PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF RITUALS AND CEREMONIALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ISRAEL

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Abstract: One of the most influential aspects in organization is its rituals and ceremonials, which defined as discrete enactments that have a beginning and an end and give expression to a culture's values and beliefs (Trice & Beyer, 1993) are presented in this article. Previous studies showed that the main importance of organizational rituals and ceremonials is in creating a holistic community integrated through ceremony thus shifts to that of social subsystems that use symbolic transactions to build within-group cohesiveness. These rituals are highly significant among fragmented and differentiated system of social groupings. In these organizations, ritual works to negotiate differences within unequal status groups, and that the modern corporation does not work in terms of unified consensus and values (Koschmann & McDonald, 2015). Multifaceted functions of the ceremonies, their formal and informal components, their voice and their function as a system of manners and respectful dignity which characterizes of the national culture and are also present in ceremonies in the education system that are in the focus of the current research. While relatively wide body of literature has explored rituals and ceremonials among various organizations (e.g., van den Ende & van Marrewijk, 2014; Cottle, 2006; L'Etang, 2011), only few studies has conducted on rituals conducted in schools.

Key words: Morning ritual, social grouping, ritual works, status groups, ceremonials, education.

1. Psychological characteristics of morning ritual in educational system in Israel

Morning ritual can be defined as a time zone within the school, where parents operate to promote interests, to mark territories, to demonstrate power, to accumulate power, to control, to keep parents among all populations.

Current research aims to examine reception ceremonies and rituals in elementary schools in Israel as reflecting Israeli culture and influence the attitude toward the status of the teacher. Specifically, this research aimed to explore how are the rituals of meeting and welcoming held in the state elementary schools in Israel? In addition, research examined what are the characteristics of similarity and difference of these rituals, and how are these rituals perceived and explained by the teachers and the parents?

To explore these questions, a mixed methodology has been applied, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The integration of both approaches were used to create a broader, deeper richer picture of the structure and importance of reception ceremonies and rituals in elementary schools. As part of quantitative approach, a survey was held among 216 teachers from 27 schools. They were asked about the characteristics of the rituals, such as frequency, duration, timing, number of participants, number of meetings and length of the ritual. In addition, teachers were asked to describe management of the rituals.

In addition, 18 in-depth interviews were conducted among principals, the deputies, teachers, parents and secretaries. These interviews aimed to deeper explore the rituals from various perspectives.

Several important results have been drawn from current research.

First, results show that teachers perceive the morning rituals as a part of school schedule, which implies how stable these rituals are. It is interesting to note that positive positions of teachers towards rituals and ceremonies at school

were consistent across teachers without differences by education, gender or seniority. This finding could be explained by that when a habit occur every morning at school and involves certain participants (i.e. teachers, parents, principles), that it becomes a ritual which deeply affects school experience (Moor & Myerhoff, 1977; Don-Yehiya & Liebman, 1981).

Second, one of the main findings in current research is the way parents use morning rituals to promote their own interests. According to findings of current research, principals, teachers and parents view the ritual as promotes positive communication between teachers and parents, and contributes to a positive image and high prestige of teachers in the parents' eyes. However, in order to keep the positive position of the morning rituals, it is essential to keep boundaries between parents and teachers. However, results show that parents in most schools have no limitations of arriving to school and meeting with teachers. Parents violate boundaries between them and teachers by coming in unexpected hours, in a non-formal clothing and even with other family relatives. This type of ritual creates an unhealthy interaction between parents and teachers. Hence, morning rituals blurs the authority differences between teachers and parents, while parents gain power to promote their own interests in school. Parents that are more involved use morning rituals to talk with teachers or manager in order to solve issues and problems they feel school could solve with their children. These activities lead to the fact that these children have more time with their teachers, on the expanse of other children of parents who are less involved.

