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THE MICROPOLITICS OF RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF A LEBANESE PRIVATE SCHOOL

by
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After more than ten years of work experience in education, I have decided to pursue a graduate degree in Administration and Policy Studies at the American University of Beirut in order to be part of a rich academic environment where I can work closely with faculty and colleagues in the field. My main goal was to engage in research that helps me ground my practical work and experience especially in educational change in a theoretical framework that could open further opportunities for research and add to the conversation of educational reform in Lebanon. This journey would not have been successful without the continuous support of AUB faculty and the case study school community.

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ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS OF

Rabih Bechara Murr   for   Master of Arts
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Title: The Micropolitics of Resistance to Educational Change: A Case Study of a Lebanese Private School.

Recently, studies on the micropolitical behaviors of principals, teachers, and middle managers during change processes in schools have been increasing (Blase, 2005). These studies have emerged vis-à-visa a staggering emergence of educational change initiatives, which have made their way into the Lebanese public and private education sector. Change in educational institutions is already met by numerous challenges (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005) especially that change is accompanied by a disruption of the status quo and traditions (Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2015), which intensifies political interaction and generates micropolitical structures and power dynamics that can either work to support or hinder the change process (Björk & Blase, 2009). As the role of principals becomes paramount during the process of change, Oplatka (2004) asserts that there is no universal theory in educational administration that can be applied and is effective in all contexts especially when transferring from an Anglo-American context to developing countries. Thus, the need to study principalship within the specific and unique social context of a country (Oplatka, 2004). Furthermore, in order to contextually understand challenges pertaining to school-wide educational change, scholars of micropolitics of educational change assert the importance of understanding the micropolitical landscape of schools during the process of change, and the micropolitical behaviors and strategies used during the process. The purpose of the study is to investigate and understand the behaviors of teachers and principals during the process of school change through the lens of micropolitics. The study also aims to develop a grounded, context-based understanding of the factors that hinder and facilitate the process of change and highlight how principals can positively use micropolitics to manage resistance, enhance collaboration, strengthen the school community and seek opportunities for change and growth. Thus, the study is placed within the context of Lebanese schools through a qualitative case study of a Lebanese private school that has and is still undergoing major change. The study followed a constructivist grounded theory methodology based on Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach. Focus groups and individual interviews were used to collect data. The case study results and discussion underscores the importance of achieving educational change through transforming the school toward continuous renewal rooted in its unique identity by effecting a bottom-up approach to change. This is important especially in a school context with a long history and an organizational culture deeply rooted in tradition. The study showed that the principal adopted non-conflictive strategies to avoid challenging deeply rooted norms and triggering resistance, while she mobilized support for the change among pro-change individuals and built a leadership team

supportive of the change initiative. A key strategy that emerged from the study is the school leadership's differentiated approach in managing groups of teachers, mainly those who were pro-change and those who were still against change. The study also identified several strategies based on "power with" dynamics that the school followed, which played a major role in the success of the planning and implementation of the school-wide change. The strategies aimed at creating a participatory approach to leadership and create opportunities for all faculty and staff to take part in decision-making. The actions also aimed at building strong communication channels between the leadership and faculty and ensure continuous support during the whole change process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recently, studies on the micropolitical behaviors of principals, teachers, and middle managers during change processes in schools have been increasing (Blase, 2005). These studies have emerged vis-à-visa a staggering emergence of educational change initiatives. The initiatives for change have made their way into the Lebanese public and private education sector. Concurrently, recent studies have identified the dominant characteristics of leadership within Lebanese public and private schools, which mostly include authoritative approaches where school principals carry very limited responsibilities as the agent for school change (Karami Akkary, 2014). A review of the literature on school change shows that such a context is prone to exacerbate the challenges of change initiatives especially that change in Lebanon is being done amidst a current system of national education that carries among its structure outdated policies and processes and stagnation in terms of sustainable development. To contextually understand those challenges, scholars of the micropolitics of educational change assert the importance of understanding the micropolitical landscape of schools during the process of change, and the micropolitical behaviors and strategies used during the process. However, there is almost an absence of research in the context of Lebanese schools that looks into the micropolitics of educational change. Furthermore, even the existing international explorations of educational leadership from a political/micropolitical perspective in education have mostly emphasized a conflictive 'dark side' politics used to manipulate and achieve personal interest. Scholars call for studies that explore the 'positive' side of the politics of educational leadership to

promote collaborative approaches to achieve certain valued goals (Blase, 1991, as cited in Klechtermans & Ballet, 2002; Ryan, 2010). Hence, this study aims to use the micropolitics lens to investigate and understand the behaviors of teachers and principals during the process of school change. The study aims to identify factors that hinder and facilitate the process of change and highlight how principals can positively use micropolitics to manage resistance, enhance collaboration, strengthen the school community and continuously seek opportunities for change and growth. The study is placed within the context of Lebanese schools through a case study of a Lebanese private school that has and is still undergoing major change. The school, which is more than 100 years old, was found appropriate for this study because it went through a long period of stagnation in terms of change and development during the civil war and post-war period. In 2010, it became the subject of an extensive school-wide change initiative and completed its first phase in 2016, and is now implementing its second strategic plan under the second phase of this school-wide change initiative.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

The topic of educational change has become ubiquitous and its prominence is in the top or near the top priorities of many national agendas (Hargreaves, 2005, p.7). Hargreaves (2005) described the amount and extent of change that schools are facing as "staggering" (p.7). The call for school development and change has appeared in the Lebanese public education sector since the end of the civil war. One of its emerging foci was a move toward decentralization of leadership for school development. Under the title of "Modernization of School Management" an initiative for "organization and development of school management" was launched by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education

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(MEHE) that aims at modernizing public schools (MEHE, 2011). The initiative is based on training the administrative staff and formulating procedures that give additional authority to school principals to develop the school through planning and development that stem from their leadership skills and participation of all school stakeholders. Based on the 2011 report of MEHE, the new regulations will "bestow the school principal more freedom for initiative-taking and decision-making" (MEHE, 2011, p.26). Thus, this initiative intends at giving Lebanese school principals prerogatives to adopt leadership approaches to advance and change their schools.

Lebanese private education sector accounts for more than 50 percent of Lebanese students (Najjar, 2008). According to the 2017-2018 statistics bulletin published by the Lebanese Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), 65 percent of students in Lebanon attend private schools (https://www.crdp.org/statistics, 2019). Change in the Lebanese private education sector is also prevalent. The high enrollment rate in the private education sector has made it very competitive and schools started to pursue change and improvement in a race toward innovation and uniqueness (Yehya Chaar, Khamis & Karami Akkary, 2016).

However, in Lebanon, large scale attempts at school change are being done in both the private and public sector amidst a current system of national education that still carries within its structure and policies the influence of the Ottoman Empire's laws and maintains a structure of governance introduced by decrees dating back to the 1959–1964 period (El-Amine, 1994 as cited in Karami Akkary, 2014). Furthermore, no attempts for major restructuring have taken place since the current Lebanese state was established in 1941, and while private schools enjoy some limited governance and freedom public schools remain

tightly managed, controlled, and financed by the government (Karami Akkary, 2014). As for the private schools, the majority of the schools in Lebanon are affiliated to or owned by religious institutions (Karami Akkary, 2014), with long-standing systems and traditions.

Furthermore, if we look at the role and work context of school principals in Lebanon, a study conducted by Karami Akkary (2014) in public and private schools, shows that principals, among other roles and characteristics, (1) "assume limited responsibilities as the agent for school change" and (2) "adopt an authoritarian orientation in enacting the role" (Karami Akkary, 2014, p. 718). Such characteristics can create a context that is less conducive to change and heightens the challenges of implementing educational change initiatives. For one, school principals most likely lack the capacity to drive and maintain the change process, given that, so far, they have assumed limited responsibility in that regard. Two, as the literature review will reveal, authoritarian views and top-down approaches to leading school change could be a major hindrance to the change process (Bishop & Mulford, 1999; Caruso, 2013; LeChasseur et al., 2016; Zhang & Henderson, 2018).

