not express similar notions. Moreover, the students describe an attitude of neglect and disregard towards them in matters which are beyond cognitive achievements, while Schools B and C's students feel that their needs are for the most part attended to and they are treated respectfully.

At School C, probably due to its specific socio-economic context, we find two characteristics which are not found in schools A and B: School C's management and staff feel that as the parents have a limited ability to attend to their children's needs, it is their duty to fill in this gap. They are therefore extremely devoted and do their best to gain the students' trust; encouraging their students to have faith in themselves, to the end of helping them succeed in their studies and improve their life conditions. The value of 'care' is therefore dominant in the school's practice as well as its culture. The dominance of another value at School C's culture and practices, 'equality,' also stems from the composition of the school's intake. In the face of a variety of nationalities and religions, the school chose to adopt a somewhat problematic policy: the school's curriculum abides by the directives of the Israeli education system, but at the same time practices tolerance and thoughtfulness towards the non-Jewish students.

The differences between the cultures of the three schools seem to centre on three main issues: The focus of the school purpose, the management style and the context each school operates in:

<b>School</b>	<b>School Purpose</b>	<b>Management Style</b>	<b>School's Focal Context</b>
<b>A</b>	Academic Press	Instructional	Institutional
<b>B</b>	Academic Press and Humanistic Values	Transformational/ Responsible	Social-Cultural
<b>C</b>	Social-Mobility via Education	Transformational/ Caring	Community

**Table 7.9: Main Characteristics of School Culture**

The three characteristics summed up in the table above, and the interrelations between them, portray the culture of each school and the commonalities and differences between them regarding it. The nature of each school's culture affects the stakeholders' perception of the school's climate and their resulting sense of well-being. A lot can be

learned about the two organisational features, school climate and stakeholders' well-being, from the stakeholders' testimonies. In the following section the differences between the three schools regarding these two concepts will be explored.

#### **7.4.2 School Climate and Stakeholders' Well-Being**

A long list of dimensions by which school climate can be assessed has been identified (see Literature Review Chapter, pp. 58-60), some of which find expression at Schools A, B and C stakeholders' testimonies: safety; connectedness (or a sense of belonging); relationship between the organisation's members; academic emphasis; and, parental involvement. Given the perceptual character of school climate, the perspectives of the stakeholders regarding the aforementioned dimensions will be given voice in the following paragraphs.

The issue of *safety* was not raised in any of the interviews with School A and B's stakeholders. This might indicate that safety, whether physical, social or emotional, does not present a problem in these schools, due to the fact that rules of behaviour are clearly communicated, and that infractions (particularly bullying and violence) are treated in a clear and consistent manner. In School C the situation is totally different. Due to the precarious nature of the latter's surrounding neighbourhood, as well as the potential conflicts between sectors within the school, School C's management and staff are extensively conscious of the issue of safety. They led an effective campaign against violence in school, the winner of a national anti-violence activity competition held by the Ministry of Education. The students indeed feel safe and define the school as their 'safety net' and 'shelter,' as do their parents.

As for 'connectedness,' which reflects the stakeholders' sense of belonging, students and teachers of both Schools B and C testify to their love for their school and their identification with the values and norms it upholds. The difference between the two schools lies in the *parental involvement*: whereas School B's parents share the teachers'



and the students' views and feel collaborated and respected, the parents of School C cannot, or will not, get involved – a trait typical in low SES populations.

Among School A's stakeholders, each stakeholder group expressed a different degree of connectedness (or lack thereof). The teachers seemed loyal to their school, but their commitment was mostly to the head-teacher rather than to the organisation. Most of the teachers do not collaborate in the decision-making process, and appear to function more as employees than as partners. Their reports lacked the warmth and compassion towards their school that we found in the other two schools. The parents described their role a-priori as limited to implementing the head-teacher's policy in administrative and financial matters. Whilst generally satisfied with the school's achievements, they did not express any emotional connection to it. The students related to their school with unmistakable resentment. They described feelings of neglect, complained about the lack of attention to their needs, and yearned for some sense of belonging. When asked what the school gave them, they unanimously referenced academic achievement and peer-companionship.

The differences between the degrees of connectedness of the three schools can be attributed to the dissimilar *relationship between the organisation's members*. Whereas all stakeholders of Schools B and C expanded on the constant emphasis of management and staff on the value of communication and respectful dialogue, hardly any mention of this could be found in the testimonies of School A's stakeholders or school publications. Respect, accessibility and attention to the needs of students and parents alike constitute an integral part of the policy of Schools B and C, as they apply to all school members. At School A, the head-teacher was described as detached and inaccessible. Respectful dialogue is practiced by some teachers, but not as a school policy. In the school publications, the one and only expectation of the school's teachers is to foster academic progress and excellence. This situation, as described by the students, may well explain the students' professed resentment towards their school to the extent of acts of sabotage on the part of the students, as an expression of protest against it (see pp. 147-50 above).

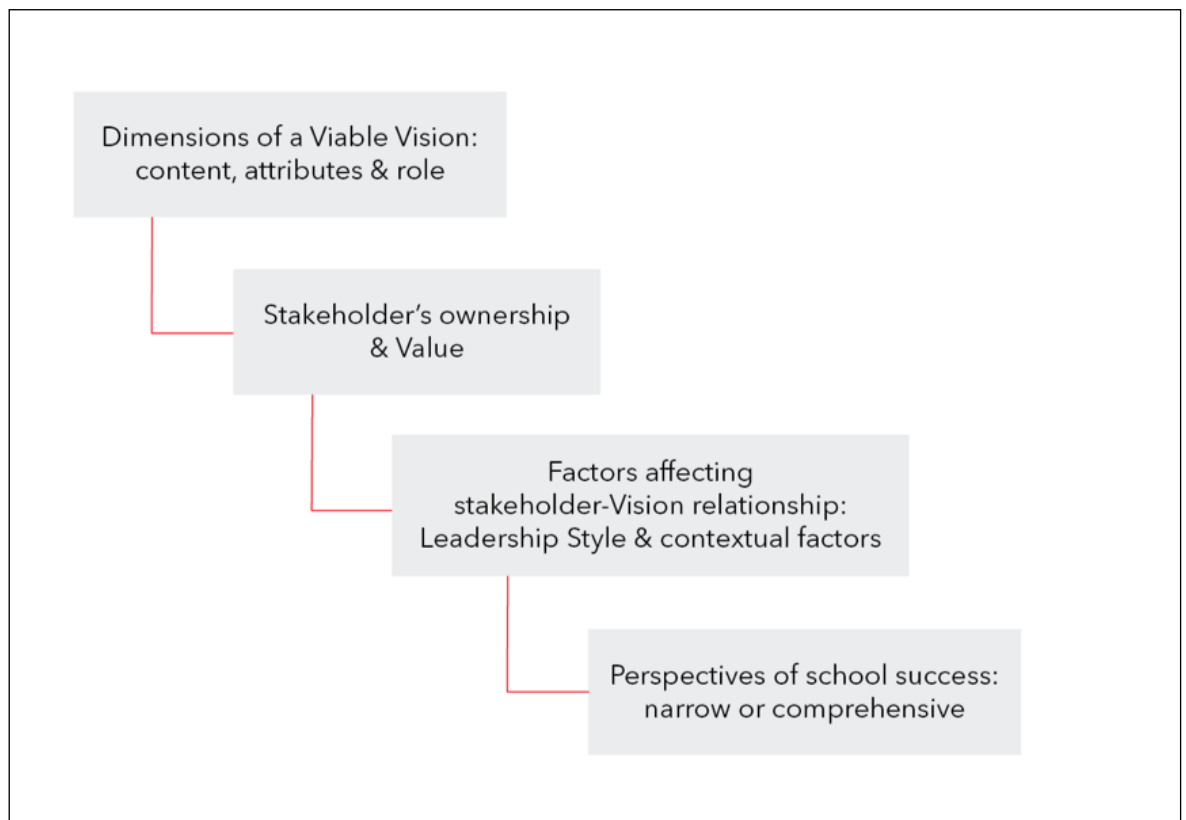
The climate at School A seemed largely affected by the double message of the school management regarding the school purpose (i.e. academic pressure), as well as by the lack of collaboration with stakeholders. The existence of an alternative vision and the failure to implement the formal, written SVS and the top-down management style are bound to create a reaction of distrust and confusion, resulting in alienation and detachment.

The differences between the three schools regarding their stakeholders' well-being are clearly connected to each school's culture and climate. All the above leads to the conclusion that concepts of vision ownership, school culture and values, school climate and well-being are inextricably linked to the status afforded the stakeholders in school. Together, they comprise the school's level of integrity, which encapsulates the character of each school and affects the stakeholders' whole school experience. Moreover, all three concepts have been acknowledged as contributing to school effectiveness, and specifically to students' academic achievements. This study corroborates the above, but suggests adding stakeholders' ownership of their SV as another dimension of school effectiveness and improvement.

## **7.5 Summary of Cross-Case Analysis**

Four goals were set for the above cross-case analysis, namely: (1) Enable a deeper understanding of both the uniqueness and commonalities of the analysed cases; (2) Produce new knowledge and 'naturalistic generalisations' (see p. 91), potentially apt to inform theory; (3) Add trustworthiness and robustness to the findings from the separate analysis of each school; and, (4) Elicit recommendations for further educational theory, research, and practice.

