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ABSTRACT

How do educators become successful leaders? This qualitative study set out to learn more about The Lookstein Center ELAI program as well as mentoring and leadership training in general, with the hope of offering insights to other school leadership programs. The mentor-mentee relationship was seen to develop into a collaborative partnership, with the reflective relationships becoming enriching for both the mentor and mentee. The findings also emphasize the value of mentoring for midcareer educators. In addition, the importance of the cohort experience was stressed. Finally, unique to the ELAI program, location was viewed as a very influential aspect of this leadership training program for Jewish educators.

KEYWORDS

ELAI; Jewish day schools; leadership; Lookstein Center; mentoring

Introduction

In the year 2008, The Lookstein Center for Jewish Education of the Bar-Ilan University School of Education in Israel initiated a program called ELAI—the Educational Leadership Advancement Initiative. Cognizant of the dearth of qualified leaders in Jewish day schools and the need to properly train the next generation of high-level school administrators, this program was designed for professionals in the Jewish education world (e.g., teachers, department chairs, assistant principals) who aspired to increase their impact at their schools and, thereby, to climb the career ladder. This program attempts to address the need expressed by Richardson (1999, as cited in Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 25), that traditional administrative preparation programs have not attracted sufficient numbers of high-potential candidates who are committed to leadership roles in the places where they are needed. Following an extensive advertising campaign, potential participants applied for the program on their own, or were recommended by their supervisors at the schools. This yearlong program saw four cohorts in the years 2008–2014, with over 80

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participants, 10 mentors, and two directors. Forty-one New York metropolitan area schools of all denominations were represented (to date this program has been limited to the New York area since funding was granted by the UJA-Federation of New York). Roughly half of the graduates have moved on to positions with greater leadership responsibilities.

ELAI describes itself as follows:

The ELAI program is designed around study, observation, and practice. Retreats [in the US and Israel] will offer examination of current educational literature and case study analysis. . . . Workshops will guide participants on how to observe different areas of school life through working with program colleagues, mentors, and experts. A mentor-guided school enrichment project will allow participants to apply their expanded understanding and insights, as well as their enhanced leadership skills.

Due to the positive feedback received throughout, and after all cohorts completed the program, researchers from The Lookstein Center set out to try and learn more about mentoring and leadership training as well as the impact that mentoring and leadership training has on the educational practice of the teachers and administrators who participated in the ELAI program. The goal has been to learn not only about the components of the ELAI program, including mentorship and leadership, but to apply the lessons learned to other school leadership professional development programs in the world of education.

As the ELAI program focuses on potential leaders in New York Jewish schools, this review will mainly focus on leadership issues and programs in the United States.

Research on leadership and mentoring

The design of the ELAI program was based on knowledge from the field as well as existing literature. A survey of some of the earlier findings regarding leadership and mentoring is followed by a discussion of the present research.

Leadership

The definition of leadership in education has shifted in recent years,

The notions of generic leadership that once dominated the field are being replaced by more contextualized notions of leadership. Context, meaning the culture and environment in which the leader works, is found to be important for key functions of schools. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 15)

In order to understand leadership, one must understand the setting in which the leader functions.

Leadership—Importance of strong leadership in schools

Why is leadership important?

Evidence suggests that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school leadership strongly affects student learning. . . . The demands of the job have changed so that traditional methods of preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by public schools. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 25)

It is clear that this would apply in any school setting.

Researchers have identified the importance of principals who function as strong instructional leaders in improving academic achievement. Several lines of research have identified the critical role of principals in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers; creating a learning culture within the school; and supporting improvements in student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In one of several studies identifying school leadership as a key factor in schools that outperform others with similar students, researchers found that achievement levels were higher in schools where principals undertake and lead a school reform process; act as managers of school improvement; cultivate the school's vision; and make use of student data to support instructional practices and to provide assistance to struggling students. The research points to the importance of a strong school leadership.

Issues in leadership development

Several factors have contributed to recognizing the importance of quality school principals and that there is an absence of such leaders in many underperforming schools. During the 1990s, many schools, especially in the United States, developed new standards for student learning, along with assessment and accountability systems that focused attention on student achievement. There is now widespread agreement among educational reformers and researchers that the primary role of the principal is to align all aspects of schooling to support the goal of improving instruction so that all children are successful (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004; Peterson, 2002).

At the same time, few jobs have as diverse an array of responsibilities as the modern principalship, and any of these roles can distract administrators from their most important role: quality instruction. The demands of the job, particularly in large schools, far exceed the capacity of most people.

Shortage of school principals in the United States

In the United States, ongoing reports of underperforming schools, an awareness of the growing demands placed on principals, and media coverage of an impending national "principals' shortage" have brought issues of administrative recruitment, credentialing, training, and support to the attention of policymakers. In addition to the excessive demands of the job that can make it difficult for principals to focus on teaching and learning, there is a growing shortage of people who are both willing to undertake principalships and are well qualified to lead instructional improvement, particularly in culturally diverse, low-income

communities and schools (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

The literature identifies three kinds of problems contributing to this shortage. First, traditional administrative preparation programs have not attracted sufficient numbers of high-potential candidates who are committed to leadership roles in the places where they are needed. “Plenty have the credentials for the job. Many don’t want it” (Richardson, 1999, as cited in Davis et al., 2005, p. 25). Many candidates do not see the principal’s job, as doable or adequately supported.

Second, even if the pipelines were cultivated to channel more high-potential candidates into the principalship, working conditions, particularly in high-poverty urban schools, and a lack of opportunities for advancement contribute to the insufficient numbers (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003).