The imperative consideration of context in the study of principalship was strongly argued by Oplatka (2004) in his review of twenty-seven papers published in refereed journals that investigated and highlighted the characteristics of principalship in developing countries. Oplatka (2004) concludes that the differences between principalship in developed and developing countries and the similarities found among principals in developing countries are largely the result of the "cultural, national and sociological contexts underpinning education in any nation" (p. 428). Hence the tremendous influence that the cultural context has on the principal's attitude, behavior, and approach to leadership.

Oplatka (2004) delineated common features among most principals in developing countries that emerged from data collected on external influences, leadership style, and role of principals. The review of the studies revealed common features that principals in developing countries shared.

1. Limited autonomy: Principals have limited power within their schools as a result of highly centralized systems. In many of the countries mentioned in the studies, the government is directly responsible for many functions within the schools and educational system like appointing teachers, allocating budgets, choosing and developing curricula, and leave principals with very limited functions to do within their schools that mostly fall under the managerial aspect. In addition, nepotism plays a key role in the appointment of new principals.

2. Lack of instructional leadership functions: The limited role given to principals in developing countries leaves them doing tasks like maintaining discipline, ordering materials, and other mundane managerial functions rather than delving into instruction and curriculum-related matters, as opposed to principals in developed countries where instructional supervision is a main function expected from them.

3. Low degree of change initiation: While a major function of principalship in developed countries during the 1990s was initiation of change, principals in developing countries were found to be more conservative and seek stability rather than causing any disruption or change.

4. Autocratic leadership style: The papers reviewed revealed that an autocratic leadership style was prevalent in most developing countries. This autocratic style varied from very strict "army-like" control to some participative approaches that

were more contrived than authentic, which means that a lot of control was still present although teachers were encouraged to collaborate and initiate. In several of those countries, like Singapore, characteristics of stubbornness, assertiveness, competitiveness, and authoritativeness were considered as attributes of an effective principal.

5. Dependence on summative evaluation: Principals in developing countries were found to rely mostly on summative evaluation for their faculty and do not give importance to formative growth-oriented approaches. Holding teachers accountable for results was also highly evident.

Oplatka (2004) draws a main implication from his review, which will serve as a premise for the rationale of this study. He concludes that there is no universal theory in education administration that can be applied and is effective in all contexts especially when transferring from an Anglo-American context to developing countries especially amidst the difference in principalship profile and practices between those countries as delineated above. According to him, we need to study principalship as "an organizational function that is generated and applied within the specific and unique social context of a country" (Oplatka, 2004, p.442), hence the need for "strongly contextually bound" (p.137) conceptualizations of principalship. Oplatka (2004) gave the following example. He argued that while notions of effective principalship in the US emphasize concepts like shared and participative leadership, the question to be asked is how effective are these elements in a context that for decades has been dominated by a top-down authoritarian conceptualization of leadership.

Additionally, the noted contextual contingencies in Oplatka's (2004) study point at the differences across contexts of the power dynamics. For example, the predominant authoritarian approach to leadership in the Lebanese public and private schools, which was identified by Karami Akkary (2014), is prone to intensify the micropolitical power dynamics within the school and heighten the already complex nature of change. This in turn might call for specific approaches and strategies conducive to change in this context.

Change in educational institutions is already met by numerous challenges (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005) especially that change is accompanied by a disruption of the status quo and traditions (Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2015), which intensifies political interaction and generates and accentuates new micropolitical structures and power dynamics that can either work to support or hinder the change process (Björk & Blase, 2009). Oplatka (2004) emphasizes power dynamics as a major difference across contexts that researchers should take into consideration while studying principalship. Blase (2005) asserts that school principals work in political organizations where power is an organizing feature. In light of this complexity, researchers have been calling for a solid understanding of the workings of micropolitics to help school principals navigate the power dynamics of their institutions. Especially that change requires an understanding of "how things really work, not how an organizational chart or a principal's action plan would like them to work" (Flessa, 2009, p.331).

However, the micropolitical dimension of schools has been mostly ignored in educational research (Blase, 2005). Even though there are studies that deal with power and leadership at the school level, few describe the dynamics of these micropolitical relationships (Malen & Cochran 2008, as cited in Ryan, 2010). Furthermore, explorations

of educational leadership from a political/micropolitical perspective in education have mostly emphasized a conflictive "dark side" politics used to manipulate and achieve personal interest. Studies that explore the 'positive' side of the politics of educational leadership, where power and influence "do not only refer to tension, conflict, struggle, and rivalry but also encompass collaboration or coalition-building to achieve certain valued goals" (Blase, 1991, as cited in Klechtermans & Ballet, 2002, p.107), are rare and required (Ryan,2010). There is also an obvious gap in studies conducted in the Arab world and Lebanon that take micropolitics as a central lens. Although studies related to micropolitics in education have increased (Blase, 2005; Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2015), it seems to be still largely absent in the Lebanese context. A search conducted on Shamaa (http://www.shamaa.org), the biggest database for education research conducted in the Arab world showed that no studies were conducted that include the terms micropolitics, power struggle, or politics. A study conducted by El Amine (2013) on the situation of education research in the Arab world that was heavily based on data collected from the "Shamaa" database revealed that 72.8 percent of studies conducted are related to teaching and learning and mostly focus on pedagogy. Studies related to policies formed 0.6 percent and to working conditions of teachers formed 0.9 percent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate and understand the behaviors of teachers and principals during the process of school change through the micropolitics lens. It aims to identify factors that hinder and facilitate the process of change and highlight how principals can positively use micropolitics to manage resistance, enhance collaboration, strengthen the school community and seek opportunities for change and growth. The study also aims to

develop a grounded, context-based understanding that reflects principals' and teachers'
perspectives on school change and resistance. Thus, the study is placed within the context
of Lebanese schools through a qualitative case study of a Lebanese private school that has
and is still undergoing major change.

Research Questions

The study will attempt to answer the following questions from the teachers and
principal's perspectives:

1. What are the factors that impede the change process at the school level?

2. What are the factors that support and enhance the change process at the school
   level?

3. What is the political landscape of the school including the formal and informal
   power dynamics involved, and how do teachers resist change using their formal
   and informal power?

4. What strategies do school leaders use to manage the power dynamics at the
   school towards limiting resistance and promoting the intended change?

Significance

This study aims to be of significance to research by attending to the gap in studies
that focus on the positive aspect of micropolitics and the lack of studies in Lebanon and the
Arab region with respect to educational research that adopts the micropolitics perspective
as its main framework. It also aims to be of significance to practice by providing a
grounded, context-based understanding that reflects principals' and teachers' perspectives
to school change and resistance in the Lebanese context, which could inform both in-
service and pre-service programs aimed at preparing school leaders

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Significance to Research

This study aims to build on previous research to promote the understanding of the change process by focusing further on the positive aspect of micropolitics and how its understanding can be used to drive positive change. The study also aims to fill the gap found in Lebanon and the Arab region with respect to research that takes micropolitics in schools as a theoretical lens to frame the research. As recommended by educational administration scholars, the study responds to the urgent need to learn about leadership across national and cultural boundaries. Given that the field of education leadership has been mostly "dominated by Anglo- American paradigms", Oplatka (2004) argues that studying principalship in developing countries "may re-explore and challenge the epistemology and methodology of existing theories and concepts in educational leadership and administration" (p.429). Which in turn will offer policymakers a better understanding of leadership in developing countries, especially within their cultural and social context.