As expanded on above, the analysis of the stakeholders' testimonies was conducted within a conceptual framework, consisting of the key structures that delineate the interrelationship between the stakeholders and their SV, as well as their implications on the stakeholders' entire school-experience:



**Figure 7.3: Framework of Analysis and Discussion – Key Constructs**

**(First introduced in Section 3.2 Above)**

The viability of each school's VS (based on the dimensions specified above); the extent of each school's stakeholder value and ownership; the factors which affect ownership and value (context and leadership style) – all these were estimated and compared, based on the data gathered from the stakeholders. The comparison brings to the fore the differences and commonalities between the three analysed cases in regard the four key structures mentioned above.

Two major differences between the three schools emerge from the analysis in this matter: as to the viability of their SV, whereas School A ignores its formal SVS, upholding instead an alternative Vision, Schools B and C are faithful to their SVSs and strive to implement them to the full. Another difference lies in the perception of the stakeholders' position in the school: while Schools B and C consider their stakeholders as partners, School A for the most part maintains a top-down management style, where stakeholders are treated mostly as employees or customers.

Commonalities were found mainly between the educational orientation of Schools B and C's managements, despite the differences in their external and internal contexts. These differences and commonalities naturally have an impact on the way each school's stakeholders perceived their ownership of their School Vision.

Moreover, the comparison of the stakeholders' views, between and within the cases, supported by verbatim quotations of their own words, fostered their credibility and trustworthiness. For example, the confrontation of testimonies between of School A's students and teachers brings out the discrepancies between the formal and the alternative school visions and their implications on the school's life. Another salient example is the tacit undercurrents of animosity between ethnic groups, which emerged from the contradictions between the parents' testimonies and the teachers' views.

The above detailed exploration of schools A, B, and C, their commonalities and differences, introduces findings which might contribute to the educational research in various ways:

- (1) Exploring prior assumptions made in the research literature in regard to the nexus between School Vision and stakeholder management.
- (2) Giving voice to educational stakeholders' perspectives regarding their place within the relationship between stakeholders and School Vision, specifically the concept of their sense of ownership with regard to the latter.
- (3) Broadening the scope of measurement of school effectiveness, including stakeholders' ownership of School Vision as a major factor in every school's culture, climate and well-being.

Overarching suggestions regarding the implications of the link between educational stakeholders and their SV, and the factors that affect them, will be offered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

### 8.1 Introduction

I started out with the question: What are the factors and/or processes that may prove to be the "keys" to improvement of the outcomes of schools and the educational system as a whole? My experience as a head-teacher taught me that the answer to this question should be sought, *inter alia*, at the level of school organisation – an assumption which has been supported by the research literature (Murphy, 1992; Wyatt, 1996; Scheerens, 2000; Kose, 2011).

As a great believer in the power of organisations, I started out with an exploration of the concepts of 'School Vision' and 'School Mission,' and the values that underpin them. Findings regarding the inter-dependence between Vision and organisational stakeholders were extensive in the literature (e.g. Branson 2008; Kurland et al., 2010), based mainly on content analysis of Vision/Mission Statements, and/or data gathered from the school management staff (seldom teachers). Other educational stakeholders (teachers, students, parents), despite the central role ascribed to them by most researchers, were for the most part not considered as a source of information on the matter.

Recommendations made in several studies (e.g. Stemler et al., 2011; Fayad, 2011) encouraged me to follow this path, and to explore the Vision-Stakeholders' relationship as a potential "key" contributing to the improvement of the quality of the entire school-experience. The core objective of this study is, therefore, lessons drawn from the data provided by head-teachers, teachers, students and parents about what makes the difference between a good school and a failing one.

This study therefore focuses on the linkage between two concepts: Stakeholders and Vision, and the ways this linkage affects the organisation. Both concepts are at the nexus of two research areas: Management and Education. The description of the

relationship between School Vision and Educational Stakeholders draws mainly on the testimonies of the stakeholders, supported by content analysis of the SVS and additional school publications, against the backdrop of the research literature regarding these concepts. As I decided to consider the stakeholders as a legitimate source of information about their own status at school, especially focusing on their SV, the following findings are based mostly on the data provided by them in their testimonies.

## **8.2 Research Questions**

The research questions chosen for this study stem from the assumption that collaborative management practice enhances stakeholders' ownership of their School Vision/Mission, thus affecting the school culture and climate. This assumption finds support in the research Literature (Van Houtte, 2005; Bascia, 2014; Van Gasse et al., 2016; Thapa, 2013). Accordingly, contrary to the common premise that academic press is the sole way to improve attainment, I have suggested a broader perspective: a positive culture and a healthy climate contribute to a better school-experience on the part of the stakeholders, resulting in the stakeholders' well-being and consequently, the improvement of their academic outcomes (Thorburn, 2015; Anderson et al., 2016).

I have also argued that the stakeholders' entire school-experience, and not merely cognitive outcomes, should be construed as a part of the comprehensive assessment process of the school's effectiveness. In an attempt to follow the findings that led to these insights, my overall research questions were as follows:

- (1) What makes a School Vision viable?
- (2) What constitutes the role of the educational stakeholders in the school system?
- (3) What affects the mutual relationship between the stakeholders and their School Vision?

- (4) How do stakeholders' ownership and value affect their entire school-experience?

### **8.2.1 Research Question no. 1: What makes a School Vision Viable?**

In relation to Research Question no. 1, the stakeholders' testimonies and the content analysis of each school's VS and other publications provided compelling information about the different extents of Vision viability in the three schools examined in this research. The three dimensions of VS viability (clearly articulated, shared with stakeholders and implemented) that have been suggested in the research literature (Baum et al., 1998; Yukl, 2006), indeed found expression in the stakeholders' testimonies, thus corroborating their use as measures of viability. Nevertheless, they were tested later on for their degree of fit with other components of the stakeholder-VS ownership for further corroboration. By and large, in two of the schools, B and C, the SV statements were portrayed as viable, as the above three dimensions were largely applied. In the third school, School A, the formal SVS was mostly described as non-viable, while a different, oral SV served as a platform for the school's actual day-to-day conduct and culture.

### **8.2.2 Research Question no. 2: What Constitutes the Roles of the Educational Stakeholders in the School System?**

As to Research Question no. 2 (What constitutes the role of the educational stakeholders in the school system?), the dimensions suggested in the extant literature regarding stakeholder ownership and value gained support throughout the stakeholders' interviews. The case study analysis revealed that the dimensions defining ownership of the VS constitute a mirror-reflection of their respective dimensions of SV viability:

- **Clearly articulated:** Understood by stakeholders
- **Appealing:** Inspiring alignment and commitment by stakeholders
- **Credible:** Fostering recruitment of stakeholders to accomplish its goals



The concepts of a viable SV and stakeholders' ownership, as well as their dimensions found in prior research are confirmed here. Still, the findings of this research offer a somewhat different perspective of vision-viability and stakeholder ownership than what is suggested in the research literature. Whereas both constructs are referred to as constants, this research presents them as a dyadic dynamic process, resulting from an evolving chain of interdependent dimensions: clearly articulated VS enhances the stakeholders' understanding and makes it more accessible and appealing, fostering their alignment and commitment. Credibility inspires stakeholders' trust, and encourages them to participate in their school's decision-making processes, leading to an increased sense of ownership and value. The developing interdependent relationship between the dimensions defining a viable SVS and the way it is perceived by the stakeholders will later serve as a key element in the models proposed below (see p. 300).

The differences between the degrees of stakeholders' value and ownership of their School Vision in the three schools provide proof for the above statement. In School A, stakeholders' relatively poor familiarity with their SVS hindered their alignment with its values, and restricted their ability to take part in its implementation in school life. Low extent of ownership was therefore demonstrated by School A's stakeholders, whereas Schools B and C's stakeholders, on the other hand, demonstrated a noticeable sense of ownership, due to their familiarity and alignment with their SV, as well as constant collaboration with the schools' managements in its implementation. Educational researchers contend that value ascribed to the educational stakeholders and their collaboration in their school's life reflects the extent of their ownership of the SV (Van Houtte, 2005; Thapa, 2013; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Van Gasse, 2016), a statement which gained support in this study.

### **8.2.3 Research Question no. 3: What Affects the Mutual Relationship between the Stakeholders and Their School Vision?**

Both interdependent concepts mentioned above, i.e. VS viability and stakeholders' ownership of it, define the identity of the school. The VS content, as well as the extent of stakeholder ownership is, for the most part, described in the literature as being regulated by the leadership style of the school management, via the managerial strategies it applies (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bourne & Walker, 2006; Kurland et al., 2010). This assumption has been corroborated in the findings of this study.

The comparison of the three head-teachers leadership style and their strategic practice highlights yet another distinction between School A, on the one hand, and Schools B and C, on the other. Based on the stakeholders' reports, whereas School A's head-teacher is mostly goal-oriented, authoritative and applies academic press as her main strategy, the head-teachers of Schools b and C are more collaborative, communicative and people-oriented. They both strive to create a balance between academic attainment and the inculcation of social, civic and moral values. Consequently, the value they ascribe to the stakeholders is extremely different: while School A's head-teacher treats the stakeholders as passive subordinates, diminishing their value in the organisation as well as their ownership of the SV, School B and C's stakeholders are regarded by their managements as proactive partners, as they enhance their alignment with the school SV and life.

