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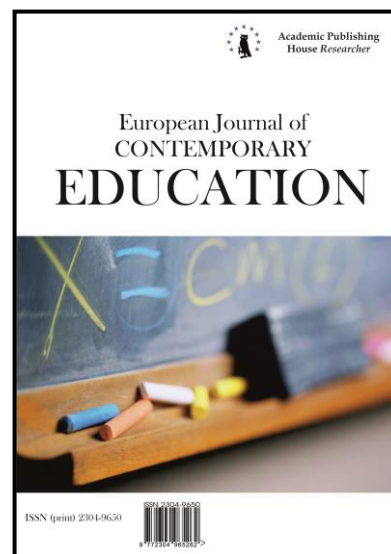
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Teachers' Authority in the Postmodern Era

Sara Zamir ^{a, *}

^a Ben-Gurion University & Achvah Academic College, Ness-Ziona, Israel

Abstract

The authority given to teachers within the school setting is vital to any educational work. According to its most widely accepted meaning, this concept signifies teachers' legal and social right to teach, counsel or guide that derives from a formal recognition of their ability to do so. As a concept, authority in the education system has undergone changes throughout history and is seen as a meaningful part of the educational process. The postmodern era presents us with an erosion of authority within the school system in general and teacher authority in particular. The goal of this study was to evaluate teachers' authority among teachers in Israel and to find out whether there are differences in this authority between distinct groups of teachers. Research was conducted using the quantitative approach. One hundred and eight male and female teachers participated by completing a questionnaire. The data were analyzed statistically, as is customary in quantitative research. The findings show that within the education system teachers display an average amount of authority. A significant difference was found between male and female teachers' ability to wield authority, whereby male teachers displayed greater self-confidence than female teachers in their ability to do so. This finding might be explained by gender viewpoints; namely that female teachers in the classroom use qualities such as caring, concern and sensitivity. In contrast, male teachers use male characteristics such as dominance, assertiveness, ambition, aggressiveness and competitiveness.

Keywords: teacher authority, postmodernism, teachers in Israel, education system.

1. Introduction

The authority granted to teachers within the school setting is essential to any educational endeavor. According to its most widely accepted meaning, this concept signifies teachers' legal and social right to teach, counsel or guide that derives from a formal recognition of their ability to do so (Shermer 2004). The concept of teacher authority, in particular, has undergone many changes throughout history, from traditional, power-based authority given the status of person wielding it,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: sarazamir5@gmail.com (S. Zamir)

where teachers received autonomy to teach and students obeyed, to the postmodern era where education is more open; the spaces where one can practice autonomy are growing, children are at the center, and it is no longer clear who wields the authority and who submits to it (Tobin, Lis, 2013).

Over the last decade, more and more teachers have been complaining about losing their authority within the education system. The proliferation of discipline problems, a gradual erosion of the status of the teacher, growing lack of respect for teachers and an increase in parental intervention (Tovin, Lis, 2013) have been undermining teachers' standing and authority (Goskov, 2016; Mayseless, 2005).

Authority – definitions

The most common attitude to the concept of authority stems from the social and legal recognition that an authority figure may act, when this recognition puts the authority figure at an advantage over everyone else. According to Jewish thought and tradition, authority is an achievement that feeds off of one's personality and positive traits and grants one the power to instruct others, while consciously understanding the limits of one's control (Shermer, 2004). According to Lev-On and Prince-Meller (2018), educational authority is a hierarchical relationship between the one wielding the authority who sets the rules of conduct and the one under that authority. In Jewish educational thought, the source of teacher authority is the position itself; this authority is granted by the very fact that they are licensed to teach the content of the Jewish tradition, commandments and values and pass them on to the younger generation (Yarchi, 2001).

The Latin origin of the word 'authority' (*auctoritas*) comes from the time of the Roman Empire and it means the ability to get people to respond willingly to one's leadership. In its various historical forms, authority took on different tones and biases in accordance with the social ideologies which differed in liberal, conservative or fascist societies (Goskov, 2016). Based on Max Weber, Goskov (2016) suggested the following classification:

Rational-legal/bureaucratic authority: Authority that comes from the regime and its legal mechanisms. The ones in authority are the government ministries and the legislative branch, while the public accepts this authority, is required to obey the laws and pay taxes, and those who violate this are liable to punishment. Within the education system, the administration and teaching staff are the ones wielding hierarchical educational rational-legal authority. Students accept teachers' authority, teachers accept principals' authority and principals accept their supervisors' authority. But this does not ensure that those accepting the authority, the parents and students, always obey the rules and solutions to this are varied and change according to place, context and time.