Significance to Practice

By examining micropolitics in schools, the study will aid in understanding the discrepancy between policy and the reality of implementation, the "implementation gap" (Björk & Blase, 2009), and the interpersonal and intergroup interactions that take place in schools (Chen, 2009). With that, it promises to identify and understand how school principals can use micropolitics, especially positive micropolitics, to drive change within their schools as a strategy to manage resistance to change. The findings of the study might help schools and policy makers within the Lebanese context account for the micropolitical factors in schools that might hinder change initiatives at their schools. It can also inform both in-service and pre-service programs aimed at preparing school leaders.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature to provide a discussion of the notion of micropolitics and the imperativeness of using a micropolitical perspective in understanding educational change and reform and attending to its challenges while drawing from major scholars who wrote about micropolitics like Blase and Ball. The chapter also discusses major findings from empirical studies conducted to understand the complex dynamics between principals and teachers and the micropolitical behaviors that arise as power is exercised. It also highlights the major challenges encountered during a school-wide change process. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the conceptual understanding guiding the design and implementation of the study**.**

Challenges of Educational Change

The topic of education change has become ubiquitous, and its prominence is in the top or near the top priorities of many national agendas (Hargreaves, 2005, p.7). Hargreaves (2005) described the amount and extent of change that schools are facing as "staggering" (p.7). Educational change could encompass different and several aspects of the school including policies, organizational structures, curriculum, teaching methods, classroom setting, integrating new technologies or programs, etc. It is a process that could be large-scale and mandated by national initiatives and policies, or school-based that stems mainly from the school's own initiative to change (Hargreaves, 2005).

Change, especially in educational organizations, is easier said than done and is faced with numerous challenges (Fink & Stoll, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005). Fullan (2007)

described change in schools as paradoxical and accompanied by inevitable messiness. He

compares the knowledge base about change to rocket science, "not least because it is

inundated with complex, unclear, and often contradictory advice" (Fullan 2007, p. 31). Star

(2011) highlighted particular characteristics of schools that make change more difficult

than other organizations. According to Star (2011), factors that work to mitigate major

change in schools include the complexity of school structures and systems, the large

number of stakeholders holding competing interests and ideologies, political intervention

and change in policies, an increasingly diverse student body, and the usual everyday busy

unexpected messy organizational environments of schools. Fullan (2007) asserts the

difficulty of change in schools by arguing that a "quick-fix orientation" will not work with

such a complex culture and describes organizational change as "non-teleological, pervasive,

and value laden" (p.35). This is mainly because it often advances the position of certain

groups at the expense of the relative status of others. A major aspect of school change

involves the disruption of routines and the status quo, whether through, incidents, actions,

or persons. It entails a "(re-) distribution of resources, rewards, benefits, power and

working conditions" (Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2015, p.136). Such changes in the social-

professional dynamics in schools could interfere with what school members see as

desirable and of interest and work to resist it. Working conditions then function as

professional interests, which instigate behaviors and actions "to establish, safeguard or

restore the desirable working conditions" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 117). Change

dynamics such as ambiguity, uncertainty, diversity, and discrepancy in goals explain the

intensity of political interactions in a school, which induce the emergence of new

micropolitical processes and structures that become in the course of change increasingly

visible and are often the reason for the intensified resistance to change (Björk & Blase, 2009). Beaty (2014) argues that within the process of improving teaching and learning, teachers, principals, and leaders engage in "symbolic rituals" (p.11) and negotiations that can support or fail to support the achievement of the intended goals of change, namely student learning. Such behaviors and actions fall within the domain of micropolitics.

Resistance is central within the micropolitics dynamics of any educational institution undergoing change. It is also identified among the paramount challenges that proved to be the main reason behind the failure of many change initiatives. What does resistance in organizations mean and how do different stakeholders perceive it?

Resistance and Organizational Change

There is no one common definition of resistance in the context of organizational change. However, a common attribute is that resistance is manifested through behaviors and actions that impede the change process.

Referring to different definitions of resistance since the early nineties, Star (2011) accentuates a major shift in how resistance is perceived. Star (2011) cites several scholars who described resistance as behaviors and events demonstrated by agents with the desire to challenge or oppose initiatives taken by others while disrupting existing power relations (Star, 2011). It is a dominant perception of teacher resistance that views resistance as an act of conservatism that stems from the teacher's "flawed personality" (Achinstein et al., 2006, p.52); this perception was challenged by Achinstein et al. (2006).

Many studies have shifted the perception from this archetypal portrayal of a change-agent leader opposed by flawed resisting teachers. The arguments commence by acknowledging that it is human nature to resist change and this nature resides in the

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teachers and leaders as well. Especially if the people responsible to implement and live the

change did not take part in the process of deciding and creating it (Starr, 2011). Ford (2008)

argues that the teachers' reactions as the recipients of change, are not dysfunctional

hindrances to change, but are potential assets that can support and strengthen the change

process. According to ford (2010), the shift in perception of resistance should start from the

principal who should look at resistance as a resource and not a hindrance.

Moreover, the literature highlights that the main problem with the archetypal

perception of resistance is that it deals with it as a one-sided phenomenon. As if resistant

behaviors are only demonstrated by those people who are asked to make the change and

problems will be magically resolved if only they change their behavior. However, many

researchers point out that resistance is a two-sided phenomenon and is dependent as much

on the behavior of change managers themselves. Ford (2010) argues that instead of blaming

teachers' resistance for the failure of change, managers should change their perceptions and

view it as an asset rather than a liability. One example given by Ford (2010) is to view

resistance as feedback that can feed into improving the plans for change and listen to new

opportunities that those resisting behaviors can provide for change to be successful. The

gist in this shift to redefine resistance is that "resistance is more in the eye of the beholder"

than an objective description by an unbiased observer. Ford (2010) argues that what is

considered resistance to some may not be to others.

Another important dimension to this new understanding of resistance is that people

who are thought of as resistors might not see their own behavior as such. Two cases

highlighted in Achinstein et al. (2006) reveal that several actions of resistance by teachers

stemmed from their genuine professional principles and not from "psychological deficits"

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or simply refusing to change. The authors referred to it as "principled resistance". The change that teachers were asked to do did not coincide with their understanding and beliefs of good teaching practices and their own sense of professionalism. According to Ford (2010), many of those labeled as resistors believe that their behavior is "supportive of the organization objective and values" (Ford, 2010, p.25).

Micropolitics in School

Studies on the micropolitics of education and educational change have been largely based on Blase's (1991) definition and notion of micropolitics (Blasé and Bjork 2009). Blase (1991) advanced a comprehensive definition of micropolitics from the existing literature:

> Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by
>
> individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part
>
> political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and
>
> groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or
>
> protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action,
>
> consciously or unconsciously motivated, may have political "significance"
>
> in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and
>
> processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. (as cited in Blase 2005, p.
>
> 265)

According to Starr (2011), micropolitical structures and activities involve both convergent (collaborative) and divergent (conflictive) processes, "with resistance encapsulating the latter" (Starr, 2011, p. 647). Micropolitics theories do not assume that all individuals make decisions based on what will advance organizational or policy goals, they recognize that

self-interest might be a motivation for behavior within an organization and that not all behavior is motivated by the pursuit of achieving collective goals (Jakobi, 2015). From a micropolitics lens, power can be exercised formally through positions of authority or informally for example through mobilization of bias or preventing certain issues from surfacing. This formal and informal power is used by individuals and groups to achieve their goals within an organization. The study of micropolitics in schools aids in understanding these dynamics and consequently the discrepancy between policy and the reality of implementation, the "implementation gap" (Björk & Blase, 2009), as well as the interpersonal and intergroup interactions that take place in schools (Chen, 2009). According to Davis (1994), studying micropolitics makes the schools real (as cited in Chen, 2009).