These findings, in turn, provide an explanation for the different attitudes of the stakeholders to their respective schools: In School A we recognise detached stakeholders, who are not aligned with the formal SVS, but are committed to an alternative SV, whose core value is first and foremost academic achievements. On the other hand, in Schools B and C we find stakeholders who are committed to their school, identify with its SV and are to a great extent involved in the schools' activity.

To recap, the school leadership is a crucial factor in determining the relationship between the stakeholders and their school's SV. Their leadership style and the strategies they apply characterise the school culture and climate, and consequently the stakeholders' well-being, all of which comprise the stakeholders' entire school-experience.

#### **8.2.4 Research Question no. 4: How Do Stakeholders' Ownership and Value Affect Their Entire School-Experience?**

Research Question no. 4 brings us back to the question which initially triggered this research: What are the factors and/or processes that may prove to be the "keys" to improvement of the outcomes of the schools, and the educational system as a whole?

The findings of this study, as described in the cross-case analysis chapter, support the argument that the extent of vision-viability and stakeholder-ownership highlight the different culture of each of the schools, which are summed up in the table below:

<b>School Features</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>Schools B and C</b>
School leaders' educational perspective and practice	Top-down	Collaborative
Collaborative strategies applied by the leaders	Scarce	Applied intensively
School Vision's viability	Ignored	Disseminated and implemented
Stakeholders' ownership of their School Vision	To a small extent	To a large extent
Stakeholders' position in the organisation	Subordinates	Partners
The resulting school culture, climate, and the quality of stakeholders' well-being	Negative culture; Unhealthy climate; Alienation	Positive culture; Healthy climate; Well-Being

**Table 8.1: Differentiating Features of School Practices**

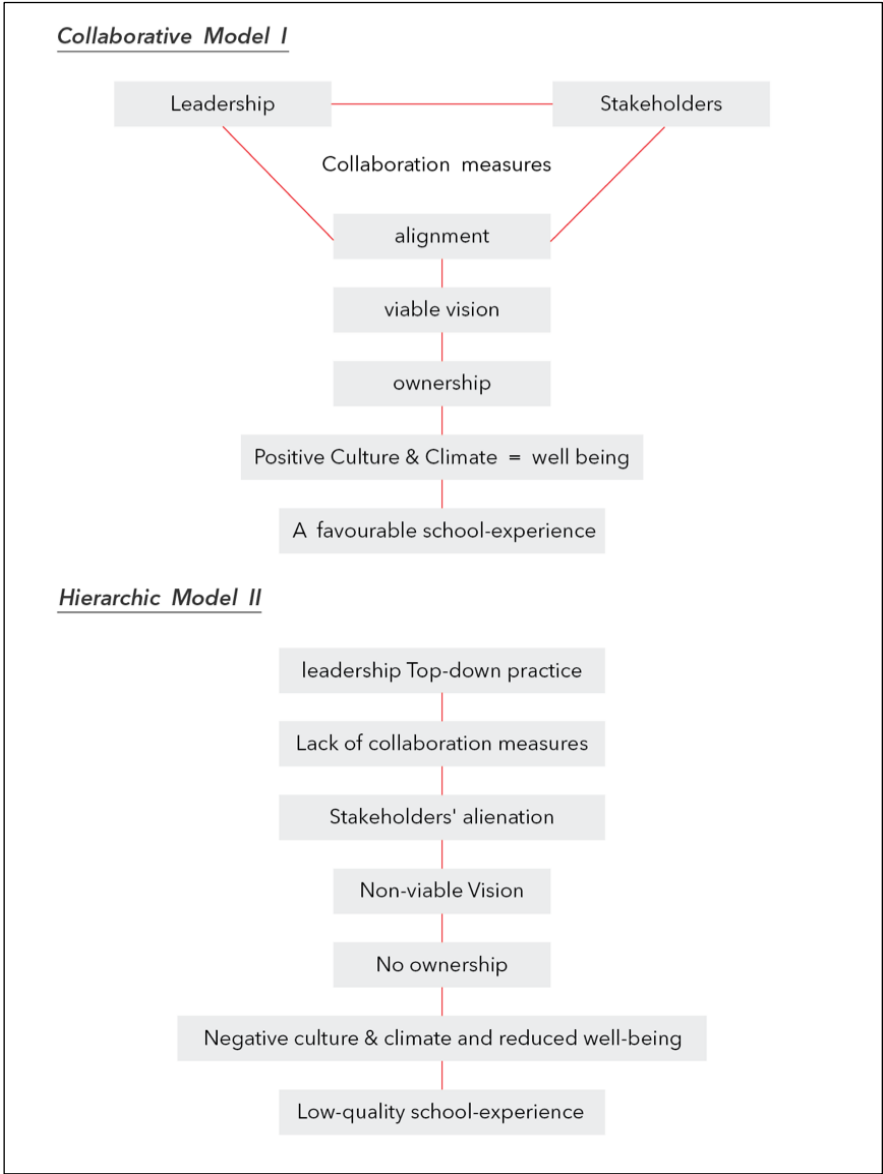
Stakeholders' testimonies indicate that Schools B and C attained a positive, strong culture, characterised by integrity and homogeneity, generating a healthy climate and a positive school-experience. School A's culture, by way of contrast, could be defined as hypocritical (Mintrop, 2012; Kilicoglu, 2017), as is reflected in the poor compatibility between verbal declaration and actual practice, a discrepancy that results in an unhealthy climate and reduced well-being, creating a much less favourable school-experience for the stakeholders.

This difference between the three schools regarding the quality of the stakeholders' school-experience brings to the fore the issue of school success and effectiveness and how to measure it. One way to measure school success is through attainment (referred to above as 'the narrow approach'), another way (referred to as 'the comprehensive approach') recommends the use of multiple informants' reports about their school's culture and climate, and their well-being in it (Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Ramsey et al., 2016). The consensual assumption, which has become more and more salient in the educational research in the last decade (Day et al., 2016) is that successful schools can be high-achieving and at the same time maintain the well-being and the personal development of their stakeholders. Despite differences in size, organisational structure and financial resources, these schools are characterised by their collaborative management practice, which invokes the stakeholders' commitment and cooperation and creates a high-quality school-experience.

The findings of this study provide support for the above assumption. They indicate that School A, for the most part, chose the narrow approach, as its main practice is intended to improve the students' academic achievements. Schools B and C were described as taking the path of the comprehensive approach, as they strive to improve academic results, but simultaneously nurture a culture of collaboration and stakeholders' well-being. These differences between the schools' perspectives account for their stakeholders' different school-experience. On the face of it, the three schools can be

considered successful, as they all excel in the academic domain. Still, in line with the literature, a more genuine success has to include the quality of the entire school-experience of the stakeholders. Through this lens, Schools B and C may be considered more successful than School A.

To recap the above, two models of school practice emerged from the data gathered in this study, both relating to the relationship between the school leadership and its stakeholders – a relationship which can determine the extent of viability of their school visions, and the stakeholders' ownership of it, towards creating stakeholders' well-being and a favourable school-experience:



**Figure 8.1: Models of Stakeholder Management and Its Resulting School-Experience**

The differences between the collaborative model (characterising mostly Schools B and C) and the hierarchic model (portraying mostly School A) stem from a chain of several corresponding features, which define the school culture and climate, and in turn affect the stakeholders' well-being.

In the collaborative model we find reciprocal relationship between the stakeholders and their SV, encouraged by the collaborative measures applied by the management. This kind of relationship enhances stakeholders' alignment with their SV, increasing its viability and feasibility, on the one hand, and their ownership of it, on the other. As explained above stakeholders' ownership inspires a positive school culture and climate, and contributes to the quality of their well-being, creating a favourable school-experience for the stakeholders.

The Hierarchic Model delineates a top-down leadership style, lacking in collaborative measures in its stakeholder management. Such an approach is bound to cause alienation and detachment and makes the SV mostly non-viable. The resulting culture and climate of such a school is negative, and the stakeholders' quality of well-being is lessened. The overall school-experience might prove rather poor.

In the following, final chapter I shall recap the findings of this study and highlight the way they address three types of gaps in the research literature regarding the issues dealt with in this study.

## **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION**

### **9.1 Summary of Findings and the Research Gaps They Address**

The analysis of the data, gathered in this study and interpreted in relation to the relevant concepts and ideas from the literature, has brought to the fore the following findings, which are apt to contribute to the extant knowledge. These findings are presented below in the framework of three types of relative gaps, which were identified through the analysis phase, namely: Theoretical; Methodological; and, Applied, as well as briefly indicating how my study addresses them.

#### **9.1.1 The Theoretical Gap**

The core of my research is the stakeholders-SV relationship and its effect on the educational organisation. There is broad agreement among educational researchers (Sidhu, 2003; Margolis & Hansen, 2003; Hoppey, 2006; Kurland et al., 2010; Norman, 2016) about the essential relationship between stakeholders and their School Vision: Alignment of stakeholders with their School Vision defines the extent of the vision's viability, because as asserted by some without everyone aligning with the vision, it becomes a meaningless, vacant declaration (McClees, 2016). Conversely, the extent of stakeholders' ownership of their SVS construes their value in the educational organisation (Carsten & Bligh, 2008). This assumption gained support in this study, but at the same time its findings offer some deeper perspectives of it, based on rigorous analysis of rich qualitative data.