These findings are aligned with other studies which examined parental involvement in school and showed that when parents are anxious for their children and feel the educational staff to not respond, they tend to be involved aggressively. For example, Hoge, Smit, and Crist (1997) attempted to define parental involvement as consisting of four components: parental expectations,

parental interest, parental involvement in school, and family community. They found that of the four components, parental expectations were the most important. Hence, when parental expectations are violated (e.g. they feel teachers do not provide sufficient help) they tend to claim this kind of help.

Another violation of boundaries between parents and teachers is by physical closeness. Parents allow themselves to turn to teachers in a very close physical distance. Principals point to the need to protect teachers from this closeness by not allowing teachers to leave the teachers' room or to disconnect parents from the teachers. In most cases, against their will, teachers cooperate and respond to parent requests and physical closeness with them.

In this vein, morning rituals increase the gaps between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ parents and harms equality between parents who are more assertive and can afford themselves fight with teachers. It seems that parents take advantage morning rituals and often teachers feel helpless and need the assistance of other teachers or even principles themselves. In the current study, findings showed that principles feel they need to protect teachers from abusive parents who take advantage of teachers during morning unexpected meetings.

When establishing positive and productive parents-teachers communication then it significantly contributes to children's functioning. First, parent–teacher relationship quality is associated with children's academic functioning, including academic competence (Hauser-Cram et al., 2003), academic progress, grade point averages (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and achievement test scores (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005). Second, such relationships are associated with children's social skills as reflected in heightened functioning in the peer group as well as social competence (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). Third, high-quality relationships are associated with children's diminished behavioral and social concerns, including fewer behavioral problems (Serpell and

Mashburn, 2012) and socio-emotional difficulties such as shyness and anxiety (Izzo et al., 1999). Importantly, such effects on children's functioning are present across time even after adjusting for children's earlier functioning (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), socioeconomic status and parental sensitivity toward children (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2003), and parents' academic involvement (Izzo et al., 1999).

The benefits of enhanced parent–teacher relationship quality may be particularly pronounced for families of children experiencing behavioral problems. Behavioral problems are a concern for both parents and teachers and are associated with children's later behavioral and academic difficulties (Reinke et al., 2008). In the context of children's behavioral concerns, relationships between parents and teachers may become strained (Sheridan et al., 2012). However, high-quality parent–teacher relationships appear to enhance the functioning of children with behavior problems across the school year (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012), and improvements in parent–teacher relationships have been shown to mediate the effects of consultation interventions on students with behavioral problems (Sheridan et al., 2012). Thus, determining factors that promote high quality parent–teacher relationships may be particularly important for this group.

Findings show that harming roles definitions as expressed in the morning ritual by parents is a significant, structured and repetitive component, while the parents' intervention space is not limited by the school staff. Teachers, principals, and parents can point out that confusion in the parents' behavior, their desire to be teachers, to tell teachers what is right and what is not accepted by a partial restriction, although not complete at all by teachers and principals. Who came up in the morning ritual.

In a broader perspective, findings show that school as an organization does not create predefined time frames for effective discussion with parents. The

existing frameworks are often not appropriate while time dedicated for close relationships between teachers and parents is hardly effective. For these reasons, parents tend to feel their children are neglected and hence they tend to break out. Thus, morning ritual is to large extent an expression of parental frustration which responds to uncertainty of handling children's issues. One key contributor to effective teacher invitations is teachers' sense of efficacy for involving parents (Garcia, 2000), which can be enhanced by dynamic, school-based in-service programs. Particularly effective are in-service programs offering experiences related to involvement practices, including open discussion of positive and negative experiences with involvement, sharing suggestions for improved parental involvement, collaboration with colleagues in developing and implementing school-specific involvement plans, and ongoing group evaluation and improvement of involvement practices (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001).

2. The meaning of morning ritual in the relationship between parents, teachers and students

Another important finding of the current study is that morning ritual in which parents try to get teachers' attention could undermine children's independence, develops dependency and creates unfairness among other students, as several parents described. These negative consequences of morning meeting between parents and teachers could severely impact on the experience of school as a safe and a fair place for all students.