Traditional authority: Authority which is passed down through to the next generation and functions in accordance with authoritarian religious and secular rules. With religious authority, in the Jewish context the rabbis and Kabbalists are the ones wielding authority and setting rules on the basis of Holy Scriptures, and the community of believers accept their authority and trust them. The secular side of traditional authority is founded in the modern legal system, for instance, which acts in accordance with traditions of jurisprudence such as legal precedent, or academia, which follows traditional authority-based rules. With traditional authority, the ones accepting authority do so willingly and therefore there is no need for sanctions.

Charismatic authority: This is granted to one person, due to a unique attribute such as a sense of sanctity, certain personality traits, or an idea the person offers to people who decide to accept this authority. In education, charismatic authority can be expressed in a principal or teacher who constitutes a role-model to be imitated for students or other teachers who accept their authority due to their charisma. Rabbis may become spiritual personalities whose authority is accepted by admiring believers. In a more negative context, this person could also be a cult leader who deprives people of their freedom.

Expert authority: Authority granted to experts in their field that is usually anchored in a certificate or formal degree, or exceptional expertise displayed in a distinct field of knowledge. This authority is not uniform. The different kinds can be completely mixed put and found in an 'impure' state, wherein a certain authority may stem from a blend of authorities such as in the case of educational authority. Such authority in schools originates in the government and the laws amending the Compulsory Education Law. Educational authority is hierarchically structured where the ones wielding the authority set the rules and the ones accepting the authority are expected to follow them. Authority within the school is dynamic and can be changed by educational bodies and may differ from school to school, based on location and educational ideology.

Authority is the power given to those who hold positions according to the hierarchical structure of an organization. In school, teachers are the ones who have authority over students, and they need it to maintain order and be able to teach. This is how the definition of authority is usually presented. In their educational environment there are five types of authority which can be used respectively in the educational system. Legal authority is granted to teachers due to their job, and they are permitted to make decisions and address discipline problems. Unique authority is afforded by their expertise, only teachers who are experts in their field are allowed to teach that subject and provide students with professional knowledge. Authority is given to charismatic teachers by students who respect and admire them, that is to say their authority stems from their personality and their investment in their job. Reward-based authority is granted, based on teachers' ability to reward good behavior, excellence, appreciation. Punitive authority is based on teachers' ability to punish students according to school rules (Avinun, 2005).

Authority in the postmodern era

According to Plato's educational approach (Hare, 1989), education is a process of learning and acquiring knowledge and teaching is the means used to arouse students' curiosity to learn. Besides imparting knowledge, one of the teachers' most important roles is to teach students to be good and moral, and thus the philosopher ascribes tremendous importance to educators and thereby grants them their authority. Plato saw educators as part of a wider system and as bound by a policy of laws which guide children towards a single opinion that the law declares to be true. This is a state compulsory education law which parents are also bound by as the ones responsible for sending their children to school. Teachers are employees hired by the government.

Plato saw the government as the branch responsible for education, which changed the teachers' standing to that of a government employee, an inferior social position. Their authority becomes formal and stems from the powers of the establishment and is far from being educational or professional. Teachers were always under the supervision of political bodies which granted them their authority. In contrast, Dewey (1902/1990) claimed that people require organizational authority within which they find their liberty. Dewey revolutionized educational thought and placed the children at the center of the educational process, while the educators' job was to lead students and mold their moral character as democratic citizens, and thus Dewey placed teachers' educational authority at a high level, but preferred it not to be overt and explicit, but that it maintain teachers' status (Rosenow, 1993).