Third, aspiring and practicing principals are frequently ill-prepared and inadequately supported to take on the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement. The quality of the preparation experience appears to be related to the willingness of potential candidates to take on this tough job, as well as their ability to survive and succeed in it. Winter, Rinehart, and Munoz (2002) found candidates’ self-perceptions of their ability to do the job were the strongest predictor of their willingness to apply for a principalship, pointing to the importance of training that builds prospective principals’ skills and sense of self-efficacy.

Thus, reformers argue, recruiting the right people, providing the right working conditions, preparing and supporting them as they lead schools, is essential to improving the pool of available school leaders, decreasing turnover in the principalship, and fostering stability and reform in schools, which in turn is needed to foster the development of students’ abilities.

Concerns about principal development programs

Historically, initial preparation programs for principals in the United States have consisted of a collection of courses covering general management principles, school laws, administrative requirements, and procedures, with little emphasis on student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum, and organizational change (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2001; Copland, 1999; Elmore, 2000). Relatively few programs have had strong clinical training components: experiences that allow prospective leaders to learn the many facets of their complex jobs in close collaboration with highly skilled veteran leaders. In addition, many professional development programs have been criticized as fragmented, incoherent, not sustained, lacking in rigor, and not aligned with state standards for effective administrative practice (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2001; Peterson, 2002).

Thus, principals have frequently lacked assistance in developing the skills they need to carry out the new missions demanded of them. This stands in contrast to career paths in many management jobs or in professions such as medicine,

architecture, and engineering, which build in apprenticeships in the early years, along with ongoing professional development. Unevenness in the quality of support has led to an intensified criticism of administrative training and development.

In addition, traditional preservice programs have come under attack for failing to adapt the curriculum to what is currently required to meet the learning needs of increasingly diverse student bodies. The knowledge bases on which programs rest are frequently viewed as outdated, segmented into discrete subject areas, and inadequate to the challenges of managing schools in a diverse society in which expectations for learning are increasingly ambitious. Some critics contend that traditional coursework in principal preparation and development programs often fails to link theory with practice, is overly didactic, is out of touch with the real-world complexities and demands of school leadership, and is not aligned with established theories of leadership (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2001; Copland, 1999; Elmore, 2000; McCarthy, 1999; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004). Often missing from the curriculum are topics related to effective teaching and learning, the design of instruction and professional development, organizational design of schools that promote teacher and student learning, or the requirements of building communities across diverse school stakeholders.

Other common features of traditional preparation programs have also come under the microscope. For example, the quality and depth of internships and field-experiences, widely recognized as pivotal to candidates' professional learning and identity formation, are notably uneven across programs (Orr & Barber, 2005). Efforts to provide field-based practicum experiences do not consistently provide candidates with a sustained hands-on internship in which they grapple with the real demands of school leadership under the supervision of a well-qualified mentor. Instead, many programs require little more than a set of ad hoc projects conducted while a candidate is still working as a teacher. Often these are written papers disconnected from the hands-on challenges and daily requirements of the principal's job.

Compounding these problems, field experiences are often loosely linked to academic coursework, which is structured around discrete domains of educational administration, rather than organized as an integrated set of learning opportunities that build upon and support the field-based experiences.

Although orientation programs for new principals are becoming more widespread, relatively few schools offer systematic mentoring for beginning principals to help them learn how to make sense of this complex job, prioritizing and juggling its many demands and developing skills in managing and leading other adults. Beyond the initial years, principals need to develop more sophisticated skills that require differentiated approaches to professional development, and, depending on their own backgrounds and prior experiences as well as the school contexts in which they work, different principals need different kinds of supports.

Criticisms of existing programs include: (a) misalignment between program content and candidate needs; (b) failure to link professional learning with school mission and needs; (c) failure to leverage job-embedded learning opportunities; and (d) uneven use of powerful learning technologies (Coffin, 1997, as cited in Davis et al., 2005, p. 40).

Schools often fail to link professional development to instructional reforms, and they continue to waste resources on one-shot workshops, rather than designing ongoing support that would help align school activities with best practices and support principal problem solving. Some analysts suggest that the weakness of many programs' field-based component is partly a result of the insularity of educational administration programs and faculty, along with the failure of these programs to use the expertise in their local schools as resources for future principals (Neuman, 1999).

Elements of a successful leadership school training program

There is growing consensus that ongoing leadership support and development, like leadership preparation, should combine theory and practice, provide scaffolded learning experiences under the guidance of experienced mentors, offer opportunities to actively reflect on leadership experiences, and foster peer networking. (Peterson, 2001, as cited in Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Based on research on what effective principals do, the National Staff Development Council has developed recommendations for the content of such programs ensuring that they help principals to:

- learn strategies that can be used to foster continuous school improvement;
- understand how to build supportive school cultures that promote and support adult and student
- develop knowledge about individual and organizational change processes learning;
- develop knowledge of effective staff development strategies;
- understand important sources of data about their schools and students and how to use data to guide instructional improvement efforts;
- learn public engagement and interpersonal relationship skills.

In their analysis of program models, Peterson and Kelley (2002) emphasized components common to exemplary features of school leadership preparation programs: having a clear vision; coherence; and a thoughtful sequencing of career development knowledge, skills, and abilities. They also concluded that stronger programs offer a long-term set of experiences; combine institutes with on-site training, practice and coaching; are closely linked to participants' work; and foster a sense of membership.