Another finding is that morning rituals in which parents and other visitors interfere school schedule is perceived by teachers and principals as harming in teachers' prestige. The devaluation of the school is also due to the availability, accessibility and sense of familiarize that prevails in the morning ritual. This ritual comes from the cooperation of principals and teachers, and even when principals

and teachers point out that boundaries must be set, this does not mean the cancellation of the ceremony, but rather the placing of a border, if we are crossed by the parents. Teacher attitudes towards parents' involvement are especially powerful because they are responsive to many parents' expressed wishes to know more about how to support children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995). Teacher invitations also enhance parents' sense of being welcome to participate in school processes, knowledge of their children's learning, and confidence that their involvement efforts are useful and valued (Soodak & Erwin, 2000). Invitations of teachers for parents to get involved also contribute to the development of trust in the parent-teacher relationship, a quality of effective parent-school partnerships (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Although trust and empowerment in the partnership require two-way communication across time, invitations offer an effective starting point for the creation of a partnership. Teacher invitations to involvement are effective in supporting parental involvement across elementary, middle, and high school and with varied school populations. Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon (2002), reporting on a sample of high-risk elementary students, found strong positive links between consistent teacher contacts with parents and parents' decisions about involvement. Critical components of the invitation-involvement connection included parents' reports that they enjoyed talking with the teacher, were comfortable asking questions, and believed that the teacher really cared about their child and was interested in their suggestions and ideas about the child's learning. Closson, Wilkins, Sandler, and Hoover-Dempsey (2004) studied parents of fourth through sixth graders and found that teacher invitations were particularly strong predictors of involvement among the Latino families in their sample.

As teachers think about their work with parents and families, they often have mixed feelings. There are good feelings of shared efforts and mutually

valued achievement with some parents; while with others, there is a sense of frustration, helplessness, or even anger over conflicting perceptions and understandings. The degree of success that teachers have in developing a partnership with parents depends heavily on the fit between parental cares and concerns and those of the teacher. The parent-teacher pairing occurs by assignment rather than choice. The common interest is the schooling of a child. What all good parent-teacher relationships have in common is the absence of conflict, which is optimally, occurs due to the presence of mutual trust and respect (Iruka et al., 2011).

It is important to note that teachers could also avoid morning ritual with parents since they lack practical support for the extra activities implied by active parental involvement programs. Teachers with limited experience or skills may reach out only to give up if initial efforts are not immediately successful. Experienced teachers may be reluctant to invite parents if negative encounters have cast a pall over the perceived likelihood of successful involvement. Further complicating prospects for effective parental involvement, teachers who feel uncertain of their skills in dealing with 'traditional' families may struggle even more as they consider trying to work productively with families perceived as 'different' from envisioned norms on a number of dimensions (Huss-Keeler, 1997).

Morning ritual places the educational staff in a very problematic situation. On the one hand, it provides an answers and can create the impression of skilled and professional teachers who know how to respond to any request and problem raised by parents. On the other hand, teachers' responses to unplanned topics during a time-consuming visit, before the day begins, could also interpreted as lack of professionalism and attention without planning instead of planned. Therefore, less skilled teachers could feel helpless when they cannot provide good

answers, and could even feel attacked by aggressive parents. This line of school policy is in line with previous research that showed parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may contribute to the frequency and flow of information in parent–teacher interactions that affect the child. When parents perceive a teacher as minimally responsive may prompt a parent to refrain from communicating a request or concern because they won't succeed anyway. In addition, this kind of communication might lead into the idea that parent's perception of a teacher's responsiveness is communicated to the child in ways that enhance a child's engagement in the classroom. Both interpretations of a possible relation between parents' perception of teacher responsiveness and child outcomes conceptualize perceived responsiveness as a relationship variable, consistent with the idea that perceptions are a unique dimension of relationships (Hinde, 1997).