(1) In the literature, each of the two concepts, School Vision and Educational Stakeholders, is described as having its own set of characteristics and dimensions. In this study it was found that these characteristics and dimensions are in fact intertwined, as they reflect each-other as two sides of the same coin, in a reciprocal manner (e.g. clearly articulated – understood by stakeholders; appealing – inspiring alignment and commitment by stakeholders; credible – fostering recruitment of stakeholders to accomplish its goals etc.). These interrelations are also reflected in this study, with an added value to the understanding of ownership: its conceptualization as a process.

(2) In most of the research literature, ownership is seen as a constant (Pierce, 2001; Carsten & Bligh, 2008). However, the findings of this study suggest the conceptualization of stakeholder ownership of their SV is a dynamic process, which evolves from the developing relationship between the stakeholders and their SV. This relationship moves from familiarity and understanding to identification and alignment, leading to collaboration and commitment. This whole process, which is mediated by the school management's practice, is referred to as 'ownership.'

(3) Many researchers agree that collaborative conduct in an organisation creates a positive (homogeneous, healthy and strong) school culture (Jerald, 2006; Maslowsky et al., 2006; Day et al., 2009; Dumay, 2009), perceived by the stakeholders as a positive climate (Hoy et al., 2002; Loukas et al, 2006). The findings of this research confirm this assumption, yet accentuate the extent of the stakeholders' ownership of their SV (which results from the developing process of the stakeholder-SVS relationship) as a major factor in shaping the school's culture and climate. This SV-stakeholders interactive relationship, or lack thereof, is described in the form of two models, which delineate its processual nature.

(4) The central role of school head-teachers and the strategies they apply (whether they practice a collaborative or a top-down leadership style), affect both the SV contents and the stakeholders' value in their educational organisation, whether, has acquired extensive attention in the literature (e.g. Barnett & McCormick, 2003; Kose, 2011). This also has been confirmed in the findings of this study, but with a somewhat different interpretation: It is not the head-teachers themselves, but rather the collaborative measurements they practiced to enhance stakeholders' alignment with the School's Vision and Mission, that seem to create a sense of ownership in the stakeholders. Moreover, it is not each separate strategy applied by the management, but rather different combinations of strategies, as applied by the different head-teachers, that ultimately affect the design of the school culture.



(5) The salient consensual assumption in the research literature is that 'successful' schools can be high-achieving and maintain the well-being and personal development of their students (Penn-Towns et al., 2001; Perkasky, 2007; Day et al., 2016). This assumption has gained significant support in this study, based on the stakeholders' own perceptions of their entire school-experience, i.e. their organisation's culture and climate and their well-being in it. The three schools examined in this study demonstrated similar success in terms of academic achievements, however, according to the stakeholders' testimonies, they differed in the quality of the well-being they provide, affecting the stakeholders' entire school experience. The findings of this study therefore indicate that academic attainment constitutes only a partial measurement of school success. The current findings indicate that a high academic achieving school may not be one that maintains the well-being and personal development of its students and that all stakeholder engagement in, and commitment to vision is critical in the latter. Further it finds that Stakeholders' entire school experience has to be regarded as a legitimate measure of school effectiveness, along with academic achievements.

### **9.1.2 The Methodological Gap**

Both theory and research consider collaborative leadership and unity of purpose as the main factors of positive culture and healthy climate in schools (Jerald, 2006; Maslowski, 2006; Branson, 2008; Peterson & Deal, 2009; Kose, 2011). The above contention draws mainly on the content analysis of Vision/Mission Statements and/or head-teachers' perspectives, overlooking other optional sources of information. Up till now, most research regarding School Vision has been restricted to the perspective of the head-teachers (e.g. Barnett & McCormick, 2003; Stemler, 2011; Fayad, 2011; Kose, 2011), or educational leadership students (e.g. Strange & Mumford, 2005; Watkins & McCaw, 2007), and more rarely, to that of the teachers (Kurland et al., 2010; Gurley et al., 2015).

However, such a choice of information-sources creates a limitation: The content of the School Vision or Mission Statement does not necessarily reflect school practice, and a head-teacher's report may lack in objectivity (Stemler et al., 2011). In this study I therefore chose to address this methodological gap by obtaining information from a variety of stakeholders, rather than relying exclusively on head-teacher testimonies and/or the content of the School Vision, in order to gain a more profound understanding of the term 'School Vision,' as it sheds light on a broader perspective: the stakeholders' perception of their ownership of their School Vision and their status and role in their school. Considering the stakeholders' perspectives as a source of valuable information about the issues dealt with in this study brought forth first hand insights about their own position in the school, and the factors that influence this. The findings of this study confirm the validity of the consideration of stakeholders' perspectives as a source of information, and at the same time augment its trustworthiness.

### **9.1.3 The Applied Gap**

There is a lack of research identifying good practice in the establishment of collaborative bonding with stakeholders, via the creation, dissemination and implementation of the School Vision/Mission Statement. This gap has been addressed in this study, as it identifies good practice which might lead to better results. The findings of this study suggest that differences in viability of school vision, stakeholder engagement practice and the extent of stakeholder ownership of their SV appear to stem from the disparate strategies used by head-teachers regarding their management-stakeholder relationships in each school. These strategies, and their resulting outcomes, can serve as guidelines for practicing head-teachers as well as for training courses, pertaining appropriate stakeholder management towards better school effectiveness.

Both the research literature and the stakeholders who participated in this research, express similar views regarding the definition of what school can be considered successful: a school which maintains the well-being of its stakeholders while fostering their academic outcomes. Collaborative bonding with stakeholders, via the creation,

dissemination and implementation of the School Vision/Mission Statement is crucial for the improvement of the stakeholders' whole school-experience. Head-teachers and policy makers who want their schools to be successful are therefore advised, to keep the equilibrium between the two objectives – attainment and a positive school-experience – in their managerial practice. To this end, methods have to be found to evaluate these broader outcomes, or the education system will continue to focus on a single measure of school effectiveness: test/exam results, rather than instilling values like the development of students as lifelong learners, employability skills, citizenship, self-confidence, teamwork and emotional well-being, all widely recognised as essential qualities for individual success in adult life and for social cohesion (Deakin-Crick et al., 2014). One possible way to measure these broader outcomes is to examine the stakeholders' own perceptions of their organisation's culture and climate, and their well-being in it (Harrison & Wicks, 2013), as has been done, though on a small scale, in this study.

## **9.2 Strengths of the Study**

One of the aims of this study was to bring forth a unique perspective on the important process of enhancing stakeholder ownership of their School's Vision, as conceived by the stakeholders themselves, and the role of school management in such a process. The study was meant to make head-teachers, policy makers and other relevant functionaries, as well as the stakeholders themselves, aware of the effects of this process on school identity and effectiveness. In the following section, I identify some of the strengths that supported the achievement of this aim and its implications:

- (1) My close familiarity with the issues this study has the potential of adding to the depth of understanding, as I was able to examine the issues both from the inside, as an active practitioner, and from the outside, as a researcher.

- (2) The extensive information derived from the stakeholders, corroborated by abundant verbatim quotations, contributed to the richness and thickness of the description of the three schools, allowing for deeper understanding and the inference of 'naturalistic generalisations' (Melrose, 2009).
- (3) The addition of the characteristics of the Israeli education system as another research context to the global reservoir of research on management and education.
- (4) Being evidence-based, this study contributes to the current effort to strengthen the ties between research and practice in education (Farley-Ripple et al., 2018), and to bridge the gap between educational research and educational practice (Lunsford & Brown, 2017). This study contributes to the identification of practices which can be expected to bring about the desired outcomes (Snow, 2015).

### **9.3 Limitation and Scope for Future Research**

Some of the limitations of this study are methodological. Due to time and resources constraints, I focused on a relatively small number of schools (three) and a limited number of interviewees (45). As this study was concerned with depth and richness of data within and between cases, conducting such a detailed study with a larger number of cases and by an individual researcher would have been impossible. I have tried to make up for this in several ways. First of all, I selected a sample of schools working in different contexts and practices; and, secondly, I provided a detailed, rich description of the schools and their stakeholders' views, based on various sources.

Another methodological limitation was the restricted opportunities provided by the schools for observation (such as frequent cancellations of meetings of the management with PTA and/or Student Council), processes which could have added to the

trustworthiness of the evidence by way of triangulation. However, these limitations might also be considered an opportunity for further research, broader in scope and using improved methodology.

Other limitations were threats to trustworthiness caused by researcher biases, stemming from my previous personal and professional experiences. I tried to address such threats through extreme cautiousness and constant self-examination (Kvale, 1996) on the one hand, and by using credibility-enhancing tactics – such as using a critical friend, triangulation and peer evaluation – on the other (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To recap, therefore, although I affirm that I made every effort to conduct the research in a rigorous manner, I acknowledge that the data could have been richer in places, while certain methodological procedures, such as triangulation, could have been more thorough.

## **9.4 Implications**

Based on the findings of this study, it is felt that there is a need for awareness-raising among school leaders, regarding their engagement with their School Vision/Mission on the one hand and with educational stakeholders on the other.