According to Blase and Bjork (2009), their review of studies of micropolitics revealed an abundant presence of micropolitics in different aspects of schools. Even teacher-student relationships and classroom interactions were found by studies to be essentially political. Thus, the study of micropolitics involves the ability to understand the organizational landscape of schools with its various roles, power structure, interests, and norms, and provides an understanding of schools as places "where conflict, competition, cooperation, compromise, and co-optation coexist" (LeChasseur, Mayer, Welton, & Donaldson, 2016, p.257).

Sarason (1990) delineates major factors that work against change initiatives that mainly reside in the strength of the status quo. These include "its pattern of power relationships, its sense of tradition and, therefore, what seems right, natural, and proper" (p. 35); all these almost inevitably mitigate drivers for change in that status quo. Sarason

(1990) also argues that schools are complex social systems, and education reform, therefore, must address the power struggles that occur within schools.

Studies on the Micropolitics of Educational Change

This section presents a review of studies that have generated findings on the micropolitics of educational change and reform. The studies are Bishop and Mulford (1999), Caruso (2013), LeChasseur et al. (2016), and Zhang and Henderson (2018). As discussed in the previous section, studies on the micropolitics of educational change have been largely based on Blase's (1991) definition and notions of micropolitics. Blase and Blase (2002) work highlighted the prevalence of micropolitics in schools as a critical aspect of the organizational structure and processes. They noted that micropolitical processes can be formal and informal and can "dramatically influence most school outcomes, including teaching and learning" (Blasé & Bjork 2009). This section will focus on four empirical studies with a discussion of the research methods used by the researchers and major findings that were consistent across the four studies. These findings were deemed critical as they informed the initial conceptual understanding framing this study.

Based on the review of the limited available studies pertaining to the micropolitics of educational change a qualitative case study approach to research was predominantly adopted across all of the studies. A qualitative case study approach appeared to be the most conducive to generate a deep contextual understanding of the workings of micropolitics. The studies also ascertain the centrality of the role of school principals as key players in navigating and mitigating the micropolitical dynamics that an educational change initiative entails and in having the capacity to facilitate and support as well as mitigate and inhibit educational change. Another major finding relates to the strategies used by principals to

manage resistance. Principals across the studies used varied strategies that could be divided

into two main categories from a micropolitics lens - conflictive strategies and cooperative

strategies. Each of these findings will be henceforth elaborated.

Research Methods Used

      All four studies followed a qualitative case study approach (Bishop & Mulford,

1999; Caruso, 2013; LeChasseur et al., 2016; Zhang & Henderson, 2018). Zhang and

Henderson (2018) argued that the qualitative approach enabled them to achieve a deeper

understanding of the issue at hand especially a complex one involving a micropolitical

dimension. The approach enabled the researchers to inquire into the strategies that

principals employ when they cooperate or are in conflict with teacher leaders. Bishop and

Mulford (1999) used an interpretative multiple-case study to investigate strategies used by

principals and teachers and the implications on trust when heightened strategies of

resistance are activated. Caruso (2013) used a qualitative approach with a one full year

examination of the perceptions and lived experiences of school principals navigating the

micropolitical landscapes of their schools to achieve a holistic educational change. Caruso

(2013) used three data collection methods based on in-depth interviews, direct

observations, and documents. LeChasseur et al.'s (2016) study used a qualitative research

method and a case study of one initiative that was implemented at six different schools over

a period of three years. LeChasseur et al. (2016) argue that using the qualitative design in

their study enabled the researchers to identify the factors in each of the six different

contexts that affected the implementation of the change initiative and allowed them to

investigate the "contextualized nature of micropolitics" (LeChasseur et al., 2016, p.258).

The Imperative Role of the Principal

The imperative role of the school principal in leading and managing educational change emerged as central in all the studies. Researchers contend that this centrality emerges from the fact that educational change has a direct impact on the principals by heightening the intensity of their work and compelling them to acquire new skills to manage the change process (Zhang & Henderson, 2018). Reform initiatives often tend to encourage schools to become self-managing and grant principals autonomy, additional responsibility, and accountability in driving the change (Bishop & Mulford, 1999). Therefore, the role of the principal becomes critical in generating strategies for negotiating the macro- and micropolitics, managing resistance, and uniting all stakeholders and organizational structures together "to create a union focused on educational change" (Caruso, 2013, p.219), making their contribution crucial to the success of a change initiative.

Thus, understanding the phenomenon of change requires an understanding of "how things really work, not how an organizational chart or a principal's action plan would like them to work" (Flessa, 2009, p.331). Scholars agree that this understanding is situated in the understanding of the inner workings of micropolitics in which principals engage (Flessa, 2009). In the "Micropolitics of Education Change", Blase (2005) strongly argues that school principals are functioning in political organizations where power is an organizing feature. If principals ignore relationships of power and do not examine their basis, any endeavor of change or reform will be defeated by the system and the status quo. Blase (2005) goes on to explain that this defeat is not due to some conspiracy or teachers being obstinate to resist change, unimaginative or uncreative because they are not. It is

mainly because trying to change power relations and working conditions, especially in traditional and complex institutions is "among the most complex tasks human beings can undertake" (Blase, 2005, p.264). Examining the role of the principal during educational change through a micropolitical lens reveals that the demands of educational change require principals to develop new skills that will enable them to advance school-based change and improvement.

In addition, researchers advance that the principals' role in leading change needs to account for the complex and situated nature of change, especially in placing its demands within the socio-cultural context of their institutions, and the varied forms and basis of opposition and resistance. As such, they need to use micropolitical strategies to assist them in leading this complex process (Jakobi, 2015), and create a collaborative and cooperative culture that embraces change. Therefore, building a thorough understanding of the working of micropolitics in schools especially during the process of change, may provide principals with "strategies to solve difficult situations where conventional strategies don't work" (Jakobi, 2015, p.45).

Strategies Used by the Principals in the Context of Resistance. The studies revealed that most of the strategies used by principals revolve around managing the power dynamics in the school and fall under either collaborative or conflictive strategies. Conflictive strategies aim at enforcing change through authoritarian and closed approaches that deny teachers voice and choice in the change process. Although such approaches succeeded to certain extents in implementing the required change, they did so at the expense of teacher motivation, promoting a collaborative working environment and sustainability of change. On the other hand, collaborative strategies used in managing the

micropolitical dynamics in the context of change are manifested when principals used their understanding of their micropolitical landscape to enhance collaboration among leaders and teachers, invite teachers to be decision-makers and voice their concerns, and achieve change based on common directions and with by-in from all school stakeholders (LeChasseur et al., 2016; Zhang & Henderson, 2018; Bennett, 1999).

Conflictive Strategies Highlighted in the Four Studies. Conflictive approaches tend to focus on forcing teachers to implement the change. These include adopting an authoritarian and dominant approach to leadership where teachers are expected to implement the change without questioning, manipulating teachers and staff members to achieve hidden agendas, controlling all aspects of the change process solely by the senior leadership, reinforcing closed channels of communication, and not taking teachers' concerns, opinions or motivation into consideration.

The first example of a conflictive approach that principals in Zhang and Henderson (2018) adopted was enforcement. Principals exhibited strong control over leadership when difference in opinion with teacher leaders emerged. Zhang and Henderson (2018) noted that the level of conflict was more evident in practice than it was communicated by the study participants. Zhang and Henderson (2018) attribute the top-down enforcement approach used by principals to the influence that Confucian culture has in the Chinese context which justifies the residence of power with the principals "as arbiters of authority in schools" and teachers strongly believe that they should "obey their principals" (Zhang & Henderson, 2018, p.620).