Researchers at Stanford University examined eight exemplary pre- and in-service principal development programs and came to the conclusion that the

following components were crucial for a successful school leadership program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007):

- a program philosophy and curriculum that emphasize leadership instruction and school improvement;
- active, student-centered instruction employing pedagogies that facilitate the integration of theory and practice and stimulate reflection—such as problem-based learning; action research; field-based projects; journal writing; and portfolios that feature substantial use of feedback and ongoing self, peer, and faculty assessment;
- faculty who are knowledgeable in their subject area, including practitioners who have had experience in school administration;
- social and professional support in the form of a cohort structure as well as formalized mentoring and advising from expert principals;
- vigorous, carefully targeted recruitment and selection processes that proactively recruit teachers with leadership potential into the principalship; and
- well-designed and supervised administrative internships that provide opportunities for candidates to engage in leadership responsibilities for substantial periods of time under the tutelage of expert veterans.

In summary, various elements are critical for understanding the impact of leadership and leadership training on the school, and on principal and student success. These include strong school leadership, and the role of the principal in aligning all aspects of the school to improve instruction so that all children are successful together with an understanding of the issues in school leadership development and the elements of a successful school leadership training program.

Mentoring

Eby, Rhodes, and Allen (2007) open their handbook of mentoring with a broad cross-disciplinary, historical survey of known mentoring relationships in the literature, politics, and even the world of leisure—among them Homer's *Odyssey*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Sigmund Freud's mentoring of Carl Jung, Saul Bellow who mentored Phillip Roth, Haydn who mentored Beethoven, and even Tina Turner who mentored Mick Jagger. Mentoring is everywhere. But what is mentoring, and how is it typically defined? Following are a few conventional definitions:

- Merriam Webster online dictionary defines a mentor as:

1. someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person;

2. a trusted counselor or guide.

- Cienkus, Haworth, & Kavanagh, 1996:

Mentoring is, then, a complex activity that involves a mentor, an intern or novice, and a process within a predetermined structure. . . . [It] often eludes easy definition. . . . The mentor-mentee relationship is, indeed, a transformative one that can forever change the course of one's life (p. 2).

- Kerry and Mayes in *Issues in Mentoring* (2014):

After pointing out the difficulty in defining mentoring, Kerry and Mayes list five "essential components": nurturing, role modeling, functioning (as teacher, for example), focusing on the professional development of the mentee, and sustaining a caring relationship over time (pp. 7–8).

Ambrosetti, Knight, and Dekkers (2014), bringing in Jones and Brown (2011) and Ragins and Kram (2007), sum this up well: "Some researchers argued that a definition for mentoring is not needed, however it has been acknowledged that mentoring is influenced by the context in which it is to be used and is often described according to that context" (p. 224).

Teachers encounter various types of professional development. Muszkat-Barkan (2011) offers definitions of some of the personalities involved in professional development: supervisors, who follow the evaluative approach; mentors, the holistic approach; and cognitive coaches, the practical approach (p. 881). The current research focuses on the mentoring relationship, which can be further broken down into "Hevruta," or "collaborative inquiry of partners"; "Rav-U-Moreh," [teacher/guide] which leads to hierarchical relationships; and "Posek," the normative-behavioristic approach (p. 894).

Most educators are aware of the benefits of mentoring. According to Bowman, (2014)

Mentoring within schools promotes teacher retention and consistency among educators. Mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction and help teachers to emerge as leaders within their schools, but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement. Teachers work collaboratively with each other as valued team members. When schools implement mentoring programs effectively, the sharing of knowledge between teachers becomes an inherent quality whereby students, teachers, and the school climate benefit. (p. 47)

All in all, the professional development that lies behind the concept of mentoring benefits the entire school (Bowman, 2014, p. 49). Indeed, "teaching and mentoring are interrelated forms of practice" (Orland-Barak, 2002, p. 460).

Mentoring is considered particularly important for novice teachers, with some schools even requiring "induction" programs with a mentorship

component for new teachers: some have assailed teaching as an occupation that “cannibalizes its young” (Ingall, 2006, as cited in Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 140). The goal of these support programs is to improve the performance and retention of beginning teachers, that is, to both enhance and prevent the loss of teachers’ human capital, with the ultimate aim of improving the growth and learning of students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, pp. 20–32). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) continue to stress that the organization as a whole benefits from the mentoring interaction, that mentoring is not just important for “teacher induction” (p. 203). The terms mentoring and induction are often used interchangeably, with some considering the terms synonymous and some pointing out that mentoring is only one component of the induction process. Looney (2008) elaborates on various definitions, even referring to the mentor-mentee relationship between Moses and Joshua.

Assigning veteran educators to mentor novice educators is also very important for preventing burnout and attrition, especially in the Jewish education world (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012, p. 333). Properly conducted, mentoring does not merely focus on tasks and results but rather, on individuals and their development; this “may require mentors to go beyond their comfort zone and challenge their own values and beliefs” (Rotstein, 2011, p. 98). Furthermore, “It is evident that mentoring keeps veteran educators engaged in learning about their own practice while strengthening their own professional identity” (p. 108). In short, both the mentors and the mentees benefit. Rotstein (2011) quotes Donald Schon (1983), affirming that “educational leaders need to shift their knowledge base from theory **and** practice, to theory **in** practice” (p. 108). “Peer learning in . . . a mentoring relationship offers significant learning benefits to the mentor” (Rotstein, 2011, p. 111). Mentoring is advantageous, especially in the Jewish day school that emphasizes personal growth:

Thus the mentoring process encompasses both the change in behavior and soul of the person mentored, and, through interpersonal dialogue, impacts those who mentor. Mentors must be open to the one who sits with them and into whose life they now can enter. They, too, must enter the realm of hope and engage in the possibility of change. You may never enter into the privacy of another soul as you do when you mentor. In therapy, the psychological understanding, healing, and growth of person and self are at the center. In Jewish mentoring, the transformation of the person in faithfulness to the values and demands of tradition is at the center. (Zimmerman, 2005)

It has been documented that the focus of professional development has shifted in recent years, now placing more emphasis on the individual school, comprehensive planning, and employing job-embedded training (Templeton & Tremont, 2014, p. 24). Mentoring is particularly relevant in this new context.

