



State Comptroller of Israel | Annual Report 71C | 2021

Ministry of Education

Appointment and Training of New School Principals



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Background

The Ministry of Education ("the ministry"), is the regulator of institutions of formal education and recognized non-formal education. It also determines the method of appointing school principals ("principals"). In addition it determines the appointment criteria and the threshold requirements for hiring principals at all educational institutions ("the threshold criteria"). This includes participation in the training program for principals ("the training program") that the Ministry operates through the Avney Rosha Institute ("Avney Rosha"). The principals leading the schools, the teaching staffs and their level of functioning have a decisive impact on the school's conduct and on the pupils' achievements and therefore, also on the education system as a whole.



Key figures

4,900

Principals were employed during the 2019/20 school year¹, approximately 3,800 of whom in formal education. From 2016/17 to 2019/20, the Ministry of Education appointed approximately 2,700 principals to formal educational institutions.

52%

Of all appointments of principals in formal educational institutions between 2016/17 and 2019/20 were appointed through a tender². The remaining 48% were appointed as acting principals.

32%

The Rate of decline in the average number of candidates who submitted their candidacy to tenders for vacant principal positions at formal educational institutions from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

33%

Of principals who were selected for a position in a tender were principals who were already employed in that position as acting principals.

325

Teachers participated in the training program in 2019/20 school year at a cost of NIS 6 million. Approximately 1,100 teachers participated in the training program from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

**766
Principals**

Were appointed to formal educational institutions alone in the 2019/20 school year, while the forecast for that year was 516 additional principals for all types of educational institutions.

60%

Of the training program's graduates in 2010/11 to 2018/19 were employed as principals. Less than 50% of the graduates were employed as principals in 2019/20.


25%

Of the applicants for the training program over the last decade, who fulfilled the threshold criteria, were accepted to the program.





- 1 The school years begins in September and ends at the end of June. School years are referred to according to the Hebrew calendar, which begins in September. For example: 2019/20; 2018/19, 2017/18, 2016/17, etc.
- 2 For the sake of convenience, the proceeding will be called "tender" or "tender proceeding" in this report, even though at issue is not a tender proceeding as this term is defined in the Civil Service Law.









Audit actions

 From March to October 2020, the Office of the State Comptroller audited aspects of the actions taken by the Ministry of Education to train and appoint new principals to schools and to retain principals in the educational system. The audit focused mainly on the 2016/17 to 2019/20 school years. The audit was performed in the Ministry of Education and in Avney Rosh. Supplementary data were received from the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Key findings

-  **Appointments of Acting Principals** – From 2016/17 to 2019/20, there was an increase in the number of principals appointed as acting principals in formal educational institutions, from 43% to 52%. During these years, approximately half (48%) of the principals were employed as acting principals.
-  Approximately one third of the principals who were selected through a tender proceeding from 2017/18 and 2019/20 were principals who were already employed in the position as acting principals. Therefore, it is possible that their employment as acting principals gave them an advantage that facilitated their selection as permanent principals.
-  Approximately 40% of the Ministry's appointments of acting principals to formal educational institutions from 2016/17 to 2019/20 were made without having first published an open tender to all teachers. The circumstances under which the Ministry appointed some of these acting principals enabled apparently the Ministry preparation in advance and announcing the vacancy to all teachers, thereby giving all candidates an equal opportunity to contend for the position during a tender.
-  When the Ministry appoints an acting principal, the candidates are not required to fulfill threshold criteria. Out of 53 acting principals whose files were randomly examined during the audit, only 17 acting principals fulfilled the threshold criteria that are required during a tender proceeding – completion of the training program. Consequently, the Ministry in effect created two appointment tracks for Principals, both of which it considered valid – one is a stringent track requiring candidates to fulfill rigorous threshold criteria, while the other is a lenient track not requiring candidates to fulfill all of the threshold criteria, apart from being a teacher. Naturally, this led to increased use of the lenient track for appointing acting principals, which essentially means that many principals appointed do not fulfill the threshold criteria that the Ministry itself had defined.