School head-teachers should be encouraged to apply measures allowing for the collaboration of stakeholders in the process of the drafting and implementation of their School Vision/Mission, towards enhancing their identification and commitment to it. It has been confirmed by the findings of this study that such collaboration has a positive effect on the school culture and climate, and that the stakeholders expect to be included as collaborators and really seek to play an active part in the school life. Moreover, it has been found in the research (Fayad, 2011, PhD thesis) that not all school leaders act upon their School Vision/Mission Statement, or regard it as a set of guidelines for their school

activity. The disregard for the values espoused in the Vision Statements creates a school culture lacking in integrity and homogeneity, resulting in an unhealthy climate. Stakeholder alignment and Vision implementation may therefore not just be an important integral part of organisational effectiveness and/or change; it could well be the bedrock, the foundation, upon which all truly successful organisational practice or change depends.

It is, therefore, suggested that the pressing concerns of practitioners (such as the issues at the heart of this study) should be included in head-teachers' professional training and/or periodic development courses, with special regard for the use the findings of this research, as well as prior research finding, in their decision-making process.

## **9.5 Reflexivity**

Ten years passed between the end of my career as a head-teacher in the Israeli education system and the decision to conduct this academic study. Retrospectively, this decade has made a huge difference in my transition from practitioner to researcher, especially in terms of self-examination and reflexivity. Passionate criticism faded as time passed (probably also due to age), making room for more objective views, based mainly on the data presented by the participants. Still, maintaining the perspective of an insider, with the experience-based intuitions and knowledge that accompany this, along with the non-judgmental attitude of an outsider, proved useful.

However, being aware of the limitations stemming from my own preconceptions (either conscious or unconscious), I tried to use trustworthiness-enhancing measures. To achieve credibility, I applied tactics recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), both in the data-collection and the data-analysis phases, i.e. triangulation, content analysis of publications, occasional observation, the use of a critical friend, and rigorous case analysis. I also used ranking tasks in interviews, which proved useful for eliciting and comparing focused perspectives of the interviewees. To improve dependability, I tried to be as reflexive and transparent as possible in relation to the research design,

implementation and writing-up, acknowledging limitations and deficiencies throughout the process. Rich and thick description of the cases was expected to be familiar to the readers, adding to the generalisability of the findings.

None of this could have been accomplished without the incomparable guidance of my supervisors throughout this very long journey. I certainly would not have been able to do it without their involvement and support.

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## APPENDIX A: THE ISRAELI EDUCATION SYSTEM

### INTRODUCTION

Israel has undergone rapid changes during its seven decades of existence as an independent state. Geopolitical developments, particularly the ongoing conflict with its Arab neighbors, affect all spheres of life, including education. Frequent demographic fluctuations raise issues of equality in educational policies (Kashti, 1978, 1998). Though particular points of resemblance to other education systems in the Western world can be identified (e.g. "open" education, collective teaching, interdisciplinary learning, etc.), the Israeli education system is unique in many other ways, including the variety of models which influenced its development, and its aspiration to create a new Jewish society in Israel. The latter has become a guiding principle of the system, which undertook the task of educating the citizens of the new society (Reichel et al., 2009).

Due to its distinctive migratory origins, Israel is considered to be one of the most multicultural and multilingual societies in the world. Hebrew and Arabic are the country's official languages; English, Russian, Yiddish, Romanian, Ukrainian, Amharic, Armenian, Ladino, French, Spanish, German, Vietnamese, Thai, Tagalog and Polish are the most commonly used foreign languages. Hence, the educational system continuously faced the colossal challenge of integrating large numbers of children from extremely divergent cultural backgrounds and a wide variety of mother tongues. Alongside compulsory military service, the educational system thus effectively serves as a device to advance the national "melting pot," promoting important policy objectives such as building a viable nation-state and furthering the "ingathering of the exiles" (Benavot & Resh, 2003).

### FACTS AND FIGURES

By and large, formal schooling in Israel is publicly funded and centrally administered by the Ministry of Education. The educational system consists of four levels: kindergarten, beginning at age 5 (although most children attend pre-kindergarten

programs from age 3); elementary schools (age 6-12); junior high or middle schools (age 12-15); and upper secondary schools (age 15-18). Compulsory education begins at kindergarten level, and continues until Grade 12 (age 18) (Benavot & Resh, 2003).

The diverse demographic and socio-economic nature of Israeli society is accommodated within the framework of the education system. Different sectors of the population attend different types of schools; this separation results in reduced contact among the various segments of Israeli society. Public schools in Israel belong to one of four sub-sectors: the Jewish State-Secular, Jewish State-Religious, Jewish Independent (Ultra-Orthodox) and State Arab sectors. Based on student enrollment, the relative size of each sector at the junior secondary level is, respectively, 38%, 20%, 28%, and 14% (Ben David, 2012). The religious composition of pupils in Arab sector schools is approximately 76% Muslim, 15% Christian, and 9% Druze (Benavot & Resh, 2003).

The "State Hebrew educational system" (both Jewish State-Secular and Jewish State-Religious) is based on the Jewish calendar. The academic year runs from September through July, 6 days per week, with about 35 teaching hours per week. The language of instruction in Jewish schools is Hebrew, and is Arabic in Arab schools. Several strategies have been used to support computer use in schools, beginning with the installation of computers into virtually every primary school in the country in 1998.

The system seeks to impart civic values, Jewish heritage, high levels of technological and analytical skills, and a heterogeneous knowledge base. A key aspect of this policy is the provision of equal opportunities in education for all children, and to increase the number of pupils who pass their matriculation examinations. However, reducing large class sizes and attracting talented educators into the teaching pool represent the immediate needs that must be addressed in order to achieve the Ministry's long- and short-term pedagogical goals. Each school is required to formulate a school vision, in cooperation with its educational staff, suited to the goals of the Ministry of Education, the district and the local authority (The State of Israel – Ministry of Education, 2013).



Between 2000 and 2016, the Ministry of Education budget increased by 86 percent in real terms; the number of teaching personnel employed in the school system grew by 55 percent; and the number of classes by 34 percent. However, the number of pupils in the school system increased by only 30 percent. Still, the main challenge remains that of achieving a more equitable distribution of education system resources between the different population groups and socioeconomic strata. From this perspective, the changes that have occurred are insufficient, and a great deal of work remains to be done (Ben David, 2010; Blass & Shavit, 2017).

## **APPENDIX B: CONCEPTS AND THEORIES REFERRED TO IN THIS STUDY**

### **SCHOOL CONTEXT AND LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES**

The research literature suggests that differences between schools may be explained, *inter alia*, by the different strategies each head-teacher uses to respond to the context his/her school operates in (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006; Harris et al., 2015; Day et al., 2016). It might be interesting for this study to explore the stakeholders' perspectives on this issue.

The concept of context is based on the assumption that schools differ from each other in many ways other than academic achievement. In the literature, schools are characterised as dynamic systems that influence a broad range of parameters of student learning, including academic, affective, social, and behavioural domains (Bascia, 2014). Success "seems to be built through the synergistic effects of the combination and accumulation of a number of strategies that are related to the leaders' judgments about what works in their particular school context" (Day et al., 2016, p.34). Understanding the nature of a school's internal and external contexts, how they are mediated by school leadership and, through this, how the interplay between contexts may influence (positively or negatively) the fabric of every school's life, is a key to informed understanding of the reasons for their success (or failure) over time (Gu and Johansson, 2013). This highlights the observation that leadership practice results from an interaction between the individual (i.e. the person-specific context) and the broader context (Goldring et al., 2008; Leithwood, *In press*; Hallinger, 2016, p. 14)

Given the nexus between leadership and context (Clarke & Donoghue, 2016), I seemed beneficial to examine the stakeholders' views regarding the interaction of each of the head-teachers' individual traits (i.e. person-specific context) with their broader school context. A more serious recognition of context could give rise to fairer evaluation of school performance, a fairer distribution of resources, and the provision of more

appropriate advice and support to schools in less favourable contexts (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006).

A list of context variables (sometimes referred to as 'context indicators'), both internal and external has been retrieved from the relevant research literature (e.g. Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007; Gu & Johansson, 2013; Bascia, 2014), to enable a comparison between the three schools examined in this thesis.

## PLURALISM, TOLERANCE AND MULTICULTURALISM

In the literature we find various interpretations of three similar concepts: 'pluralism,' 'multiculturalism,' and 'tolerance.' Several definitions of the concept 'pluralism' have been offered, common to all of them is the notion that it implies something more than co-existence of pluralities (Hogg et al., 1969; Banks, 1974; Weinstein, 2004; Nye, 2007). "What makes a cultural frame pluralist is that single groups not only co-exist side by side, but also consider the qualities of other groups as traits worth having in the dominant environment" (Colombo, 2013, p. 3). 'Tolerance,' on the other hand is defined by Wikipedia (and other dictionaries) as "a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one's own; freedom from bigotry." Tolerance is therefore the virtue of acceptance, a state of mind which characterises (and constitutes a pre-condition for) a pluralist organisation. Multiculturalism is a form of pluralism, one that emphasizes community-defined identities and histories. Pluralism, if one wants to force a distinction, can allow for individual differences as well as group differences, and is, therefore, wider in scope:

In a modern pluralist democracy, civic education should not solely teach the perspective of the state; it should privilege the perspective of the other. It should teach students how they can understand their fellow human beings, and how to be sensitive to the conditions of the lives of others, the rituals that they participate in, and the decisions that they make.