Lessons learned from a study similar to this ELAI study, on a mentorship program specifically instituted in Orthodox Jewish day schools, concluded that mentoring must be built on a foundation of trust; teachers must be allowed to make mistakes; mentoring must be valued in education; communication and

collaboration are crucial; mentoring takes time; diverse needs call for a unique approach to mentoring (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012, p. 350).

The current research set out to learn more about the following questions:

- How do current and aspiring leaders of Jewish schools view the role of mentoring in leadership training?
- What elements in the ELAI program do the participants view as most important, inspiring, and unique, and what are the implications for other school leadership programs?

Method

The researchers in the present study are both full-time employees of The Lookstein Center as well as academic lecturers in the field of education and qualitative research. Their familiarity with the ELAI program and its participants facilitated their ability to schedule interviews with program participants and directors, on the one hand, yet was viewed as a challenge when trying to “make the familiar strange,” on the other. In all, it can be said that both researchers saw firsthand how the program grew, developed, and succeeded over the 6 years of its existence, yet they were not actively involved in the administrative, decision-making, or day-to-day aspects of the program. Nor were they involved in formal program evaluation, such as that of Steve Bailey (2013) after Cohort III.

After preliminary meetings with colleagues at the Center, it was decided to focus the ELAI-centered research on the topics of mentorship and leadership, at which point the academic literature was consulted to offer background and insight, in anticipation of the ensuing interviews. Twenty-five interviews were ultimately carried out—with six mentors, 17 participants, and the two directors.

Interviews took place over a 2-week period, in New York, at the participants and mentors’ schools, with the exception of the interviews with the directors, one of which took place in Israel, face-to-face, and one via Skype, a few weeks after the participant interviews. Potential interviewees were chosen after a long, detailed discussion with one of the program directors (“purposefully selected,” Creswell, 2009, p. 178). Since all 80-plus participants could not be interviewed, an attempt was made to meet with male and female participants from a variety of ideological backgrounds—“success stories” as well as participants who did not necessarily move up the career ladder—but most importantly, participants who, it was felt, would be able to best express themselves and share insights. As this is a qualitative study, the goal was not to collect data and compare outcomes but rather, to learn as much as possible about mentorship and leadership, from the participants who were considered best able to share the most with the interviewers. The overall goal was to shed light on a phenomenon, “particularization,

not generalization” (Stake, 1995, p. 7), but nonetheless via “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002).

After reviewing current existing literature on the topics of mentorship and leadership, the interviewers prepared broad open-ended questions for the semistructured interviews, as follows:

- What do you think is the role of a mentor; what makes a good mentor?
- Why did you mentor on ELAI? Why would you want to be mentored?
- How has the mentorship relationship developed over the ELAI year?
- How has mentoring/being mentored changed your practice as an educator? How does the school/school culture benefit from having mentor relationships?
- What are the qualities of a successful school leader and why?
- What is the place of vision in defining a successful school leader?
- What are the most important components of a successful school leadership training program and why?
- How well did the ELAI program prepare you to be a successful school leader?
- Give examples.

Each interviewer followed the basic structure of the prepared questions, but adapted the actual interview as the discussion evolved, without directing where the discussion would go, in order to allow more latitude for the interviewees to express themselves and their opinions, even if the “answers” were not what was hoped to be heard, per the original “questions.” The interviews were audio-taped with the written consent of the participants. The interviews, each of which lasted roughly an hour, yielded rich data about participants’ mentoring and leadership training experiences and their impact on school practice, among other relevant issues. The interviews were transcribed and reviewed, and then analyzed according to qualitative methodology of categorization (Merriam, 2009). Analysis was conducted scrupulously, by hand. The researchers coded and categorized their findings from their interviews; then all categories were reviewed together, to identify the most prominent ones.

Context: Unique milieu of Jewish day schools and professional development programs

Ambrosetti, Knight, and Dekkers (2014) as stated above, stress the importance of context in the mentoring relationship. Since a very large component of the ELAI program involved mentoring, and since this research focused on a very specific slice of the Jewish education scene, a brief review of the nature of this population and their communities, the context, is called for, at the outset.

The Avi Chai Foundation published a comprehensive census report for the year 2013–2014 (Schick, 2014). Overall in the United States, there were some 255,000

students from kindergarten age through high school enrolled in some 861 Jewish day schools of all denominations—Orthodox (the overwhelming majority, some 87%), Conservative, Reform, and Community. Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have Jewish day schools, with New York and New Jersey being “to a great extent, the center of the day school world” (p. 2). Indeed, the past 15 years has seen a growth in enrollment of some 70,000 students—nearly all from these two states, and mostly, from the ultra-Orthodox world (p. 28–29). The report concludes with questioning whether the community will succeed in keeping up with this growth, in terms of resources, ensuring adequately trained and prepared educators.

The ELAI Jewish day school leadership program, which addresses this challenge, and upon which this study was carried out, included only schools from the growing New York metropolitan area.