-  Fifty out of the 53 acting principals for which documentation of their appointment was located, have continued in their roles as acting principals beyond the timeframe defined in the appointment of principals procedure. The audit found no documentation of the reasons for this deviation from procedure.
-  **The Training Program for Principals** – The Program is designed, inter alia, to respond to the need for additional principals. However, the quota for participants defined by the Ministry of Education and Avney Rosha were significantly lower than the 2012 and 2018 forecasts of the number of additional principals needed. From 2013/14 to 2019/20, the disparity between the quotas and the forecasts of new principals needed was 1,283. Despite the fact that the Ministry had been aware of the shortage of candidates for the role of principal, who are graduates of the training program, it failed to adjust the quotas to its needs and did not amend the threshold requirement whereby only graduates of the Training Program may be appointed as principals during a tender proceeding.
-  **Admissions to the Training Program** – The training program not only trains potential candidates for employment as principals in order to create a reserve, but it is also increasingly being used to train principals who are already employed as acting principals.
-  **Effectiveness of the Training Program** – The audit found that the ratio of graduates who were not employed as principals subsequent to their graduation up until 2019/20 rose from approximately one third of the graduates in 2014/15 to nearly half of those who graduated in 2018/19. Approximately 40% of the graduates of the 2010/11 to 2018/19 graduating classes were never employed as principals after graduation. Less than 50% of the graduates during these years were employed as principals during the 2019/20 school year. Approximately one third of the training program students were unsure about whether they would submit their candidacy to a tender for a position as a principal after they graduate.
-  **Principals resigning from office** – An analysis of data from Avney Rosha and the Ministry of Education found that, out of 1,999 graduates of the training program from 2010/11 to 2017/18, 1,268 were employed as principals for at least one year. 150 of the principals (approximately 12%) resigned from office after having served as principals for only one to three years³. Nevertheless, the Ministry has not initiated any dialogue with new principals who resigned in order to ascertain the reasons and draw conclusions and it has not decided what resignation rate should be deemed reasonable.
-  **Codex of procedures** – The role of principal and his/her spheres of responsibility are not regulated in any codex of procedures, but rather derive from a multitude of circulars issued by the director-general, which lack any organized holistic vision. School principals

³ Did not continuously hold office during 2018/19 and 2019/20.



encounter difficulties during the performance of their role, which could result in: an increase in resignations; suitable candidates losing their motivation to submit their candidacy; and an even higher ratio of training program graduates who are not employed as principals.



Appointments of Principals – In the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, the supervisors examine the selected candidates' experience and verify that they hold a teaching certificate, but do not ascertain whether they fulfill the threshold criteria prescribed in the appointment of principals procedure, including academic education and training to be a principal. The audit also found that the training program's student quota defined for ultra-orthodox Jewish candidates is far from being commensurate with the ultra-orthodox Jewish community's pupil ratio in the education system (ultra-orthodox Jewish pupils account for approximately 30% of all pupils in the Hebrew education system in Israel⁴). Out of 2,320 graduates of the training program from 2010/11 to 2018/19, only 18 were defined as being subject to ultra-orthodox Jewish supervision, out of whom only 5 were employed as principals in the 2019/20 school year.



The 50% increase in the number of principals who graduated Avney Rosh and were appointed during tender proceedings from 2016/17 to 2019/20 should be commended.

The Ministry has defined a plan for reducing principals' workload and is taking action to implement it.

Key recommendations



It is recommended that the Ministry of Education analyze the reasons for its low success rate in appointing principals through tenders. Inter alia, it should analyze the impediments that cause a small number of candidates to apply for tenders and should take action to increase the number of candidates. The Ministry should also analyze the correlation between principals' workload and employment conditions and the low number of candidates for the role.



It is recommended that the Ministry analyze the number of appointments of acting principals in order that appointments of acting principals will be the exception and not the norm. It is recommended that the Ministry clarify the directives relating to instances when it is warranted to appoint an acting principal in general and, in particular, instances

⁴ State Comptroller, **Annual Report 70B** (2020), "Ultra-orthodox Jewish Education and Supervision Thereof," pp. 1067 – 1137.



when it is warranted to appoint an acting principal without announcing the vacancy and holding a tender proceeding.



The Ministry's district offices should be diligent about documenting the reasons for extending an Acting Principal's appointment, as is required, and the Ministry's Director-General should examine these reasons.