Alternately, parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may be an indicator of the quality of teacher interactions with children based on direct observation of teacher behaviors in the classroom and/or indirect information sources such as child reports of teacher actions or views of a teacher communicated by other parents. In the latter interpretation, a parent's perception of teacher responsiveness functions as a proxy measure of teacher sensitivity to children. Accordingly, perceived teacher responsiveness may be linked to child outcomes through the quality of teacher interactions with children in the classroom. To determine the extent to which parents' perception of teacher responsiveness is an attribute of parent– kindergarten relationships, it is useful to include an independent measure of teacher interactions with children as a control variable to more precisely estimate the contribution of teacher responsiveness to child outcomes. Hence, one of the most important factors which could promote communication between parents and teachers is empowering teachers for parental involvement. Many teachers hold generally positive attitudes about involving

families in students' education, but few receive training in how to develop collaborative, family-responsive involvement practices. School in-service support for teachers' development of parental involvement skills thus is an important strategy for enhancing the incidence and effectiveness of involvement. If school will maintain fixed meetings between teachers and parents in convenient hours for both parties, then it is likely that these type of morning rituals will decrease.

There is a lack of a clear and uniform policy of an education system regarding the restriction of parents' entry into the morning ritual at schools. Hence, parents can enter the professional space of teachers and interfere their work. Any deviation from such a response can be interpreted as a lack of professionalism on the part of the teachers. On the other hand, on the part of the teachers, such responses can be interpreted as aggressive, disrespectful, stressful and disruptive. Therefore, it is vital to limit parents' access to teachers at morning in order to keep a safe and productive professional environment for teachers. In addition, it is recommended to set a weekly time frame in which parents will meet and consult with teachers. This is part of a larger process to make parental involvement at school more efficient, while communication between teachers and parents could also take place by phone, school digital forums, whattsap and other tools.

Teachers demonstrate responsiveness to a parent by communicating openness to new information, suggestions, and other forms of feedback about the classroom, and maintain a welcoming, supportive stance toward parents (Powell, 2001). Teacher responsiveness to children, such as showing individualized interest in a child's experiences, helping a child feel valued and accepted, and engaging in emotionally warm and positive interactions, has long been considered a core feature of high-quality early childhood classrooms (Hyson, Copple, & Jones, 2006).

Most of the communication between parents and teachers take place in a non-physical form, such as phone and texting, since both teachers and parents don't necessarily have enough time for long meetings. On the other hand, in order to keep a close relationship, teachers in kindergarten use to set periodic meetings which usually take place in the lobby of the kindergarten itself or in one of the parents' houses, when there are some relevant issues for all the parents. The lobby of the kindergarten is considered to be a relatively neutral place for these meetings since parents can speak and behave in a more open and free way, without the fear for other people to judge them. In this environment, the relationship between teachers and parents could be improved (De Carvalho, 2014).

Results of this study emphasize the need for formal school policy in order to create two-way communication between parents and educational staff (teachers and principles). Two-way communication involves interactive dialogue between teachers and parents. Conversations may occur during telephone calls, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and various school-based community activities. Effective dialogue “develops out of a growing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). A teacher may contact parents to celebrate a child’s successful school experience. However, more frequently, the contact is to share a concern about the child, which can be a source of significant tension for both teachers and parents alike. Teachers should strive to make these interactions as productive as possible. One of the important ways to maintain two-way communication is parent-teacher conference. Effective parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity to create a successful partnership, but they may be anxiety provoking for both teachers and parents alike (Minke & Anderson, 2003). Indeed, Metcalf (2001) suggests that instead of viewing the conference as a reporting session for what is not working in school, teachers can construct an opportunity to discuss

what is working with the student. Metcalf advocates a solution-focused approach based on past student successes in order to alleviate blame and move forward with an individualized intervention plan. Indeed, putting the child at the center of the parent-teacher conversation will allow for a focused discussion on the "whole child," including both strengths and weaknesses (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).