(Weinstein, 2004, p. 22)

Projects and learning centres which encourage dialogue, critical thinking and the recognition of diverse cultures have been recommended as optional additions to schools' curriculum (Sapon-Shevin, 2000).

In a broader context, education has a significant role to play in the way in which understanding of, toleration for, and engagement with other groups are developed across the national context (Nye, 2007). To fully participate in a democratic society, students need the knowledge, attitudes and skills a multicultural education can give them to understand others and to thrive in a rapidly changing, diverse world (Banks, 1976).

A less radical perspective, also found in the literature, supports the notion that pluralism is the compromise between the extremes of segregation and assimilation. In a pluralistic society, the dominant group permits minorities to retain many of their cultural patterns, so long as they conform to those practices deemed necessary for the survival of the society as a whole (Bennet, 1981). This line of thinking is based on the assumption that schools are public institutions, which represent the dominant culture of the system they are a part of. Such an assumption makes it even harder to accomplish pluralistic values, and considers cultural hegemony legitimate, contrary to the common perception of cultural myopia and cultural homogeneity as negative values (Pantoja et al., 2014). As Hogg et al. (1969) described it:

I am firmly convinced that one thing is to announce formal intentions of tolerance and of positive consideration of diversity, quite another is to accept the real challenges imposed by a truly *democratic school*: that means recognizing that (in an education-for-all vision) social differences are not “background noise” but rather its constitutive and essential point, both in shape (educating *for* and *through* differences is needed) and in the content (educating *to* difference as such is also important.

(p. 237, original emphasis)

## LOW SES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Student academic outcomes are often linked to demographic factors of family poverty and racial or ethnic background (Cornell et al, 2016, although there is much debate about the interaction between these factors and how they affect student achievement (Sirin, 2005; Ladd, 2012). The negative impact of low family SES on academic achievements has been extensively explored since the late 1970's, Since Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) first explored this issue in order to explain differences in children's outcomes in connection with their background. This has become a key goal for researchers and practitioners alike (e.g. Smith, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2006; Ferguson, 2007; Biglan et al., 2012). Research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skills more slowly (Isaacs et al., 2011). Initial academic skills are correlated with the home environment, where low literacy environments and chronic stress negatively affect a child's pre-academic skills. Moreover, these lower levels of academic achievement and educational attainment contribute to lower levels of economic success in adulthood and lower social mobility in society. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessed the academic achievement of 15-year-olds in 43 countries. A significant relationship was found between SES and educational measures in all countries (Adams et al., 2007).

Central to Bourdieu's analysis is the concept of *cultural capital*, defined as proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices, i.e. the linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences and styles of interaction, that promote social mobility beyond economic means (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997). Another relevant term coined by Bourdieu is the individual's 'habitus,' an individual's position in the social structure. As a result of understanding their place in the social structure, individuals are able to determine what is achievable or possible in their lives. Such predisposition, once inculcated in the individual, influences their perceptions and interpretation of their life experiences, to elicit, assent and encourage respect by subordinate groups for the social order (Raffo et al., 2006). Hence students, encouraged by the educational system, internalise the social position assigned to them and regard it as determined and

unchangeable. They tend to regard their life experience as a function of chance, luck, or fate, under the control of powerful others, or as simply unpredictable (Rotter, 1990). This generates practices and behaviours within the individual which are not regulated or explicitly institutionalised (Raffo et al., 2006), as well as low self-esteem and self-trust.

Bourdieu et al. (1977) argue that education serves to maintain rather than reduce social inequality. The system of higher education, in their view, transmits privilege, allocates status, and instills respect for the existing social order. Differences in cultural capital become systematically encoded in educational credentials, which then funnel individuals (or rather reproduce individuals) into social class positions similar to those of their parents. Thus, although endowed with the traditional function of transmitting general cultural knowledge from generation to generation, educational institutions in fact perform a deeper, more dimly perceived, social function: they contribute to the reproduction of social class structure, by reinforcing cultural and status cleavages among classes (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997). Conversely, Bourdieu et al. (1977) emphasise the positive active role schools can play in determining the students' educational expectations, as they are able, to a certain extent, to override the influence of the students' inferior cultural origins.

Nevertheless, in the research literature we find a dispute over the possibility of change of this situation via education. Some researchers maintain that efforts to improve the economic prospects of children from low-income families have frequently focused on the educational system, but often with disappointing results (Isaacs et al., 2011). Other researchers suggest that there is a tremendous opportunity during the school years for significant transformation: "Low SES children's behaviour is an adaptive response to a chronic condition of poverty, but a brain that is susceptible to adverse environmental effects is equally susceptible to positive, enriching effects" (Jensen, 2009, p. 23). Nurturing environments, characterised by trustworthy reciprocal social relations within individualized networks can reduce the impact of socially inherited cultural capital, by teaching, promoting, and reinforcing pro-social behaviour, including self-regulatory

behaviours and all of the skills needed to become productive adult members of society (Biglan, 2012). "There have been many interventions that have successfully improved the educational achievement of those who might otherwise fail in school because of their family background" (Sirin, 2005, p. 446). Role-modelling can also help promoting students' self-efficacy (Ferguson et al., 2007; Merolla, 2016), as can school climate and student support (Cornell et al., 2016).

## SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

A part of the problem of the low achievements of children from low SES background lies in their low self-efficacy (Merolla, 2016). According to the Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), an individual has multiple "social identities". They also maintain that "subordinate groups often seem to internalise a wider social evaluation of themselves as 'inferior' or 'second class'" (p. 11). Social identity is the individual's self-concept based on their social group membership. Social identity can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity, which refers to self-knowledge that derives from the individual's unique attributes (McLeod, 2008; Hogg, 2008). Therefore individuals tend to put people into social groups, dividing the world into "them" (out-groups) and "us" (in-groups), in a quest for positive distinctiveness, meaning that people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I'.

Social identity theory states that the in-group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that there are three mental processes involved in evaluating others as "us" or "them" taking place in a particular order:

- (1) **Categorisation:** We categorize people (including ourselves) in order to understand the social environment. We find out things about ourselves by knowing what categories we belong to and define appropriate behavior by reference to the norms of groups we belong to.

- (2) **Social identification**, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to and conform to the norms of the group. There will be an emotional significance to one's identification with a group, as one's self-esteem will become bound up with group membership. The more an individual conceives of the self in terms of the membership of a group, that is, the more the individual identifies with the group, the more the individual's attitudes and behaviour are governed by this group membership (Van Knippenberg et al., 2002).
- (3) **Social comparison**: Once we have categorized ourselves as part of a group and have identified with that group we then tend to compare that group with other groups. If our self-esteem is to be maintained our group needs to compare favorably with other groups.

This is critical to understanding prejudice, because once two groups identify themselves as rivals they are forced to compete in order for the members to maintain their self-esteem. Competition and hostility between groups is thus not only a matter of competing for resources but also the result of competing identities.

Another perspective of the matter offered in the research literature is the distinction between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. The fixed mindset reflects the belief that personal attributes, such as capabilities and intelligence, are stable and tend to not change much over time, whereas supporters of a growth mindset assume that personal attributes are relatively malleable (Dweck, 2006). It has been suggested (Heslin et al., 2008), that one of the critical factors determining people's response to a situation, and their self-esteem, is their mindset: fixed or growth. The ones who believe in the possibility of change are more likely to actually succeed, as they perceive failure as a learning opportunity, rather than using defensive mechanisms which impede success



and lower self-esteem. Schools situated in impoverished neighbourhoods can make this happen:

The need to help students develop a sense of empowerment, as well as strengthen skills, emotional resources and confidence to identify their goals and implement plans to transform aspirations into reality, is especially relevant among those from less privileged backgrounds.

(Carvalho, 2015, p. 4)

## APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

School	Group	ALIAS	Age	Gender	Tenure (years at the school)	Educa- tion	Comments
A	Head-Teacher	Ella (HT)	60	F	30 (23)	MA	Vice Head-Teacher
	Teachers	David (T)	51	M	25 (25)	MA	Vice Head-Teacher
		Miriam (T)	52	F	35 (24)	MA	
		Rina (T)	49	F	21 (17)	MA	
		Noa (T)	47	F	16 (4)	BA	
		Dana (T)	48	F	23 (21)	BA	
	Students	Gad (S)	13.5	M	3		Student Council Member
		Ronny (S)	18	F	3		Student Council Chairperson
		Yael (S)	16	F	6		Student Council Member
		Mali (S)	14.5	F	3		Student Council Member
		Joseph (S)	17	M	4		Student Council Member
	Parents	Dan (P)	53	M			
		Jerry (P)	49	M			PTA member
		Nathan (P)	46	M			PTA member