The Ministry should find a solution in order to fill the need for additional principals and a solution for the shortage of candidates for the role of Principal from among graduates of the Training Program. It should consider increasing the Training Program's annual student quota; it should consider defining the Training Program as a threshold criterion and should train currently employed acting principals, without adversely affecting its reserve. The Ministry should consider additional solutions for the shortage of candidates for the role of principal from among graduates of the Training Program, including increasing the Training Program's annual student quota and revising the threshold criteria for appointment as a principal. It is also recommended that the Ministry act to increase the Training Program's effectiveness and to increase the number of graduates who are employed as Principals. It is also recommended that the Ministry re-examine the candidate screening process for admittance to the Training Program and improve the screening process to assure that the Training Program's students are suitable for the role of principal. It is also recommended that Avney Rosha consider suitable curricula and mechanisms for training principals in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community.



It is recommended that the Ministry consider preparing a codex of procedures that will encompass all directives issued to principals, and complete the implementation of its plan to alleviate the workload imposed on Principals.



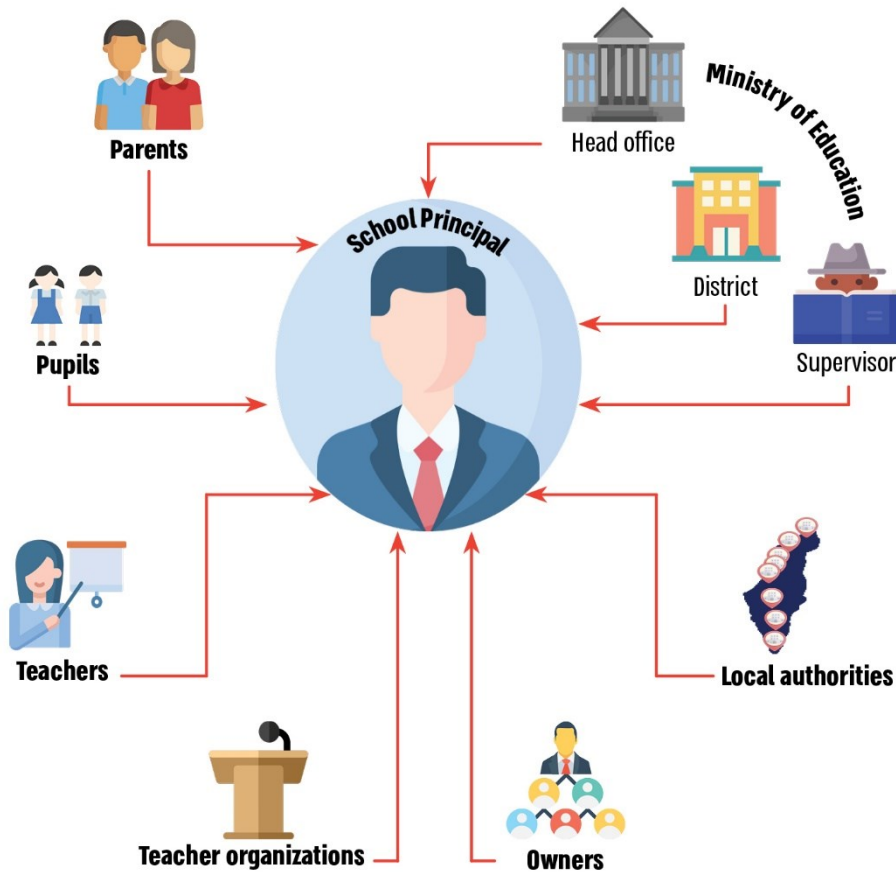
It is recommended that the Ministry analyze the data on resignations of new Principals, inter alia, by disseminating a questionnaire to resigning principals in general and to new Principals in particular, and analyze their responses and draw conclusions.



It is recommended that the Ministry of Education analyze the issue of principals in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, including their training, selection and appointment, and use the results of its analysis to decide the degree of its involvement in the process of selecting and appointing principals in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. The Ministry should then publish specific explicit directives in this regard, after holding a dialogue with the organizations that are operating the schools in this community, in order to assure, on the one hand, that principals in this community will successfully perform their roles and lead the pupils and the school to achievements and, on the other hand, that they will be compatible with the school's educational framework and characteristics.



A Principal's Reporting Hierarchy and Work Interfaces



Source: Office of the State Comptroller.

Summary

The functioning and quality of principals have a decisive impact on a school's conduct, on the pupils' achievements and on the education system as a whole. It is recommended that the Ministry consider ways to improve the process of appointing principals for schools in all communities, including in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community. It is also essential that the Ministry and Avney Rosha, which operates the training program for principals, take measures to improve the program's effectiveness so that its graduates will be employed as principals.