The traditional authority of the past relied on the status of being a figure of authority. Within families, parents chose the methods of education and punishment, and any attempt at intervening was considered a challenge to their authority. Teachers in school were given autonomy in teaching and students were supposed to obey without challenging what was asked of them, with the full support from parents, for whom teachers were of the highest value. Corporal punishment, obedience and inflexibility were common in traditional authority (Omer, 2008). Gradually, over the years, traditional authority has weakened over time and concepts such as 'authority' and 'authoritarian' were considered aggressive. During the 1960s and 1970s, an ideology developed that wanted to do away with the use of authority in children's education. According to the new ideology, parents and teachers should educate children through love, understanding, support, freedom of expression, while removing boundaries and enforcement. The new ideology became commonplace and influenced educators and psychologists who believed that this was the way to educate the students of the future generation (Omer, 2008).

In modern Israeli society, the education systems place the child at the center and encourage the development of student autonomy. The biblical verse "teach a child in his own way and even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs, 22: 6), has become a slogan which expresses the need for educators to adapt themselves and their curriculum to their students, to their personality, age and scholastic level. A diachronic examination shows that this verse has been interpreted in different ways at different times. The interpretation that places children in the center in no way resembles the past interpretation, neither in Jewish nor Christian society (Hed, 2011).

Omer (2008) claimed that in the 1980s, the concept of a 'new authority' was created. This is the kind that does not want traditional authority, but still wants to educate children in a way that sets boundaries, create coping situations with challenges in a manner acceptable to society. The new authority requires the presence of parents at home and of teachers in the classroom to demonstrate authority figures who maintain the differences in status, but show caring, resilience

and confidence and act with full transparency. The support for the teacher does not come from the teachers' job or qualifications; rather it is built on a process of trust and complete avoidance of violence towards children.

The postmodern era in the West (the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century) reflects the approach that nothing is absolute or definite anymore as it was in the modern era, including science, and that democratic expression and criticism should be allowed. The organizational structure is more dynamic and less hierarchical and the belief in letting employees and professional staff in on ideas and decision making is growing. Information flows and travels rapidly between continents thanks to the internet, emails and mobile phones. Society is more varied and multicultural; it is more open to a variety of lifestyles, accepting those are different and striving for equality of opportunity (Goskov, 2016). In the postmodern era, schools aspire to establish authority that is not based on forceful control, threats, obedience and punishment. At the same time, schools today try to create a safe place where the staff care about their students, listen to them and are present and involved (Omer, 2008) and it seems that they can't make up their mind.

These significant changes taking place in the postmodern era are directly influencing the quality of education. Educational policies are adapting themselves to societal, religious and class-based diversity, no longer presenting a unified curriculum for everyone without addressing these differences. Rather, they aim for more personalized adaptation. There is a lot of information and it is readily available on social media, and virtual learning allows people to purchase courses on the computer at home or any other physical location. Schools' organizational structure is more democratic, where the staff is committed to professional development while adapting to an ever-changing reality. The blurring of hierarchies in the postmodern era has diminished the social standing and authority of teachers and teaching. During the modern era, authority was granted according to hierarchical ranking, and this was supported by the public. In the postmodern era, the hierarchical structure is no longer clear and there is no definite side that wields authority or that accepts it, which is the general principle in defining the concept of authority. The current general state of authority directly impacts the hierarchical structure in schools and psychology research indicates a weakening in parental, legal and teacher authority over young people (Abinun, 2005; Goskov, 2016).

Wilf (2012) claimed that one of the things the weakened teachers' authority was the Students' Rights Law passed in 2004, designed to 'protect' students against teachers through legislation. The law's very name teaches us that it recognizes the fact that students have rights and that is enough to make it worthy of criticism.

The law states: children have the right to an education, students' rights and obligations should be displayed in schools; students should not be discriminated against for various reasons; students and their parents have a right to a fair hearing before said students are permanently expelled from the school they attend; students have the right to write matriculation exams; discipline in schools will be managed in a manner that befits human dignity; students may not be punished for anything their parents do or do not do; students should be encouraged to establish a student council, and information pertaining to students should be kept confidential and be disclosed only if necessary for professional reasons (Ayalon, 2012). The law, which is meant to protect students' rights, is unbalanced, since it doesn't codify their obligations. The various sections of the law enable a wide range of definitions which students sometimes take advantage of by casting teachers' behavior in a light which makes it seem they have violated the law. 'Strong' parents brandish the law any time teachers use an authoritative tool on their children who need boundaries. Teachers are not entitled to legal protection due to their job and tend to give up on trying to educate the children whose parents tend to complain about every little authority-based step taken against their children (Wilf, 2012).