In terms of Jewish professional development and educator training programs in addition to ELAI, Woocher and Woocher (2014) mention “the universities connected to the major denominational movements that have long played a key role in educator training” (p. 40), such as Yeshiva University (e.g., YU Lead), the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and the American Jewish University. In addition, the Brandeis University DeLeT program and Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education play a role. Woocher and Woocher also note that New York University and Stanford University have recently entered “into the field of Jewish educator preparation” (p. 40). Nondegree PD programs also exist, such as SuLaM, the Day School Leadership Training Institute, the Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators, the Jewish Early Childhood Educational Leadership Institute, and the Executive Leadership Institute of the Foundation for Jewish Camp. One program even trains day school educators to become mentors, the Jewish New Teacher Project. To be sure, other programs exist, but it must be noted that the ELAI program studied here focuses on mentoring and leadership in the New York area day school setting.

Findings

The interviewees, who were more than willing to share their experiences and who were, by and large, gracious “hosts” spoke at length about reflection, collaboration, and vision (not necessarily professional outcomes and practical suggestions gleaned following participation in the program—which would have been interesting from a professional perspective)—the foci of the ELAI program itself. Below are additional themes—what is a good leader, aspects of leadership that can and cannot be learned, what is a good mentor, uniqueness of the ELAI program—that arose throughout the interviews.

What is a good leader?

This seemingly simple question was asked of all interviewees, yet most had difficulty answering it, or had to think for a few minutes before formulating an answer. MY (to maintain confidentiality, initials instead of names are used), a mentor: “Being a leader is not being a manager.” The concept of “vision” arose repeatedly, with some (e.g., mentees HD, SD, and CA) saying that the leader’s personal vision must match the school’s vision. Furthermore, vision must be proactive, and not merely reactive (director G). Mentor AR stressed that the leader must be able to get people excited about the vision, to be able to share it and articulate it. And along these lines, mentioned mentor MG, “Leadership is not about power; it’s about the ability to effect positive change.”

So how is this achieved? Common terms mentioned included trustworthiness, integrity, honesty, kindness, responsibility, respect, patience, and warmth. The leader must be a role model (mentor MG stressed the importance in this setting of being a role model in Torah study), facilitate problem solving, must give authentic feedback, have a sense of humor, love his/her job and children, be knowledgeable (in theory as well as practice), listen, and support. Mentee GC stressed the importance for the leader of not maintaining the status quo, but of always growing, to which mentor MG added, “change as growth, not just for change’s sake.” Decision-making was of utmost importance. One interviewee (mentee KD) added that the leader must “create a culture where people like working there and have hard-working models. . . . School leadership is different than regular leadership.” Most importantly, “leaders have to model”—including being reflective and having mentors themselves!

Director S touched upon a difficult aspect of leadership—that the leader must be able to navigate politics—and also see the big picture; always want more, and be a lifelong learner.

But the common thread throughout remained the value of collaboration, in line with ELAI’s basic tenets: “Unless you collaborate with others you are not really a leader, you are doing it yourself” (mentors BS and MY) and they need “buy-in from your stakeholders” (mentee KD), as director S stated so aptly: “you can do a tremendous amount of cross-fertilization between staff, if there is an atmosphere of collaboration in the school, and that goes back to why collaboration is important to the leader . . . schools that are not collaborative, there is competition between the teachers.” Or, as mentor RT stated, “The leader is the first one pulling . . . pulling the load with your team and not directing them to pull it.”

Aspects of leadership that can and cannot be taught

So can one learn to be a leader, or is one born a leader? Several mentors (by definition, leaders themselves at the schools) as well as mentees offered opinions:

So I think part of that is personality, but I think some of it is teaching. I have a particular mentee in mind, from last year, who, it was very clear to me, this is not his personality and along the way he, you could tell he was bumping up against things that we were saying, not in negative ways but you know, cognitive distances need understanding, so there was cognitive distance for him, he kept bumping up to things, and by the end of the program when you do the go-around at the end and people talk about what they're taking away and what they're learning, this was a guy who grew and learned, understood, was taught strategies, was taught steps, and so, I don't know how he puts it into practice and I wasn't his mentor but if I were to look at where he moved on the continuum of discourse and engagement and openness to learning new things, by the end he was talking the talk, whether he was walking the walk I leave that to you to figure out. (mentor PG)

This mentor believed that in at least this one case, the mentee was not a born leader but did learn to "talk the talk" thanks to the program.

But what exactly can be learned? First and foremost, tapping in to and learning one's own basic leadership style was very important, and was mentioned by several participants. The ELAI experience was built for this self-discovery, but more specifically, offered GC, "just basic skills, like being organized, time management, and efficiency and effectiveness, and learning how to stay calm" were actual and practical leadership skills that could be learned. SD, a mentee, added that a leadership program should teach "presentation skills and speaking," again, practical components of the role of leader.

KD, a mentee who is moving very quickly and successfully up the leadership ladder at her school, offered the following:

That's exactly right, it's a *science and an art*. That's why I think in the past before ELAI and all these things existed, there were still successful leaders, so how did they get there? Trial and error, modeling, maybe they had other mentors, they just intuitively, some people just [have] people skills, they get some of that in place of leadership. I think there was always there on some level, but I do think that strategies can be taught, I feel like I benefit a lot from that, how to stay focused, how to stay organized, how to run a meeting, what does a successful meeting look like, that could definitely be taught, but that's not all it takes to be a leader, I think it's about realizing it's about people, people who work for you or people are complex, people have ideas, have feelings, people have, you know. . . .

What is a good mentor?