School	Group	ALIAS	Age	Gender	Tenure (years at the school)	Education	Comments
<b>B</b>	Head-Teacher	Michael (HT)	62	M	32 (23)	MA	
	Teachers	Gabby (T)	27	F	3 (3)	BA	
		Deborah (T)	45	F	18 (2)	BA	
		Susana (T)	52	F	27 (18)	MA	
		Rebecca (T)	48	F	22 (20)	BA	
		Fay (T)	30	F	2 (1)	BA	
	Students	Daniel (S)	17.5	M	2		Student Council Member
		Dalia (S)	18	F	3		Student Council Member
		Avital (S)	17/5	F	3		Student Council Member
		Meira (S)	18	F	3		
		Ariel (S)	17	F	2		Student Council Member
	Parents	Iris (P)	37	F		MA	PTA member
		Gabriel (P)	43	M		MA	PTA member
		Ruth (P)	41	F		Professional Course	

School	Group	ALIAS	Age	Gender	Tenure (years at the school)	Education	Comments
C	Head-Teacher	Jacob (HT)	60	M	20 (17)	BA + Head-Teacher Training	
	Teachers	Zoe (T)	42	F	17 (16)	MA	
		Aaron (T)	35	M	12 (8)	MA	
		Olivia (T)	59	F	33 (31)	MA	
		Andy (T)	33	M	1 (1)	BA	
		Emma (T)	50	F	26 (26)	BA	
	Students	Etan (S)	17	M	4		Newcomer (S. America); Catholic; Student Council member
		Amelia (S)	16	F	6		Newcomer (Uzbekistan); Jewish; Student Council member
		Mia (S)	17	F	5		Newcomer (Uzbekistan); Jewish; Student Council member
		Sofia (S)	17.5	F	6		Arab; Muslim Student Council member
		Lily (S)	16	F	4		Newcomer (Uzbekistan); Jewish;
	Parents	Sarah (P)	43	F		BA	PTA member
		Lia (P)	49	F		High-School Diploma	PTA member
		Caleb (P)	45	M		High-School Diploma	PTA member

## APPENDIX D: CODING RUBRIC

(Source: Stemler et al., 2011, p. 416)

<p><b>A = COGNITIVE/ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = foster cognitive development</li> <li>2 = problem solving</li> <li>3 = creativity</li> <li>4 = effective communication</li> <li>5 = critical thinking</li> <li>6 = literacy</li> <li>7 = acquire knowledge</li> <li>8 = participate in the arts</li> <li>9 = improve student achievement/test scores</li> </ul>	<p><b>E = PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = Physical development</li> </ul>
<p><b>B = SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = social interaction</li> <li>2 = become effective parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>F = VOCATIONAL PREPARATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = competitive in the workforce</li> <li>2 = marketable skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>C = EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = positive attitudes</li> <li>2 = ethical morality</li> <li>3 = joy for learning</li> <li>4 = life-long learning</li> <li>5 = self-sufficient</li> <li>6 = self-discipline</li> <li>7 = reach potential</li> <li>8 = emotional skills</li> <li>9 = promote confidence</li> <li>10 = spiritual development</li> <li>11 = respect for others</li> </ul>	<p><b>G = INTEGRATE INTO LOCAL COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = promote community</li> <li>2 = community partnerships</li> </ul>
<p><b>D = CIVIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = productive</li> <li>2 = responsible</li> <li>3 = public service</li> <li>4 = contributing member of society</li> </ul>	<p><b>H = INTEGRATE INTO GLOBAL COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = appreciate diversity</li> <li>2 = global awareness</li> <li>3 = adaptive students</li> </ul>
	<p><b>I = INTEGRATE INTO SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = religious education/environment</li> </ul>
	<p><b>J = SAFE/NURTURING ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = safe environment</li> <li>2 = provide nurturing environment</li> <li>3 = person-centered</li> </ul>
	<p><b>K = CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0 = Misc.</li> <li>1 = provide challenging environment</li> <li>2 = technologically advanced</li> <li>3 = provide engaging work</li> <li>4 = highly qualified faculty</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX E: PILOTING PROCEDURES**

### **GENERAL – VALIDITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Validity, in both quantitative and qualitative research, determines whether the instrument used allows the researcher to hit "the bull's eye" of the research object (Joppe, 2000 in Golafshani, 2003). Or, to use more qualitative terminology, whether the instrument used generates dependable, consistent and trustworthy results and a better understanding of a situation.

This research chose to take Healy and Perry's (2000) supposition that "the quality of the study should be judged by its own paradigm's terms" one step further. Following Creswell and Miller's (2000) suggestion that validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumption, we constructed the piloting test-procedures in congruence with the overall methodological orientation of this research, i.e. the accumulation of different perspectives - in this case, various functionaries in the educational system - to create a valid/trustworthy research instrument.

### **JUDGES FEEDBACK AND OTHER VALIDATION MEASURES**

The research instruments were tested for validity in various ways, all of which consistent with the paradigm orientation of this research.

#### **(1) Teachers Interview Protocol**

The *Teachers Interview Protocol* was presented to the following five expert judges from different schools for inspection:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Tenure</b>	<b>No. of Judges</b>
Head-Teacher	Over 15 year	1
Senior Teacher	Over 20 years	2
Junior Teacher	5 years	1
Experienced Educational Organisation Consultant	Independent	1

The rationale behind the choice of this particular group of judges lies in their variety of function and seniority within the educational system, thereby underlining the assumption that this diversity of function and rank will facilitate the production different perspectives and forms of feedback.

## **(2) Parents Interview Protocol**

The *Parents Interview Protocol* was presented to four parents of children studying in different high-school grades from three schools, as well as one expert in research methods and data analysis, for inspection.

The rationale behind the choice of this particular group of judges is motivated by the variety of children's ages and school environment in the educational system, thus highlighting the assumption is that such variability will allow different perspectives and forms of feedback to emerge.

### **(3) Feedback Procedures**

Each judge was presented with the relevant interview protocol (teachers/parents) consisting:

- (1) A brief, written description of the aim of the research
- (2) A structured evaluation form in which the following issues were covered with regard to document (1):
  - (2.1) **Wording:** Is the language correct? Are the questions clear?
  - (2.2) **Clarity:** does the terminology used require further explanation?
  - (2.3) **Sequence:** Are the questions sequenced in a logical order? What changes (if any) would help improve the protocol in this context?
  - (2.4) **Inclusiveness:** Are the current questions comprehensive enough? Do they exhaust the subject?
  - (2.5) **Lacunae:** Are there questions which are currently absent from the protocol and may help produce further valuable data for the research?
  - (2.6) **Redundancies:** Are there repetitive or superfluous questions currently contained in protocol that ought to be omitted?
  - (2.7) **General Commentary:** Invitation to make any comments/suggestions regarding the protocol, its structure and content.

Each of the judges reviewed the protocol and assessed it according to the structured evaluation form ( the judges were not asked to answer the actual questions listed above, though some of them reported that they did follow this document closely in order "to get a better feel of it").



#### **(4) Judges Comments**

Generally speaking, the judges found the questions in the *Interview Protocols* clear, well stated and focused, as well as friendly and efficiently organized.

To further improve the *Interview Protocols*, a number of changes were introduced based on feedback from the judges, as follows:

##### *Teachers Interview Protocol*

- Minor changes in wording (e.g. in question #1: "How well acquainted *do you feel you are* "instead of "How well are you acquainted...").
- Addition of a request for examples (e.g. in question #5: "In what ways is it expressed...").
- Terminological modifications (e.g. in question #8: "Academic achievements" instead of "Cognitive Development"; "Acquisition of social skills" instead of "social development").

##### *Parents Interview Protocol*

- Addition of a list of optional responses (e.g. in question #3: "E.g. formal school documents, conversations with school staff, school assignments etc.").
- Additional questions pertaining to issues such as selection of the child's school, parent's own School Vision statement and his/her active part (if any) in creating a change of the school vision (questions #1, 6, 8).
- Removal of overlapping questions, namely: question #6 was included as one of the options in question #3.

Furthermore, following an insightful suggestion from one of the judges, an additional perspective from which to examine teachers' stances was introduced, namely: an inquiry into their views as parents. To this end, an alternation was made in the concluding question, specifically: instead of "what would you change in the alignment of your school regarding its vision?" teachers are now encouraged to adopt a different outlook and describe what they would like to see their own children receiving in school. To the same end, parents are now asked to compare the school which they attended with their son/daughter's current school. These modifications were made primarily in order to avoid "auto-pilot" responses from those taking part in the survey.

#### **(5) Head-Teachers Interview Protocol**

In contrast with the two abovementioned protocols, the *Head Teachers Interview Protocol* was not subjected to inspection by expert-judges as it is based, to a very high degree, on Prof. Stemler's profoundly validated Interview protocol (Stemler et al., 2011, p. 405). The latter was supplemented by two additional questions. These questions are consistent with the research aims and questions, and they have already been validated by the two groups of expert judges used for the *Teachers Interview Protocol* and *Parents Interview Protocol*.

## **APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**

### **(A) TEACHERS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The research you are asked to participate in is being undertaken for the award of a PhD at the University of Portsmouth, under the supervision of Dr. Mark Wyatt from the School of Languages and Area Studies and Dr. Sue Parfect from the Department of Education.[\*]

The research aim is to examine the expectations of educational stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, government officials) from their school, and their contribution to the set of values the school abides by *vis a vis* the School Vision.

One of the ways to scrutinize the vision of an organization is to examine it through the eyes of its stakeholders – the people who constitute the fabric of the organization and operate it. In the case of schools, it is consensual that educational vision should have sufficient depth to address the fundamental convictions of the school's stakeholders and reflect their personal vision.