Abinun (2005) wishes to mark out boundaries within the school system in a democratic society, as is customary today. Children should be placed at the center and their needs and uniqueness should be taken into account. According to him, freedom is an important value but it should be adapted to education and only on condition that this does not come at the expense of other important values such as hurting oneself or others.

The research aim was to evaluate the existence and level of teacher authority.

The research questions were: Is there a difference among teachers in the context of teacher authority? How is this difference expressed?

Research assumptions:

There will be differences in teacher authority between different groups of teachers.

Operational assumptions:

Male teachers will display a higher level of authority than female teachers due to their socialization as men.

Homeroom teachers will display greater authority than subject teachers since they know the students and parents better.

Elementary school teachers will display greater authority than secondary school teachers due to their students' younger age, which enables them to accept authority more readily than teenagers in high school.

Religious teachers will display greater authority than secular teachers since there are religious commandments pertaining to the authority of one's elders.

Veteran teachers will display greater authority than young teachers as a result of their experience and their established standing within their teaching subject.

2. Methodology

The method and why it was selected

In the frame of evaluation research, I used a quantitative method to examine the attitudes of male and female teachers about using their authority on their students.

In a quantitative study, the researchers have no control over the independent variable and thus cannot manipulate it. Quantitative studies stem from a theory, a data set that undergoes analysis and interpretation to see how it measures the research questions and assumptions (Friedman, 2013). This approach is better suited to the studied issue both for the researcher (time, skills and preferences) and for the scope of the study and the research questions.

Research tools

The tool used in this study was an independently constructed attitudes questionnaire. A questionnaire was deemed appropriate for this study as a tool that allows examination of numerous participants. In order to get the broadest possible picture of teacher authority within a certain time frame, one must examine as many teachers as possible and questionnaires help one do this. The questionnaire in this study contained 17 statements concerning teacher authority and how it is expressed in the postmodern era with a six-point Likert scale (I don't agree at all, I don't agree, I tend not to agree, I tend to agree, I agree, I very much agree). Respondents were also asked to give personal details related to age, gender, years of teaching, role, the level of the school in which they teach, and degree of religious observance (see Appendix A).

Table 1. Four categories of the questionnaire after Factor Analysis and reliability testing

Factor name	Relevant statements	Reliability
F1. Setting boundaries for students and parents	1-6	0.812
F2. Teachers' high self-confidence in their ability to cope	7-10	0.781
F3. Teachers' helplessness when trying to cope	11-13	0.852
F4. Sense of anxiety with students and parents	14-17	0.708

Participants

This quantitative study examined the opinions of male and female teachers who work in elementary and secondary schools from the secular and religious sectors, from the south of Israel and its central coastal plains; homeroom and subject teachers, novice and veteran teachers. Of the 108 participants, 77 were female teachers and 31 were male.

Table 2. Research population

Gender	Seniority (Years)	Role	School	Religious observance
Male: 31 Female: 77	1-3 4-7 8-15 Over 15	Homeroom teachers: 53 Subject teachers: 55	Elementary: 64 Secondary: 44	Secular: 33 Traditional: 13 Religious: 62

Data analysis method

In this study the findings were analyzed statistically. The statements were divided into four factors and their reliability was checked as shown in the chart below.

After the division, the factors underwent a T-test to compare the independent variables. The test checked whether it was possible to distinguish clearly between the categories and a number of group pairs: male and female teachers, homeroom and subject teachers, elementary and secondary teachers. An ANOVA test examined differences between groups that included more than one variable: degree of religious observance and teaching seniority. A Pearson test was also conducted to examine the correlations between the factors

3. Results

The findings were discovered through analyzing the questionnaires filled out by 108 male and female teachers (N = 108). These elementary and secondary school teachers were asked to express their opinions on teacher authority. Of the 108 respondents, 31 were male and 77 were female. About 50 % of the respondents had been teaching for up to 15 years while about 50 % had been teaching for more than 15 years seniority. Approximately half of the respondents (49.1 %) were homeroom teachers and approximately half (50.9 %) were subject teachers. More than half the teachers (50.9 %) teach in elementary schools and about 40 % teach in secondary schools. Over half the respondents defined themselves as religious (57.4 %), 12 % as traditional and about 30 % as secular.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of group averages: F1 and F2 – high teacher authority, F3 and F4 – low teacher authority