Manipulation of staff by the principal to achieve a hidden preset agenda and lack of clear transparent communication were other conflictive strategies identified in Bishop and

Mulford (1999). Their study revealed that a number of teachers voiced their doubt about the principal acting in the best interest of teachers and considered them working in the interest of the higher authorities. Teachers conveyed that even when their opinion is sought on a certain matter, they feel that the decision is already predetermined by a hidden agenda that is never communicated to them and their opinion will not change anything (Bishop & Mulford, 1999).

Principals forging strong alliances with superiors to seek endorsement for the use of conflictive approaches over teachers was another strategy that Principals in Caruso's study used to control resistance. Principals in Caruso (2013) demonstrated the ability to "navigate their micropolitical landscapes" by identifying people with power among their peers or superiors and forging close alliances and connections that will protect them when using closed and conflict-based approaches like enforcing mandates on teachers.

Principals also used an approach of strict control that permitted them to enforce their authority and rely on vertical coordination, authoritative, and autocratic approaches to implement district initiatives and guarantee the accomplishment of tasks. One principal's ability to control his micropolitical landscape through his leadership style was perceived by his staff as showing them "he was in charge and "this was how it was going to be" (p.238).

Despite the success of a number of principals to suppress resistance and compel teachers to complete tasks, using conflictive strategies and approaches was found to isolate staff and faculty from vital communication networks and discouraged personal relationships. This leads to the erosion of trust and loss of teacher motivation (Caruso, 2013). As a reaction, teachers refrained from voicing concerns and worked to elude hierarchical control and maintain autonomy within their classrooms (Caruso, 2013).

Principals in Caruso's (2013) study succeeded in building strong alliances and networks that enabled them to enforce their authority and control resistance, albeit at the expense of the quality of teacher motivation and contribution to the change process. Something that scholars believe threatens the effectiveness and sustainability of the change initiative.

Interestingly, resorting to the conflictive approaches in the studies was mostly heightened in moments of disagreement in the perspectives between teachers and principals. In Bishop and Mulford (1999) for example, teachers said that trust between them and the principal was fully present when their aims coincided. When there is a discrepancy between what the principals wanted to be done and what the teachers believed should be done, the principal reverted to saying that this is what teachers are supposed to be doing and teachers were not allowed to question why (Bishop & Mulford, 1999). According to Balse and Blase (2002), this shows a tendency and potential for leaders in any given situation to consciously use hierarchy and status to control or influence others especially in instances of disagreement.

Collaborative Strategies Highlighted in the Four Studies. Collaborative approaches aim at creating genuine opportunities for teachers and school stakeholders to be active participants in the various stages of the change process - from planning to implementation. Such approaches include building trust, empowering teachers, creating channels of open communication, and promoting collaboration.

Zhang and Handerson's (2018) study revealed cooperative strategies used by principals that included using exchange and facilitation processes. Zhang and Handerson (2018) argued that the collaboration between principals and teachers facilitated successful and sustainable school change. In some cases, the studies revealed that connection and

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cooperation between principals and teachers were strengthened by using cooperative strategies. In Zhang and Henderson (2018), principals involved teacher leaders in sharing responsibilities that contributed to the school staff's professional development. Instead of just managing and controlling everything themselves, the principals' role was to support teacher leaders and engage them in school-based decision-making processes and share the power in managing teachers and students. In cases where principals shared power with teachers or teacher leaders instead of exerting power over them resulted in "collective efficacy" and facilitated the management of change. The studies showed that promoting teacher agency was pivotal in realizing the change.

Although the topic of teacher agency is quite broad, especially with the increase in studies on this subject, I will present a brief discussion of teacher agency in terms of curriculum development by referring to two main studies. The studies are Teacher Agency in Curriculum Making: Agents of Change and Spaces for Manoeuvre by Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller (2012), and Teacher Agency in Curriculum Contexts by Campbell (2012). A simple definition of agency is that "it enables individuals to make free or independent choices, to engage in autonomous actions, and to exercise judgment in the interests of others and oneself" (Campbell, 2012, p. 183). It can also be described as the capacity of actors to "critically shape their responses to problematic situations" (Biesta & Tedder, 2006, p. 11, as cited in Priestley et al. 2012). The extensive theorizing of agency and the diverse theoretical framings informing it renders any review of agency to be selective. However, Priestley et al. (2012) provide a comprehensive examination of the concept of agency, especially teacher agency as it relates to curriculum design and implementation. In their extensive theoretical account of agency, they highlight the

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ongoing structure-agency dualism. The structure agency dualism emerged from two views on different sides of the continuum. Priestley et al. (2012) present them as such:

> One view of agency stresses on the capacity for autonomous action . . . [independent] of the determining constraints of social structure … This perspective has come under sustained criticism from thinkers … for underemphasizing the influence of societal structures and human culture and discourses on agency … An alternative view of agency is grounded in the influence of society over the individual, seeking to supplant agency with structure … "many of the wants, values and priorities of decision making are determined by the structural … conditions of our institutions. (p. 195)

Campbell (2012) adds that in recent years, systematic attempts have been made to find a middle ground on this position. Attempts were made by social theories to transcend or resolve this dichotomy (Priestley et al., 2012). One of the first efforts was done by Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, which attempted to provide an acceptable theoretical explanation of action, which does not eliminate the role of either structure or agency; tried to transcend them. In brief, structuration theory attempts to resolve the dualistic views of structure-agency by arguing that social action cannot be explained by the structure or agency theories alone. Instead, it acknowledges that individuals function within the context produced by structures, and at the same time individuals either reinforce or modify this structure by acting within or outside the constraints placed on them respectively, though his theory received a lot of criticism by later scholars it remains a major influence in contemporary social theories. Priestly et al. (2012) mention Biesta and Tedder's (2007) ecological view of agency, presenting the idea that "agency is achieved

under particular ecological conditions" (p. 196). This conception proposes that even if individuals have some kind of capacities, whether they can achieve agency relies on the interaction of the capacities and the ecological conditions i.e. interaction with others and the surrounding. In other words, "agency is a matter of personal capacity to act, combined with the contingencies of the environment within which such action occurs" (Priestley et al., 2012, p. 196). Hence, an individual may exert and demonstrate more or less agency at various times and in different settings based on the context and ecology of that setting. Although the structure/agency discussion is much more vast, we can conclude from the articles that teachers' extent and capacity to achieve agency differs across contexts and is reliant on both; the enabling and limiting environmental conditions and structures, and the teacher's capacity to act upon their convictions, values, and attributes. After their rigorous examination of the different theories that aimed at conceptualizing human agency, Priestley et al. (2015) underline a main conclusion. It is important to avoid "an overly individualistic view of agency" (p. 191) that understates the impact of society's forces and organizational structures, while also dismissing positions that over-interpret the power of such forces and structures to represent individuals as helpless and dependent, rather than as autonomous beings. Furthermore, they argue that the realization of agency results from the interaction of individual efforts, available resources, and contextual and structural factors as they come together in specific and always unique situations (Priestley et al., 2012).

Another common strategy used by principals in several of the studies to facilitate collaboration is clear communication. Lack of clear communication that is based on data and research results in personal stories and subjective interpretations to be promoted by the different interest groups within the institution and hence maintain the status quo (Bennett,

1999). The imperative role of principals in understanding the micropolitical landscape in order to endorse and promote transparent communication is conveyed by Bennet (1999) as follows:

> I believe that greater attention to fact through research and data collection, more intentional communication strategies and strategic shared decision-making processes, together with greater understanding of politics, will move schools towards reform more effectively. (p.199)

Another example where principals succeeded in supporting teachers was found in cases where teachers were encouraged to use inquiry while achieving a transition to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In LeChasseur et al. (2016) study, and within the context of PLCs, teachers "consistently communicated this support" (p.269). LeChasseur (2016) found that progress took place in the process of teacher inquiry only when the different areas of struggle and discrepancy of interest were clearly communicated and viewed as opportunities to work toward transformative change.