In order for parent-teacher conferences be effective, they require thoughtful and well developed planning. Price and Marsh (1985) developed a series of practical suggestions to address all aspects of the still traditional parent-teacher conference. In planning for the conference, Price and Marsh encourage teachers to select an appropriate meeting time and location, advise participants in advance, review the student file in advance, develop a clear purpose for the meeting, and identify information to be discussed including positive aspects of the child's performance. Teachers are advised to begin the conference with a friendly comment and brief, informal conversation and then to explain the student's progress in a straightforward way, carefully listening to parent input and ensuring time to summarize the discussion and plan recommendations. Establishing a specific time frame at the outset of the conference, followed by close adherence to the agenda, allows for more comfortable termination of the meeting. Lastly, teachers are encouraged to follow-up the meeting by preparing a written conference summary in line with school board policies. Additional follow-up activities might involve making appropriate referrals, discussions with relevant teachers, or planning specific instructions or strategies. Effective parent-teacher conferences also require important interpersonal skills on the part of the teacher (Evans, 2004). Communicating a genuine caring for people, building rapport, conveying interest and empathy, reflecting affect, and using clarifying statements to ensure an accurate understanding of parental views are all highlighted. Parent-teacher conferences can also be a "prime situation for cross-cultural

miscommunication" to occur (Quiroz, Greenfeld & Altchech, 1999). Child-led conferences with Latino immigrant parents, for example, appeared to be culturally incompatible and ineffective. Rather, a group conference model was far better attended and more positively received by the participants. Thus, teachers need to consider whether the traditional conference approach will meet the communication needs of the parent community served.

Another recommendation to improve teacher-parent communication, and therefore to diminish frequency of morning ritual is by using technology communication which is "not limited by school hours or location" (Brewer & Kallick, 1996). Student performances can be videotaped and presented to a larger audience at convenient times. Students may create digital portfolios that can be shared with parents on an ongoing basis. Ultimately, student learning plans may be accessed online, enabling goals and progress to be shared with parents. Indeed, the capacity to link homes and schools with new technologies provides many novel opportunities to enhance communication with parents beyond the traditional formats.

3. The importance of school positions towards efficient parental involvement

Another recommendation derives from current study is to create a time schedule for teachers which could be more parents friendly and could be more appropriate to create significant meetings. This recommendation is also relied on findings from previous studies that stressed the importance of school positions towards efficient parental involvement. Griffith (2001) reported principal practices critical to a positive school climate: these included clear principal efforts to meet the needs of all school members (students, staff, parents), regular visits to classrooms, and consistent public advocacy for school improvements. He noted

that these practices appeared especially important in creating a positive climate in schools serving families from lower-socioeconomic circumstances and those whose children are enrolled in English-as-a-second-language programs. Sheldon (2003) offered additional evidence that a principal's practices, including those identified by Griffith, are also linked to improvements in student learning, an ultimate goal of parental involvement in education.

Schools and teachers convey the value of parents' active support of child learning when they invite involvement, support skills that enable effective involvement, and respect life-context variables that may influence parents' abilities to be involved. Well-developed invitations targeted to all parents must include a full range of involvement suggestions such as suggestions for parents whose own education and skills may lead them to conclude that their influence is minimal, especially as their children move into higher grades. School invitations that offer empowering information are particularly critical in supporting more active role construction (Gonzalez, Holbein, & Quilter, 2002); they also support a positive sense of efficacy about the value of one's involvement for children's school success (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). In order to enhance parents, schools should use multiple approaches to offering invitations.

There are several types of constructive collaboration between parents and teachers. One of the types of parental involvement is volunteering, i.e., parents' help and support in the school. Teachers can encourage parents to participate in this type of parental involvement by sending home an annual postcard survey to identify available talents, times, and locations of volunteers; maintaining a dedicated space for families involved in volunteer work to share resources and hold meetings; and establishing classroom volunteer programs, parent patrols, classroom parents, and a telephone tree. Parental participation of this type in children's early school years has been related to the children's improved reading

achievement one year later (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000) and academic achievement and reduced behavior problems four years later (Domina, 2005). Low- to middle-income African American parents' participation in their children's school activities was found to be positively related to their children's improved reading achievement, better teacher ratings of their children's academic behavior skills, better maternal ratings of their children's emotional regulation, and more parental involvement at home (Hill & Craft, 2003).