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
F1	4.1651	.87408	108
F2	4.2847	.98497	108
F3	2.0278	1.04928	108
F4	2.0972	.90806	108

Table 4. Pearson correlations between factors

		F1	F2	F3	F4
F1	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	108			
F2	Pearson Correlation	.325**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001			
	N	108	108		
F3	Pearson	-	-	1	

	Correlation	.367**	.455**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	108	108	108	
F4	Pearson Correlation	-.170	-	.568**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.000	.000	
	N	108	108	108	108

The correlation table above revealed five statistically significant correlations between the following pairs of variables:

1. statistically significant positive correlation was found between F1 – Setting boundaries for students and parents and F2 – Teachers’ high self-confidence in their ability to cope (rp = .325, p < 0.01). The higher the average for F1, the higher the average for F2.
2. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between F1 – Setting boundaries for students and parents and F3 – Teachers’ helplessness when trying to cope (rp = -.367, p < 0.01). The higher the average for F1, the lower the average for F3.
3. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between F2 – Teachers’ high self-confidence in their ability to cope and F3 – Teachers’ helplessness when trying to cope (rp = -.455, p < 0.01). The higher the average for F2, the lower the average for F3.
4. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between F2 – Teachers’ high self-confidence in their ability to cope and F4 – Sense of anxiety with students and parents (rp = -.330, p < 0.01). The higher the average for F2, the lower the average for F4.

Table 5. Gender differences in teacher authority

Gender	Males			Females			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
F1	31	4.2688	.62757	77	4.1234	.95605	.928	83	.356
F2	31	4.6855	.91508	77	4.1234	.97132	**2.837	59	.006
F3	31	1.8925	.82725	77	2.0823	1.12670	-.849	106	.398
F4	31	1.9516	.86221	77	2.1558	.92484	-1.058	106	.292

p<0.01

The t-test for independent samples deals with the differences between the two groups that are independent of each other.

A statistically significant difference was found between male and female teachers for the F2 factor average, namely, their high self-confidence in their ability to cope. The average among men was higher than among women, indicating that male teachers have greater self-confidence.

Table 6. Teacher authority according to school role

School role	Homeroom teacher			Subject teacher			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation			
F1	53	4.3428	.78543	55	3.9939	.92683	*2.106	106	.038
F2	53	4.6604	.87856	55	3.9227	.95242	**4.179	106	.000
F3	53	1.8994	.95538	55	2.1515	1.12732	-1.252	106	.213
F4	53	2.0236	.91102	55	2.1682	.90785	-.826	106	.411

p<0.01

Statistically significant differences were found in the F1 and F2 averages, namely, homeroom teachers have a clearer ability to set boundaries for parents and students as well as higher self-confidence in coping than do subject teachers.

Analysis of the factors among teachers working in elementary and secondary schools showed no statistically significant differences in the averages of the four factors.

Analysis of the factors among teachers according to years of teaching showed no statistically significant differences in the averages of the four factors for any of the seniority groupings.

Analysis of the factors among teachers according to degree of religious observance showed no statistically significant differences in the averages of the four factors for any of the degree of religious observance groupings.

4. Discussion

This study has shown that the level of authority among teachers in general is little more than mediocre. The study supports the literature, which indicates a gradual decline in teacher authority in education systems that has become more noticeable over the past decade and hence disrupts the quality assurance of educational procedures. This loss of authority is expressed in the deterioration of student discipline, teacher burnout, and an increase in critical parental intervention (Tobin, Lis, 2013). Teachers complain about difficulties with classroom management, the rise in discipline problems, the lack of coping tools and the sense that they are working in an organizational structure that does not offer them sufficient support and coping tools (Mayseless, 2005). Shermer (2004) reported on the feelings of teachers who complain about their ever-decreasing status in the eyes of parents. He claimed that this was not a total collapse of authority, but rather a gradual erosion of students' trust in their teachers.