In sum, the studies showed that the principal plays a pivotal role in building a structure and environment conducive to promoting teacher agency and effectively engaging teachers in school-based decision-making processes. Communication, which is a skill required for school leaders, becomes more critical when considered through a macro and micropolitical context. Bennett (1999) asserts that it is within the expanded responsibilities of principals especially during the process of educational change and reform to provide opportunities for "educational dialogue" where stakeholders could seek clarification and take part in and question actions and decisions made (Bennett, 1999). Creating, facilitating, and maintaining those channels of communication according to Bennett (1999) helps the

principal immensely in working with the different interest groups within the school. Failing to do so, like in the cases of principals in Caruso (2013) who mainly relied on conflictive closed approaches and did not invite communication to politically negotiate interests and viewpoints of teachers, constrains the micropolitical landscape of principals and hinders sustainable change (Caruso, 2013). Referring back to Ford (2010), principals and leaders accusing teachers of resisting and attributing this resistance to the failure of achieving change will create confrontational dynamics and alienate principals from the individuals who they badly need to partake in implementing the change. Thus, Ford (2010) argues that a more constructive approach is to "listen to resistance as a form of feedback" (p.27). Principals and leaders can utilize this feedback to enhance the change process and promote teacher agency so teachers become effective participants and collaborators in the change process, which will make the implementation of change plans and change realization more successful.

Initial Conceptual Understanding

The literature review accentuates the salient role of the principal in understanding and navigating the micropolitical environment especially in the process of change. This role has been underscored in the course of the literature as a central element in managing change and resistance through the principal's ability to understand power dynamics and navigate the micropolitical landscape of the school. Processes ranging between conflictive and cooperative that result from the power dynamics between people in the institution are better identified and understood through the lens of micropolitics. Concomitantly, these power dynamics are heavily contextualized where culture is an essential factor that carries

within it traditions and predominant trends and approaches that might influence the power

dynamics and consequently heighten and intensify the challenges or yield new ones.

The empirical studies further revealed that most strategies used by principals during

the process of change fell under either conflictive or collaborative. Smeed, Kimber,

Millwater, and Ehrich (2009) worked on what they called "a new model of micropolitics"

that is built on the cooperative and conflictive strategies used by leaders and the use of

power and power dynamics. The model highlights three central power-based leadership

approaches—'power with', 'power through' and 'power over'. 'Power over' approach

includes conflictive strategies like dominance and control; it is when power becomes

concentrated in the hands of the principal. 'Power through' or what is also referred to as

facilitative power includes principals creating structures through which they can enable

others to use power with them to reach the desired goals instead of maintaining power

within their own hands. Such strategies include negotiating with faculty, arranging

resources to assist staff, and "identifying which staff members work together effectively"

(Smeed et al., 2009, p.30). 'Power with' entails doing things with others - mutual power. It

includes a democratic approach and collaborative strategies like open communication and

staff empowerment. Thus, the model is based on the variety of micropolitical strategies

used by school principals in the governance of their schools, especially in dealing with

resistance. These strategies range from control at one end to empowerment and

collaboration at the other (Smeed et al., 2009).

The literature points at various strategies for managing micropolitics in schools.

This study relies on the Smeed et al. (2009) model to frame these strategies. The model

starts with the identification of the macropolitical context that is mostly responsible for

instigating the change. Which will then lead to the different strategies that principals would

use to carry the change amidst the high possibility of the emergence of resistance. The

model clusters those strategies under the three power relationships from the most

controlling and conflictive to the most collaborative and empowering. The following figure

delineates the model:
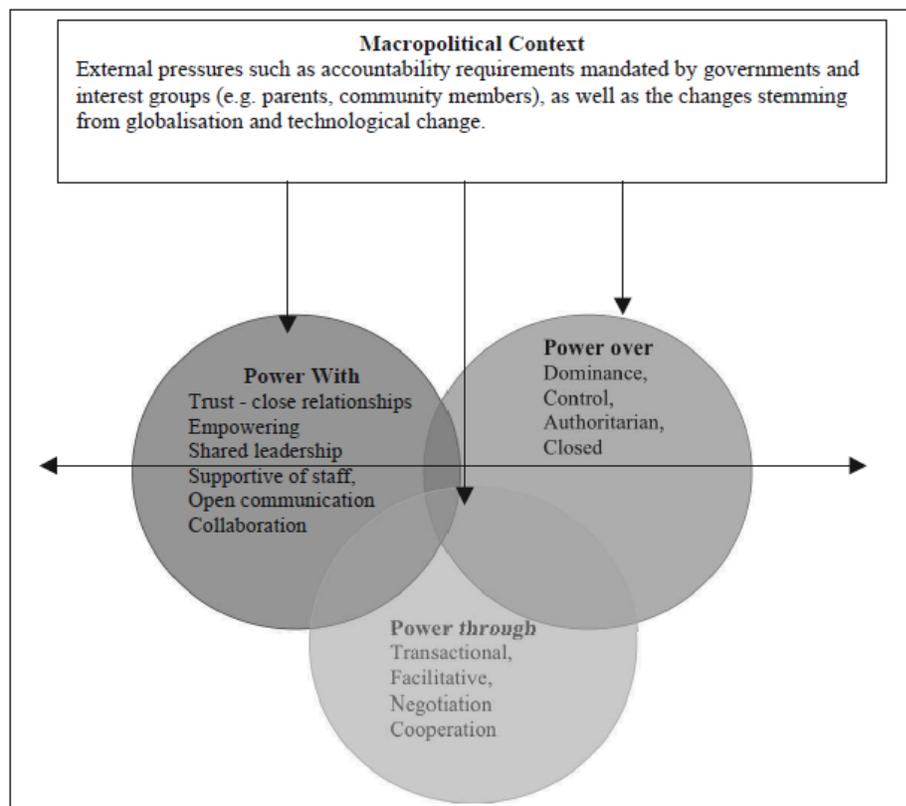
Figure 1. A new model of micropolitics. Reprinted from "Power over, with and through: Another look at micropolitics," by Smeed, J., Kimber, M., Millwater, J., & Ehrich, L. (2009). Leading & Managing, 15(1), 26-41

In my study I will use this conceptual understanding to craft the main questions that

will guide my study and enable me to do the following:

1. Directly ask about the principal's role as an agent of change.

2. Explore whether the school principal is aware of the political landscape and power dynamics of the school.

3. Explore how teachers and the principal react to change and perceive resistance.

4. Explore the ways through which the principal manages the power dynamics that are linked to resistance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study uses the micropolitics lens to identify the factors that impede the change process at the school level and those that support and enhance it, build an understanding of the political landscape of the school including the formal and informal power dynamics involved, and identify the strategies leaders use to manage the power dynamics at the school towards limiting resistance and promoting the intended change. All of the studies referenced in the literature review used a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach enabled researchers to achieve a deeper understanding of a complex issue, something that characterizes cases involving a micropolitical dimension. The approach enabled them also to inquire into the strategies principals employ when they are cooperating or in conflict with teacher leaders (Zhang & Henderson 2018). This section describes the design of the research study. Given that this study aims to provide a contextual understanding and description of the phenomenon, I will use a qualitative case study design.

The Research Design

The research design is a case study using a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Given that the purpose of the study is to investigate and understand the micropolitical behaviors of teachers and school leaders, the case study qualitative research design was found most appropriate. The theorizing approach used in this study is based on Charmaz's (2006) constructivist grounded theory approach. Constructivist grounded theory

falls under the interpretive paradigm. According to Charmaz (2006), a constructivist approach puts emphasis on the phenomena at hand and looks at data and analysis as resulting from the shared experiences and relationships with participants. Thus, theory in the constructivist approach is considered as an interpretation of the view of the researcher.