The literature points to a number of key elements of the collaborative approach (Denner et al 1999), including theoretical and social relevance, and the need for explicit goals among all of the participants. These common goals are best developed in the context of articulating a shared mission that benefits the program, researchers and policy makers. The roles of the participants should be clearly defined, in terms of leadership and data collection, and relationships among collaborators developed with a sense of trust and mutual respect. For example, Groark and McCall (1996) found that employing a project coordinator who has a practitioner perspective can be beneficial. Finally, results and products pertaining to the research process should be accessible to all participants, both in terms of physical access as well as insuring that products communicate well to diverse audiences (Denner, Cooper, Lopez, and Dunbar, 1999).

Findings of this study show that parental involvement in their children's education is a product of the interrelationship between individual barriers and school barriers. Hence, it is necessary to improve teachers' practices as well as identify parental obstacles to involvement in their children's education. However, it may be more effective to focus on improving teacher practices rather than on parental variables because schools have more resources than parents in terms of educated teachers, established in-service programs, and funding for programs. Improving school practices to encourage active parental participation may be less

of a challenge than improving the demographic status of low-SES and single parents would be (Pryor, 2001). Muijs et al., (2004) stated that Achieving parental involvement is one the most difficult areas of school improvement in economically disadvantaged areas. One of the reasons for the difficulty may be related to the lack of pre- and in-service education (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002) for teachers on ways to initiate and practice parental involvement in the classroom. As a result, many teachers have reported a lack of relevant knowledge and have experienced uncertainty regarding ways to encourage parent involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

4. Conclusions

To sum, current study has both theoretical and applied contribution. From a theoretical perspective, this research shed light on the argument that one of the most important issues in school as an organization is its culture, while culture is related to the actions and organizational practices held in organization. Results of current study emphasize the importance of the definition of the routines and their organizational roles as recruiters of legitimacy from the near and broad environment. In addition, results enable to gain better understanding of the routines with their advantages and disadvantages for the different audiences. Another important theoretical contribution is the illumination of the awareness of educators of the cultural reproduction in of their everyday work and the cultural influence on their status in society.

From a practical point of view, results could be used as a basis to develop intervention programs of training and professional development of teachers and principals, especially in light of the leading reforms in the Ministry of Education – the New Horizon and Courage to Change Reforms. Within these reforms, the teachers' professionalism today presents a demand for multidimensionality: a

teacher is required to be in charge of the scholastic, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral parts. The need for multiplicity of several occupations and perspectives of these roles does not allow and is contradictory to professionalism. In recent years, the loss of teacher authority and the greater burnout among the practitioners of the teaching profession have been increasingly noted. Therefore, every transformation that may be examined and implemented in the field of the teaching profession must take into consideration the organizational culture, and specifically the values that integrated, as expressed, for example in welcome rituals and ceremonies. The increase of effectiveness in this field should be done from within the framework of the values of the culture and not outside of it. The contribution of this research study is, therefore, in the coping of the educators with the question of whether to change or not from the place of the knowledge and awareness of the culture, in its characteristics, for better and for worse.

Limitations and future directions

Current study has several limitations. First, study population for both quantitative approach and qualitative approach includes relatively small samples which are not built to be representative of teachers' population in Israel. Although sample does include several professionals and also has significant diversity of age, gender, seniority and education, still sample does not represent educational staff in Israel. Therefore, it is important that future studies will conduct a random sampling which will include large number of participants and also that this sample will better represent teachers in Israel. Second, the main focus of current study was morning rituals in school, and specifically the interaction between parents and teachers during these rituals. However, there are numerous of other rituals in schools which also play a significant role, such as rituals between teachers and principles and others. Future studies should further explore these rituals and the

way they are perceived by stake holders at school. Finally, this study has been conducted in Israel and therefore its conclusions are mostly relevant for Israeli population. More research is required in order to generalize its conclusions also for other countries which could hold special cultural features that could affect school rituals.

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