Omer (2007) also indicated the ongoing deterioration of teacher authority and social standing, citing disrespectful treatment from the public and parents who tend to intervene in the teachers' work and weaken their authority. Teachers work within a system that has demands that are incompatible with their work hours, there is stress and lack of backup from the principals when they come into to conflict with parents or students. He also mentioned lack of discipline and complete disrespect from students and sometimes verbal and physical violence towards the teachers. The boundary between freedom of expression and its limits is becoming increasingly blurred and with it, the teachers' authority in the classroom. In order to rehabilitate teacher authority, the official authority given them through their teaching certificate is clearly insufficient. They must nurture their personal and professional authority which will lead to an inner discipline that doesn't stem from aggression, threats or intimidation.

The gender issue

The study's assumption, which stated that male teachers would show more authority than female teachers was partially validated. Analysis of the findings reveals a distinct difference between male and female teachers' ability to use their authority only in terms of their self-confidence. In accordance with the factors examined, the higher teachers' self-confidence, the more they could set boundaries for students and parents. The greater the teachers' self-confidence, the less anxiety they have when facing students or parents. The feelings of anxiety and helplessness reveal a significant decrease in teachers' ability to cope and use their authority. The low self-confidence among female teachers when coping with students and their parents might indicate gender inequality within the education system. Most of those employed in the education system in Israel are women (74 % according to the Central Bureau of (2019), and yet, management, supervisory positions and other high-paying jobs are held by men. The same is true of those heading public organizations (Herzog, 2010). The salary offered for teaching jobs is relatively low, there is little chance of promotion and the long hours relative to the low pay do not contribute to the self-confidence of the female teachers comprising the lower ranks (Keynan, 2013). Given these inferior conditions, the teaching profession has undergone overwhelming feminization. This process has influenced the social standing of teaching as a profession during the last few years and some people think that male teachers use teaching merely as a springboard (Avisar, Dvir, 2009).

One explanation for the difference found stems from the prevailing notion that men and women differ because of their gender and this difference is expressed in how they teach, their style and their influence on students (Aelterman, Sabbe 2007). Another explanation stems from the feminist perspective that female teachers in the classroom use their authority through their unique personal characteristics such as caring, concern and sensitivity (Goskov, 2016). In contrast, male teachers use male characteristics such as dominance, assertiveness, ambition, aggressiveness and competitiveness (Keynan, 2013).

The role issue

The findings show that homeroom teachers display more authority than subject teacher. This stems from the fact that homeroom teachers show higher rates of self-confidence when setting boundaries for both students and parents. This can be explained by the fact that homeroom teachers have a more constant presence in the lives of the students and their parents.

The Israeli Ministry of Education defines the homeroom teachers' job as being the main ones responsible for their students' wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 1994). Homeroom teachers play a meaningful part in the students' developmental process and aside from their job as homeroom teachers, they are also responsible for other areas such as a familiarity with students' personal lives, ongoing communication with students and their parents, connections between students and subject teachers, and being attentive to students' needs and development (Dor, 2014). Homeroom teachers are seen as managers of a microsystem burdened with several managerial tasks: making a year-long plan, organizing social and cultural activities, chairing pedagogical meetings, reporting to the principal, complying with Ministry of Education directives, being responsible for addressing discipline problems reported by subject teachers (Tzidkiyahu, 2008). In comparison, the subject teachers' job focuses on teaching their subject material and updating homeroom teachers on any pertinent information about the students (Dor, 2014). Homeroom teachers are more involved and play a more dominant role in the educational process. In the Israeli education system, homeroom teachers are expected to have a more personal relationship with their students and their parents. They know them better than any subject teacher who meets them for a few hours a week (Eilam, 2008). Consequently, the difference between homeroom teachers and subject teachers can explain the homeroom teachers' place at school in relation to the students and their parents as the one being better able to use authority.

The issue of seniority

The findings show that the number of years of teaching has no influence on the level of teacher authority. Even though it would make sense to think that veteran teachers would have more authority, analysis of the findings shows that there is no correlation between the number of years of teaching and the ability to display authority with students and parents. Keynan (1996), who conducted research on staff rooms, described a hierarchical culture within the teachers' professional culture. Every teacher has his or her own social standing, consisting of external criteria such as education, discipline, seniority and social status within the school and in the staff room in particular. One of the interesting findings in the study is that seniority sets one's status, but it is not necessarily true that veteran teachers hold higher social status among their fellow teachers. Veteran teachers who do not get any promotion or more meaningful responsibility in addition to teaching have failed at their job. Since that is the case, seniority does not grant teachers an advantage when it comes to using their authority in class or with parents. Other studies even suggest that one of the reasons that teachers quit is the exhaustion from coping with discipline issues and their helplessness when confronting them. To a large extent, quitting also occurs among veteran teachers, who have been worn down by having to struggle for years and time hasn't necessarily given them an advantage in their ability to use their authority (Yariv, 2010).