A qualitative approach permits the researcher to understand in-depth the investigated phenomena and allows for capturing the voice of the targeted population as well as account for the contextual peculiarities of the phenomena under study. Although a theoretical understanding and set of theoretically framed questions often guide the study, qualitative research is designed to seek understanding and meaning in the data. This meaning is said to be "embedded in people's experiences and mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1988, p.19 as cited in Merriam, 1989, p.166). The interest is in meaning that conveys "how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, and how they structure their social worlds" (Merriam, 1989, p. 166). Another important rationale for the use of a qualitative approach for this study is that qualitative methods are more open to contextual interpretation than quantitative research (Merriam, 1989). Rather than relying on analytical constructs from pre-existing theories, a qualitative approach can also provide the opportunity for the development of new, contextualized theories (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory, for example, allows the movement from data to theory so that new theories could emerge, which are specific to the context in which they were developed (Charmaz, 2006).

The emergence of grounded theory stems from advocacy to develop "theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories"

(Charmaz, 2006, p.4). Grounded theory methods in general follow systematic yet flexible guidelines to collect and analyze qualitative data in order to construct theories "grounded" in that data (Charmaz, 2006, p.2). In grounded theory, the researcher tries to learn what is happening in the setting of the study and what the lives of the participants are like through their actions and declarations while asking what analytical sense could be made of them.

The Case School

The school chosen for this case study is located in Beirut. The school's history and the phases it has gone through make it relevant to the purpose of this research.

The school was founded in the early nineteen hundreds as one of the first not-for-profit independent - not affiliated to any religious denomination or a specific foreign country - teaching institution in Beirut. During its founding phase, the school established strong ties with other international schools, established by missionaries from various parts of the world, in the region, and sought support from the diaspora who supported the school through diverse contributions, including creating faculty exchanges. During its growth phase (1934-1974), the school flourished and introduced pioneering programs. The school attracted a good number of expatriate teachers throughout, and at peak, had 26 nationalities in its student body. However, in 1975 war broke in Lebanon and Beirut's Downtown was hard hit. The school became unreachable and closed for two years, to reopen through the effort of a group of its teachers and principal to serve the immediate local community consisting mainly of low-income families. This allowed many children to have good education and protection during the hard, civil war days. After 1991, a period of re-adaptation to peacetime followed during which all the enrolled students were supported until their graduation. The total number of students dropped gradually from around 1000 to

335 by 2006. As of 2010, the school developed and launched an overall executable strategic plan with clear targets, goals, and landmarks. It is important to note that the change initiative came at a time where the school had been stagnant during all the civil war years and after, the physical facilities had been receiving minimal maintenance and the school lacked any form of written policies or curricula. Most processes at school were carried through institutional memory and habits that had been established for years. The school also had minimal resources (human, teaching tools, technology, professional development, etc.) for providing quality education. The strategic plan was extensive and coherent. It covered all areas of the school and centered on extensively changing the school curricula, programs, teaching methodology, and learning experiences to align with best current practices in education and international standards. The first part of the plan was completed in 2016 with the school obtaining accreditation from the Council of International Schools (CIS) and New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) as an international attestation to the school's transformation. All major areas of the school were completely renovated and transformed to meet international standards in education and enrollment increased to around 580 students. The accrediting team positively commented on the major change that the school has undergone through a relatively very short time. The school is currently implementing a phase II strategic plan that aims at further developing curricula and teaching and learning with goals to be completed by 2021.

Another reason for choosing this site is because the co-investigator in this research has been working at this school for 12 years. This allows for unique access to a wealth of information that might not be available in a different site for the study.

Study Participants

The population in this study comprises full-time teachers across all grade levels of the school and the school principal.

Initial Sampling

Initial sampling in grounded theory is when the researcher starts the data collection process at the beginning of the study. The initial participants in the study comprised a sample of 15 teachers from the different divisions - lower school, middle school, and upper school, which formed the focus group. An individual interview was held with the school principal. This constituted the initial sampling of the data collection process.

Theoretical Sampling

The memo-writing phase of grounded theory, which will be explained in the following section, identifies gaps in the emerging conceptual categories that require more work and more data to be sought in order to strengthen those categories. This is done through theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting. Thus, theoretical sampling takes place after initial data is collected and coded. Theoretical sampling directs the study and serves the explication of categories. Using theoretical sampling, the researcher in this study went back to the field and gathered additional focused data for the conceptual and theoretical development of categories. It is also important to note that in theoretical sampling the researcher did not seek data for a larger representation of the population or statistical generalizability of the results, but allowed for new data to emerge to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. This notion will be explained further in saturating categories.

Data Collection

Constructivist grounded theory method comprises a process that starts with gathering data and ends by writing the analysis and reflecting on the whole process. However, the process is not as linear in practice. The researcher in grounded theory may stop and write whenever ideas emerge whether at the beginning or later stages in the process, and the same goes for data collection. Going back to the field after initial data is collected is common to the grounded theory approach. Hence, one of the main advantages of grounded theory, as Charmaz (2006) puts it, is that the researcher can always insert new parts to the research puzzle or even infer completely new puzzles while data is being gathered. This can even occur late in the analysis stage of the study. This flexibility of grounded theory gives the researcher more focus on the field data and context than many other methods (Charmaz, 2006).

A common method of data collection in grounded theory is intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2006). This study relied on one focus group interview with teachers and one individual interview with the school principal. It also used school documents such as the organizational chart and relevant policies to locate the formal power in the school.

Intensive Interviews

Intensive interviews aim at acquiring a rich understanding of the topic at hand. They reveal the participant's experience, behavior, and attitudes, which can be probed deeply to identify underlying concepts. Intensive interviewing has been a prominent method for data gathering in different qualitative research. They enable in-depth exploration of the topic at hand and thus an adequate method for interpretive inquiry. This in-depth quality of intensive interviews facilitates the interpretation of the participant's experience. (Charmaz,

2006). Charmaz (2006) recommends devising interview questions for a grounded theory approach that are broad and open-ended especially at the initial phase of the interviewing process. Then the researcher could focus the interview questions to entice more focused and detailed discussions of specific topics. Charmaz (2006) asserts that open-ended, non-judgmental questions will encourage participants to talk freely and yield unexpected stories, which the researcher could later build on and use to seek more specific data. In grounded theory intensive interviews, the researcher narrows the scope of the interview topic to collect data that is more focused and that help in developing the theoretical framework as he/she continuous through the interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Intensive interviews are a highly adequate tool for constructivist grounded theory for they are both "open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted" (Charmaz, 2006, p.28). According to Charmaz (2006), intensive interviews allow an interviewer to:

- go beneath the surface of the described experience(s)

- stop to explore a statement or topic

- request more detail or explanation

- ask about the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions

- keep the participant on the subject

- come back to an earlier point

- restate the participant's point to check for accuracy

- slow or quicken the pace

- shift the immediate topic

- validate the participant's humanity, perspective, or action

- use observational and social skills to further the discussion

• respect the participant and express appreciation for participating (p. 28)

The purpose of using intensive interviewing in grounded theory is to "explore, not to interrogate" (Charmaz, 2006, p.29). The questions should be general enough to make room for a broad range of experiences and focused enough to prompt and expand on the specific experiences of the participant (Charmaz, 2006).

The researcher started the interviews with a set of questions that were written beforehand for each interview and derived from the theoretical understanding that came out of the literature review in line with the research questions of the study. Appendices A and B contain the interview questions for the individual interview with the school principal and the focus group with the teachers respectively. During the course of the interview, the researcher used more focused questions to dig deeper into a described experience(s), further explore a specific statement or topic, request more detail or explanation, and ask about the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

The researcher, upon the consent of the participants, taped the interviews. Taping the interviews allowed the researcher to study the data over and over again and identify the nuances in the participants' language and their meanings, enabling the researcher to delineate the directions to which the data will lead. After taping the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews. This facilitated line-by-line coding when analyzing the data. For maintaining privacy, only the researchers had access to the tapes, and they were not to be published.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews aim at evoking a level of respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions, which cannot be captured using other methods like

observation. For this study, a focus group interview was conducted that included a sample of 15 teachers.