Since mentorship is such a crucial aspect of the ELAI program, both mentors and mentees were asked this question outright. They had a lot to share:

From the perspective of mentors	From the perspective of mentees
Good, active, listener	Listen without judging (non-judgmental)/good listening skills
"Listening, encouraging, and validating"	and patience
Ability to reflect	Bring out talent
Respect	Role model
Make oneself available	Pull mentee out of comfort zone
Build/offer a safe relationship	"Get into each others' heads"
Share (e.g., experience and skills)	Approachable
Nonjudgmental/not evaluate	Well-educated
Direct/help versus support to solve own problems	Guide (help and support vs. "doesn't give answers")—"you get a little bit of her insight but she also helps you figure out your own style" (note that some mentees did wish their mentors would solve their problems for them, come up with answers)
Serve as role model/offer life experience	Share
Be not perfect	Empower the mentee
Inspires the growth of the mentee	Sees the big picture
Reflective	

As the reader can see, most answers are intuitive, but home in on the values of nonjudgmental listening, having a reflective role model, and supportive growth.

However, it is worth noting that a sentiment that surfaced several times was that this relationship was beneficial not only for the mentee, but for the mentor too:

- We as mentors matured as we realized everyone was growing together. Becomes more reflective. (mentor AR)
- Enormous amount of reflection, learn to be humble, sharing mistakes, positive experience for mentees and mentors, share vulnerabilities (director G)
- Becomes more reflective (mentors BS, MY, MG)
- Challenges you (mentor MY)
- Learning with them (mentor MG)
- Must think about own practice (mentee HD)
- Became more collaborative in their own leadership (director S)
- Way of giving back to the field (mentor MG) and school (mentee ZL, a mentor on another program)
- Become a more relaxed leader ... improves with experience (mentor MT)
- Mentorship is growth/learning for both sides. (mentor BS)
- Mentoring creates teachers (those who mentor too) who are more dedicated. (mentee KD who is quickly moving up the leadership ladder)

Mentor AR likened the relationship to that of chavruta learning, where both sides benefit, even if they enter the relationship at different levels.

Overall, and to summarize, mentor MG tied this in nicely, suggesting "I think that not everyone who's a good leader will be a good mentor, but if you're a good mentor, I think you're a good leader." And mentee HD took

this sentiment one step further: “I think you must be a mentor if you’re a leader because you can’t lead from an ivory tower . . . you are a leader if you’re a mentor because you are a role model for someone.”

Uniqueness of the ELAI program

The common denominator that all interviewees shared was their participation in the ELAI program, either as mentor or mentee (or director). Some had participated in other leadership programs; some were or are currently mentors with other programs. These interviews, however, focused on the participants’ experience of the ELAI program. Below are the most salient aspects, in their view and from their perspective.

Many participants pointed out the unique *Israel experience* component, and not only for the camaraderie that it built. Part of the year-long ELAI program included a week-long trip to Israel where sessions were held, meetings facilitated, and educational trips experienced. One mentee (LS) remembered specifically how different leadership styles were explored—in one setting via an inspiring lecture by a music conductor, Itay Talgam, who presented various musical leadership styles (that could be extrapolated to the educational setting); in another setting, the participants were asked to herd sheep at Neot Kedumim. Also at the Israel seminar, participants were able to devote quality time to their projects, something they would have found challenging in their busy lives back home.

Another unique aspect of the program was the *wide range of participants*. Tying this in to the Israel experience, mentor AR spoke of the “multitude of diverse perspectives . . . different ideologies speaking together. . . . Refreshing to hear different viewpoints and different perspectives. . . . Importance of Israel component, importance of Jewish peoplehood as an ideal. . . . Israel belongs to all of us.” Indeed, educators from so many streams of Judaism interacted, yet “there was so much more in common than there was different in the room” (director S).

Another unique aspect of ELAI, according to the participants, was the *project*: “The project was very important, utilizes the skills that the mentors were trying to teach us. Allowed me to feel more confident in myself as a leader” (mentee KR).

In addition, *case studies* were discussed, and viewed as one of the most helpful aspects of the program, “creating libraries of solutions to problems that didn’t exist” (director S), “case studies were very helpful to learn to be more open-minded . . . thinking deeply and not making rash decisions” (mentee GA).

Two analogies were repeated on several occasions, that of the merry-go-round, and that of the toolbox. It was explicitly expressed by a few that one of the strongest aspects of the ELAI program was that once one participates, he/she is “on the merry-go-round,” meaning in the pool of Jewish education leaders. Positions at schools may change, but once one is on the merry-go-round, it is believed, one is considered a leader in the world of Jewish education (mentee HD).

Another analogy of the toolbox referred to the skills gained in the program that became educators' tools of the trade.

Tying in mentorship and collaboration with leadership in the Jewish day school setting, the bottom line "What makes ELAI unique," was summed up nicely by mentor BS: "Leadership and mentorship has been at the core of Jewish philosophy. We see this when Yitro [Jethro] told Moshe [Moses] to work collaboratively."

Discussion

The design of the ELAI program is cognizant of Peterson's (2002) view that leadership preparation should combine theory and practice, provide scaffolded learning experiences under the guidance of experienced mentors, offer opportunities to actively reflect on leadership experiences, and foster peer networking. The following discussion will focus on the themes that most touched upon the research questions and the ELAI program and which will most likely impact other leadership training programs to follow.

Mentorship

Clearly one of the central components of the ELAI program which was seen as key to its success was that of mentorship. This has clear implications as far as other leadership programs are concerned. The value of mentorship is attested to by both mentors and mentees. The importance of mentorship is well documented in the literature. Rotstein (2011, p. 102), for example, emphasizes that the structured mentoring process is one important way to support educators in a collaborative learning community.