The issue of religious observance

When analyzing the findings concerning different levels of religious observance, no difference was discovered in terms of levels of authority or the ability to cope with difficulties that demand authority with students or parents, between teachers with differing degrees of religious observance. Seemingly, a religious way of life is more totalitarian and establishes clearly defined behavioral guidelines for the individual. Within religious society, educators are granted authority based on their knowledge, specifically in the Torah, displaying exemplary personal behavior and having strong study skills are a good enough and necessary basis for educators. When authority, respect and power are given to a person by society, any disrespectful treatment is an insult to all of society (Shermer, 2004). The research literature suggests several reasons for the gradual erosion in teacher authority in the education system, regardless of the degree of religious observance of the teacher or the school. Overcrowded classrooms, the weakening of the social standing of teachers, a curriculum that neither interests nor challenges the students – all of these weaken a teachers' social standing regardless of their degree of religious observance. Another explanation attributes the trend of declining authority to Israeli culture in general, based on the general acceptance of impertinent behavior (*chutzpah*) as a national trait (Tobin, Lis, 2013).

The main research imitation lies in the research population, which consisted of 31 male teachers and 77 female teachers. The difficulty in finding male teachers derives from the fact that most teachers are, indeed, women. Given the fact that the review of the literature shows that most teachers are female, I would recommend examining a broader scope of schools across more areas in order to reach an equal number of male and female participants. Research data of this kind will constitute a stronger foundation for the conclusions one might draw as the source of differences in wielding authority among male and female teachers. Another direction that could be examined is that of ethnic differences. The review reveals the insight that authority is a concept that can change from one culture to another. One might examine how culture affects the use of authority and explore such differences in Jewish and Arab cultures.

5. Conclusion

Given the findings of this study, as an evaluator, I propose that the issue of setting boundaries in education should be introduced as obligatory and system-wide, and not something left up to the individual teacher. When boundaries are defined, there is order and each side in the educational setting knows their place, understands what is expected of them, and what they are aspiring to achieve. This gives everyone a sense of safety, understanding and protection. The education system must demarcate the boundaries of key concepts in education, encourage and cultivate quality education that is not based merely on obedience, threats and fear that certainly cannot create truly respectful any sustainable boundaries. Only these actions can improve the quality assurance in educational institutes.

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Appendix 1

This is a research questionnaire. Your participation in the research is very important and so I will be most appreciative of your cooperation.

Age: _____

Please circle: **Gender:** M / F **Years of teaching:** 1-3 / 4-7 / 8-15 / over 15

Role: Homeroom teacher / Subject teacher **School:** Elementary / Secondary

Religious observance: Religious / Traditional / Secular. **Circle your choice:**

Table 1. Attitudes questionnaire

		<i>Do not agree at all</i>	<i>Do not agree</i>	<i>Tend not to agree</i>	<i>Tend to agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Very much agree</i>
1.	A student who disrupts/objects/is rude knows I will use a deterrent and punishment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Students know the drill! Anyone who interrupts will leave the lesson and face the consequences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	A parent who intervenes in my work will be called to order.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	When a student is disruptive I put him/her in their place.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	In my lessons, students are always attentive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	When I feel a parent is interfering with my job, I set boundaries.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Whatever discipline problems there are, I can handle them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	I am confident that I can handle a student who disrupts the lesson.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	I have all the tools that help me deal with discipline problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	When there are discipline problems that disrupt the delivery of the lesson, I do not call for the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11.	I have difficulty finding a way to deal with violations of discipline.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12.	There is nothing I can do when children interrupt and don't listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13.	When students disturb the lesson I give up.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14.	I answer parents who call me at any hour, because I don't want any trouble with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.	I cannot manage the lesson when students disturb me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.	I become anxious when a student opposes me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.	I feel I am losing control when students don't listen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6