This research also aims to serve as a meaningful and effective source of information for head-teacher training, as well as contribute to changing school management attitude towards their stakeholders and the latter's expectations.

We would be grateful if you could answer the questions contained in this interview openly, both with respect to your understanding of the term 'School Vision' in general, and to your expectations from the school you work in in particular.

---

\* My supervisors at the time when the interviews were held – N.M.

We would like to emphasize that any identifying details will remain confidential and the information you give will be used solely for the purpose of this research and none other.

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### **Opening question (emotive):**

- What is your immediate association upon hearing the term 'School Vision'?

### **Semi-structured questions:**

1. On a scale of 0–5, how well acquainted do you feel with the Vision Statement of your school? (0 = not acquainted at all; 5 = very well acquainted).  
If the answer is "0", please skip to question 6.
2. Please name at least 3 main issues that are mentioned in the Vision Statement of your school.
3. Did you participate in writing your school's Vision Statement? Were you asked to participate?
4. When was the last time the School Vision was discussed (or at least mentioned) in any school forum you attended?
5. Which values in the School Vision Statement find expression in everyday life at your school? In what ways? Could you give examples?
6. From a given list of stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, authorities) whose interests should the school focus on?
7. Does your school follow your line of thought?

(Cont. on the next page)

8. Following is a list of school tasks. Please evaluate them according to the importance you ascribe to them (0 = least important; 5 = most important):

Academic achievements	_____
Emotional development	_____
Acquisition of social skills	_____
Vocational preparation	_____
A safe and nurturing environment	_____
A challenging environment	_____

**Concluding question:**

- Which of the tasks listed in question 8 above would you like to see included in the vision of the school your children are attending?

## **(B) PARENTS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The research you are asked to participate in is being undertaken for the award of a PhD at the University of Portsmouth, under the supervision of Dr. Mark Wyatt from the School of Languages and Area Studies and Dr. Sue Parfect from the Department of Education.[\*]

The research aim is to examine the expectations of educational stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, government officials) from their school, and their contribution to the set of values the school abides by *vis a vis* the School Vision.

One of the ways to scrutinize the vision of an organization is to examine it through the eyes of its stakeholders – the people who constitute the fabric of the organization and operate it. In the case of schools, it is consensual that educational vision should have sufficient depth to address the fundamental convictions of the school's stakeholders and reflect their personal vision.

This research also aims to serve as a meaningful and effective source of information for head-teacher training, as well as contribute to changing school management attitude towards their stakeholders and the latter's expectations.

We shall be grateful if you could answer the questions addressed to you in this interview openly, with regard to your understanding of the term 'School Vision' in general, and your expectations from your son's/daughter's school in particular.

We would like to emphasize that any identifying details will remain confidential and the information you give will be used solely for the purpose of this research and none other.

---

\* My supervisors at the time when the interviews were held – N.M.

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### **Opening question (emotive):**

- What is your immediate association upon hearing the term 'School Vision'?

### **Semi-structured questions:**

1. Was the school your son/daughter attends selected by you? If the answer is "yes", was the school's Vision Statement one of the criteria by which you made your decision?
2. On a scale of 0–5, how well acquainted do you feel with the Vision Statement of your son/daughter's school (0 = not acquainted at all; 5 = very well acquainted)? If the answer is "0", please skip to question 7.
3. Were you ever informed about the School Vision of the school your son/daughter is attending? If the answer is "yes", please describe when and how you were informed (e.g. formal school documents, conversations with school staff, school assignments, school forums, etc.)
4. If possible, please name at least one issue mentioned in the Vision Statement of your son/daughter's school.
5. Did you contribute in any way to the creation of your son/daughter's school's Vision Statement? Were you invited to do so?

(Cont. on the next page)

6. Attached please find a summary of the Vision Statement of your son/daughter's school. Please read it and answer the following:
- (a) Is the Vision Statement of your son/daughter's school any different from the vision of the school which you attended as a child? If the answer is "yes", please elaborate on the differences between the two visions, both in terms of their aims and their expression in school life.
- (b) To the best of your knowledge, which values in the School Vision Statement find expression in everyday life at your son/daughter's school? In what ways? Are you able to give concrete examples?
7. From a given list of the main educational stakeholders - teachers, students, parents, authorities - whose interests, in your opinion, should the school focus on? Please explain your choice.
8. Following question 7 above: Does your son/daughter's School Vision, and/or everyday life in his/her school, reflect your line of thought? If the answer is "no", have you taken any action to try and change the situation?
9. Please complete the following sentence: "The main task of school in my view is to \_\_\_\_\_".

(Cont. on the next page)



10. Following is a list of school tasks. Please evaluate them according to the importance you ascribe to them (0 = least important; 5 = most important):

Academic achievements	_____
Emotional development	_____
Acquisition of social skills	_____
Vocational preparation	_____
A safe and nurturing environment	_____
A challenging environment	_____

**Concluding question:**

- If it was up to you, is there anything you would change in your son/daughter's school with regard to its Vision? Would you change the way this vision was created or the way it is being applied in the school's everyday life?

## **(C) HEAD-TEACHERS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The research you are asked to participate in is being undertaken for the award of a PhD at the University of Portsmouth, under the supervision of Dr. Mark Wyatt from the School of Languages and Area Studies and Dr. Sue Parfect from the Department of Education.[\*]

The research aim is to examine the expectations of educational stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, government officials) from their school, and their contribution to the set of values the school abides by, *vis a vis* the School Vision.

One of the ways to scrutinize the vision of an organization is to examine it through the eyes of its stakeholders – the people who constitute the fabric of the organization and operate it. In the case of schools, it is consensual that educational vision should have sufficient depth to address the deepest convictions of the school's stakeholders and reflect their personal vision.

This research aims also to serve as a meaningful and effective source of information for head-teacher training, as well as contribute to changing school management attitude towards their stakeholders and the latter's expectations.

We shall be grateful if you could answer the questions addressed to you in this interview openly, with regard to your understanding of the term 'School Vision' in general, and the school you work in particular.

We would like to emphasize that any identifying details will remain confidential and the information you give will be used solely for the purpose of this research and none other.

---

\* My supervisors at the time when the interviews were held – N.M.

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Why does your school have a vision statement?
2. Who was involved in writing the mission statement?
3. On a scale of 0-5, in your opinion, how familiar is the school community with the mission statement (0 = not familiar at all; 5 = thoroughly familiar)? Please specify:

Teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Parents \_\_\_\_\_

Students \_\_\_\_\_

4. When and why was your school's mission statement last revised?
5. Is the mission statement related to practice in the school?
6. Following is a list of school tasks. Please evaluate them according to the importance you ascribe to them (0 = least important; 5 = most important):

Academic achievements \_\_\_\_\_

Emotional development \_\_\_\_\_

Acquisition of social skills \_\_\_\_\_

Vocational preparation \_\_\_\_\_

A safe and nurturing environment \_\_\_\_\_

A challenging environment \_\_\_\_\_

(Cont. on the next page)

7. Which of the tasks listed in question 6 above does your school focus on? If you can, please give examples.

**Concluding question:**

- Do you consider community involvement (teachers/parents/students in the creation and ongoing maintenance of your School Vision important? If the answer is "yes", what measures should be taken to improve it?

# APPENDIX G: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

## FORM UPR16

### Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information)



<b>Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information</b>		<b>Student ID:</b>	434976
<b>PGRS Name:</b>	NIVA MATALON		
<b>Department:</b>	Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences	<b>First Supervisor:</b>	Prof. Sherria Hoskins
<b>Start Date:</b> (or progression date for Prof Doc students)	Feb 1st 2008 (19 month suspension).		
<b>Study Mode and Route:</b>	Part-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full-time <input type="checkbox"/>	MPhil <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MD <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Title of Thesis:</b>	SCHOOL VISION - A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS		
<b>Thesis Word Count:</b> (excluding ancillary data)	82,000		
<p>If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study</p> <p>Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).</p>			
<b>UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:</b> (If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: <a href="http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/">http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/</a> )			
a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Candidate Statement:</b>			
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)			
<b>Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):</b>		10/11:10	
If you have <i>not</i> submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>			
<b>Signed (PGRS):</b>		Niva Matalon	
<b>Date:</b>		20/5/2018	

29<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Dear Mark (and Niva)

**Full Title of Study: SCHOOL VISION ? A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

**Documents reviewed:**

Email Communications

Document including:

- Protocol
- Invitation letter to participants (including consent form and participant information)
- Letter to Ministry of education (Israel)
- Interview schedule

Thank you for your application for ethical review; I am sorry for the delayed response. I understand that the research is to be conducted in Israel and that you have sought relevant permissions and met necessary governance requirements. Your proposal was reviewed by a sub-committee of the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee. It was content to give a favourable ethical opinion subject to some minor conditions

1. Please ensure that all documents make it clear that the research is being undertaken for the award of a PhD at the University of Portsmouth. You should use appropriate departmental headed paper identifying the supervisor
2. You have stated that you will remove any links identifying data and data subjects by August of next year, we assume that you will retain the non-identifiable data until you complete your PhD and destroy it thereafter.

We will assume that you have made the necessary adjustments and I wish you every success with the project.

Kind regards

David Carpenter: Chair FHSS REC

Members participating in the review

David Carpenter

Sukh Hamilton