The findings emphasize that mentors value the mentorship not just for the impact that it has on the mentees but also for their own development as educational leaders and practitioners. Mentors mentioned how they had become more reflective in their work and more collaborative in their leadership roles.

This point is clearly supported by the literature. For example, Bowman has posited that, "Teachers who have opportunities to mentor other teachers emerge as leaders within their professions, thus developing learning organizations and improving their own credibility with their colleagues" (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008, as cited in Bowman, 2014, p. 48). Rotstein (2011) affirms that "the mentors in the Leadership Institute have, indeed, become more effective leaders in the Jewish community and developed new competencies as educators" (p. 98). He continues,

Reflection is a critical skill for effective leaders. . . . Mentors are developing themselves as reflective leaders when they explore multiple perspectives that challenge them to excel in complex and uncertain environments. Consequently, mentoring is its own

form of leadership development which facilitates reflection-in-action. The mentors emphasize that so much of what they learned from their fellows was instrumental in the implementation of ongoing changes in their own schools. (p. 110).

The findings also indicate how mentors become more enthusiastic and dedicated to their school roles as a result of the mentoring process. The literature, too, points to the energizing impact of mentorship on the mentors:

Teachers who take the time to mentor novice teachers invariably feel revitalized within their own careers. Many mentors report that mentoring not only energizes them, but also helps them to improve their skills (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2008, as cited in Bowman, 2014), and reflect on and improve their own decision-making abilities. (Mathur, Gehrke, & Kim, 2012, as cited in Bowman, 2014, p. 49)

What is the ideal relationship between the mentor and the mentee?

The findings show that teachers appreciated the opportunity to be coached and receive instant feedback. This appeared to be one of the most important parts of the mentoring experience. Participants viewed the mentors as experts with a deep knowledge base, experience, and the expertise needed for guiding them professionally. The literature supports this view. Some suggest that good mentoring occurs when a more experienced educator (the mentor) provides support, guidance, advice, and encouragement to a newcomer or less experienced teacher (the mentee) for the purpose of facilitating instructional improvement (Barrera et al., 2010; Bower, 2005; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Hudson & Hudson, 2010; Hudson & Skamp, 2002; Portner, 2008, as cited in Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012).

Others write that the primary role of the mentor is to guide the learner in his or her search for strategies to resolve dilemmas, to boost self-confidence, and to construct a broad repertoire of leadership skills. “Competent mentors do this through (a) modeling, (b) coaching, (c) gradually removing support as the mentee’s competence increases, (d) questioning and probing to promote self-reflection and problem solving skills, and (e) providing feedback and counsel (Lave, 1991, as cited in Davis et al., 2005, p. 10). Mentors often stated that they intended to, “support,” “coach,” “assist,” and “provide resources for growth” (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012, p. 339).

Wilcox (2014) posits that the “The mentor must be an individual who can answer questions with ease and correctness, and imbue our culture and climate” (p. 4). Templeton and Tremont (2014) write that,

the central task is to select wise mentors—educators who have proven track records of failures and successes in public education. . . . Wise mentors have perspective. . . . Wise mentors understand that teaching is rewarding because of the time invested in the process. . . . Wise mentors understand that building trust is a product of loyalty and privacy. . . . The wise mentor understands his charge to develop the capacity of the protégé. . . . Wise mentors are skilled communicators. . . . (pp. 25–26)

The wise mentor is seen as developing the skills and knowledge of his mentee.

What is interesting in the findings is the perception of some mentors that the ideal mentor-mentee relationship is more like an equal partnership in the mentorship experience rather than the “coaching” or “modeling” one more prevalent in the literature. The term *chavruta* or study partner was used to describe the mentor-mentee relationship. In this model, the mentor and the mentee are on an equal footing, sharing their ideas and experiences and learning together. While this model is discussed in the literature (Muszkat-Barkan, 2011), it is one that needs further reflection and discussion. This has implications as to the ideal sort of mentor-mentee relationship model to work toward in a leadership training program.

Cohort

The findings provide insight into the importance of the cohort experience in a successful leadership program. It allows for collaboration and the sharing of ideas with fellow professionals. This allows for fruitful and meaningful discussions.

The literature seems to support this view. The following points from the theory on group dynamics help advance our knowledge base about why cohorts might be an effective way for students to learn: In effective groups, members feel important, have a sense of belonging, and are accepted for their expertise and contributions (Zander, 1982); when its purpose is clear, a group has a greater probability of success and members of effective groups develop a sense of purpose when their activities require mutual interaction and interdependence (Zander, 1982). Barnett and Muse (1993) contend that many educational leadership students choose to participate in cohorts because of their preference for working collaboratively. By selecting students in cohorts with similar expectations and commitments, faculty facilitates cohesive and interdependent groups. The literature in adult learning indicates that adults learn best when they can direct their own learning, influence decision making, focus on problems relevant to practice, tap their rich experiential background, and build strong relationships with peers. Social psychologists maintain that groups become cohesive when participants can reflect on their cumulative experience, evaluate their own learning, and rely on others in the group for support. When programs are developed with this in mind, the cohort participants become active learners who can trust their own capabilities and depend on each other for support.

However, the findings of the ELAI program highlight an aspect of the value of cohorts that has been little explored in the literature: the value of participants coming from different ideological and religious backgrounds. Most participants in our study felt that the heterogeneity of the cohort whose participants came from different religious perspectives and practices enriched the discussion and fostered tolerance for different viewpoints and positions. It was, for some

participants, the first opportunity to meet teachers from different religious denominations. This is particularly true of participants with a strictly Orthodox religious background who had their first opportunity to meet with participants from a Reform Jewish school. The opportunity for discourse with diverse participants led to fruitful discussions.

Religious diversity not only had an important impact on the cohort component but also on the mentor-mentee relationship. Both mentors and mentees commented about their initial hesitancy to work with others from a different religious background but there was a sense on both sides that the interaction was not only beneficial but helped to breakdown stereotypes and led to great tolerance between religious groups.

Particular features of the ELAI program

The findings of this study indicate that there are two components of the ELAI program that proved most important in its success: geographical component—inspiration from Israeli setting; and experiential components.

Geographical component

The literature does not emphasize the importance of the geographical setting of the leadership training program as a factor in its success. Yet this element was highlighted by many of the ELAI participants as being core to the program. MY, for example, said

I think you can't do this program without the Israel component. This particular leadership program emphasizes the importance of Jewish peoplehood as an ideal, and that was able to be communicated across all lines; it didn't really matter and I think being in Israel, the home of the Jewish people and being in different parts of the country, you feel a part of something that is, you know, thousands of years old and then you realise you're part of a chain and you have a higher sense of who you are and what you're supposed to be doing, and I think a Jewish leadership program has to provide an Israel experience in order for it to emphasize the Jewish part of leadership.

Others stressed the inspiration that being in Israel had given them and how it had energized their roles as school leaders.

Another participant emphasized the importance of the program being conducted away from home. Spending significant time away from her family and the concerns of her everyday life, she was able to focus completely on the program and to reflect on important issues in education.

While some of these findings are particular to the Jewish educational community this research shows that the geographical setting of the leadership training program should be given greater consideration in the preparation of a training program.

Experiential components

Experiential components, like the Neot Kedumim shepherding activity in Israel was highlighted by ELAI participants as a successful leadership training exercise. These type of activities involve hands-on, practical exercises or activities where participants have to solve problems, perform tasks, or achieve results, often within a certain timeframe. These activities may take the form of a simulation that is very similar to normal work activities (e.g., dealing with a difficult employee) or may look unrelated to the workplace (e.g., crash landing in the desert) but then are related back to workplace situations. The concepts, skills, and relevance of the exercise are often discussed after the exercise and arise out of the direct experience of the participants rather than an intellectual concept from a previous lecture. The participant has to transfer their experience through their own intellectual processes. Lessons frequently stay with participants for years because of the vivid reality and emotions that they experience during this type of learning.

It has been possible for groups of managers, for example, over the course of a few days involving several experiential exercises to develop their own theory and guidelines for team dynamics and team building. These results can be as comprehensive as many textbooks on group behavior. Action learning is a more extended version of this approach in which teams are expected to complete a workplace project over the course of several months. The project is used as a basis for learning the concepts and skills taught in the program. The team helps each member, and the total group, learn as the project proceeds.

Conclusions

This research article aimed to answer the following questions:

- (1) How do current and aspiring leaders of Jewish schools view the role of mentoring in leadership training?
- (2) What elements in the ELAI program do the participants view as most important, inspiring, and unique, and what are the implications of this for other school leadership programs?

The interviewees, mentors, and mentees alike, clearly saw mentoring as a key component of a successful leadership training program. While the value of mentoring to the mentee is well-documented (e.g., Bowman, 2014), this research highlights the professional and personal impact of the mentoring process on the mentor. In our interviews, mentors mentioned how they had become more reflective in their work as educational leaders and practitioners and more collaborative in their leadership roles.

The research also highlights the multilevel relationships that can develop between mentor and mentee. On the one level, the mentor is seen by the mentee

as the wise and experienced educator who can answer questions with ease and provide simple solutions to complex issues. They provide support and advice to the mentees giving them the confidence to succeed in the future. On a different level, the mentor-mentee relationship can develop into more of a partnership, in which both are on an equal footing, sharing ideas and experiences. When this happens, relationships can become more enriching for both mentor and mentee. This chavruta model was seen by some participants as important in the success of their mentoring relationship.

In addition, this research emphasizes the value of mentoring for participants in a midcareer leadership training program. While student-teacher mentoring is well-documented for beginning teachers (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), the current research points to the effectiveness of mentoring also for those more experienced teachers who wish to move into leadership positions in the world of Jewish education. As mentioned, many did.

Regarding particular elements of the ELAI program which participants view as important, inspiring, or unique, our research highlights the cohort experience as being very influential in the ELAI program's success. The heterogeneity of ideologies and religious backgrounds of the participants enriched the discussion and fostered tolerance for different viewpoints and positions. Religious diversity, rather than acting as a barrier between participants, led to fruitful discussions within an accepting environment.

The fact that core components of the program took place in Israel was very meaningful and inspiring for many participants. Israel, the historical home of the Jewish people, was seen as a unique location to learn what it means to be a Jewish leader of a school. Experiential components, like the shepherding activity in Neot Kedumim, stood out as formative events in gaining insights into what leadership is.

While some of the above points are unique to a program for Jewish school leaders, others are valuable to consider for leadership training programs as a whole. Regarding mentorship, consideration needs to be given to the multifaceted nature of the mentor-mentee relationship, ranging from a more hierarchical student-teacher relationship to one of equal partners in a joint journey of discovery. While Israel as a location for leadership training is unique to the Jewish experience, attention can be given to how location and educational experiences can be an inspirational component to any leadership training. This study seems to indicate that, as with teaching, the affective components of such a school leadership training program can be of equal or even more significance as the cognitive ones. After all, educators train the heart as well as the mind.

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