Bringing together several participants to serve in focus groups requires consideration and attention to several aspects during the planning process of the study. These include sampling method, group structure, number of participants, and number of groups (Morgan, 1998).

According to Morgan (1998), random sampling is rarely used when selecting participants for focus groups mainly because randomly sampled groups might not share a common understanding or shared perspective on the research topic, thus would not produce meaningful discussions. He encourages the use of purposive or theoretical sampling where the researcher intentionally selects the participants in each group to serve the research purpose. This according to Morgan (1998) provides homogeneity which in turn permits for "more free-flowing conversations" among groups members and ensure that participants feel comfortable talking about the topic to each other and would do so in a "normal, day-to-day interaction" (Morgan, 1998, p.7). Hence, the researcher purposefully targeted teachers who had been at the school throughout the change process and lived through the experience.

In terms of group structure, the groups could be either more structured or less structured. A more structured focus group approach is appropriate when there is a preset agenda for the study and the group's moderator wants to meet this agenda. This approach usually produces limited data. However, a less structured approach according to Morgan (1998) is most appropriate for exploratory research and enables the researcher to learn something new from the participants and learn about them in their own words. In such a structure, the questions are more open-ended and the moderator or researcher does not

interfere much in the discussion. This section will be elaborated on in the focus group protocol that was used. Furthermore, using what is called a funnel-based approach, the researcher started with a less structured approach during the interview and then directed the discussion to dig deeper into a described experience(s), further explore a specific statement or topic, request more detail or explanation, and ask about the participant's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

As for group size, Morgan (1998) suggests a rule of thumb with a range between 6 and 10 with a 20 percent more to account for no show or individuals who might not want to participate. This range of number according to Morgan (1998) is not too low to hinder the sustainability of the discussion and not too large to lose control of it. Hence, the number of participating teachers in the group was 15.

Focus Group Interview Protocol. The focus group protocol followed during the study is mainly based on Krueger (2002).

Pre-interview. The co-investigator occupies a senior leadership position at the school. Within the scope of his work, he takes part in teacher evaluation processes but does not have direct authority in terms of teachers' recruitment or contract termination, which falls under the Human Resources department capacity and school principal. The primary-investigator, who has no affiliation with the school, will be the one asking for the consent forms from teachers. The primary investigator obtained the consent form from participants, which states the purpose of the research and what it entails (Appendix C).
The researcher attended to all logistics before the interview date to ensure the provision of a location and environment that is conducive to carrying a focus group interview.

During the focus group interview. According to Krueger (2002), the first few minutes in a focus group discussion are critical. The moderator should manage to ensure quickly and briefly a thoughtful and tolerant environment, establish ground rules, and set the discussion tone. Kruger (2002) recommends the following pattern starting a group discussion:

1. Welcome

2. Overview of the topic

3. Ground rules

4. First question. `

The second crucial point during group discussions is making sure to ask questions that produce powerful information pertaining to the research topic. For this purpose, Krueger (2002) suggests the following guidelines, which will be used in the formation of questions for this study.

- Use open-ended questions like, what did you think of the new program, or how did you feel about the changes that took place in a specific area. Krueger (2002) cautions against using phrases such as "how satisfied" or "to what extent"

- Avoid as much as possible dichotomous questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no"

- Instead of asking why, Krueger (2002) suggests being more specific by asking about attributes or influences.

- Use "think back" questions by taking participants back to an experience.

- Use different types of questions including (a) open ended question; (b) introductory question; (c) transition questions; (d) key questions; (e) ending questions.

- Use questions that engage participants by using "reflection, examples, choices, rating scales, drawings, etc." (Krueger, 2002, p.6)

- Focus the questions in a sequence that moves from general to specific

As for the ending questions, Krueger (2002) suggests the following:

- Use an all-things-considered question, which requires the participants to reflect on the whole discussion and then state their viewpoint on the main topics of the study.

- Use a summary question, which is asked after the moderator gives a brief oral summary of the session.

- Use a final question where after the moderator reviews the purpose of the study asks the participants, "Have we missed anything?"

During the interviews, the researcher followed the guidelines delineated by Krueger (2002) especially in terms of focusing on open-ended questions and probes to get the participants to reflect deeply on their experiences.

Individual Interview

For this study, in addition to the focus group interview with teachers, the researcher conducted an individual intensive interview with the school principal. The intensive interview enabled the researcher to use the conceptual understanding a priori to craft the main questions that will guide the interview and enabled the collection of in-depth data

about (a) the principal's role as an agent of change and the context that is mostly

responsible for instigating the change at the school; (b) explore whether the school

principal is aware of the political landscape and power dynamics of the school; (c) explore

how the principal perceives resistance to change; (d) explore the ways through which the

principal manages the power dynamics that are linked to resistance. Table 1 include the

data collections tool used for each research question.

Table 1

Data Collection Tools and Participants Pertaining to the Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Participants
1. What are the factors that impede the change process at the school level?	Focus group interview Intensive interview	Teachers Principal
2. What are the factors that support and enhance the change process at the school level?	Focus group interview Intensive interview	Teachers Principal
3. What is the political landscape of the school including the formal and informal power dynamics involved, and how do teachers resist change using their formal and informal power?	Focus group interview Intensive interview	Teachers Principal
4. What strategies do school leaders use to manage the power dynamics at the school towards limiting resistance and promoting the intended change?	Focus group interview Intensive interview	Teachers Principal

Data Analysis

As per the constructivist grounded theory approach, after collecting the data, the researcher started the analysis process through initial coding of the data, raising codes to tentative categories, and writing initial memos. The researcher then moved to focused coding while going back to gather more focused data and start writing more advanced memos to refine conceptual categories. The next major phase included theoretical sampling and seeking specific new data before entering the stage of integrating memos and finally constructing an abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience, which forms the grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Coding

The first step of data analysis in grounded theory is coding. There are two types of coding: initial coding and focused coding that researcher used in this study.

Initial Coding. During initial coding, the researcher explored fragments of data (words, lines, segments, and incidents). Through coding, the researcher moved to make analytic interpretation of the statements in the data. This is where the researcher started asking, "which theoretical categories might these statements indicate" (Charmaz, 2006, p.45)? During initial coding, the researcher asked the following questions:

- "What is this data a study of?" (Glaser, 1978: 57; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

- "What does the data suggest? Pronounce?" (Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

- "From whose point of view?" (Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

- What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate? (Glaser, 1978, as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.47)

For this study, the researcher mainly performed line-by-line coding. In line-by-line coding, each line of the written (transcribed) data or number of lines were named by the researcher and coded using qualitative data analysis software QDA Miner by Provalis. Using line-by-line coding in studying the data generates novice ideas that are potential to be sought. This method reduces the possibility of the researcher superimposing his/her presupposed concepts on the data.

Focused Coding. During focused coding, the second major coding phase, the researcher identified the most prominent and useful initial codes and tested them against extensive data, through a process of comparing data with data and then data with codes (Charmaz, 2006). This phase permits for the synthesis, integration, and organization of large data. The codes in this phase are more selective and conceptual than initial codes. Focused coding entails making decisions about "which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.58). Through comparative methods, comparing data to data helps develop the focused codes, and comparing data to these codes helps in refining them.

Memo-Writing

During this step of the research process, the researcher started writing informal analytic notes called memos. In memo-writing, the researcher started by writing about the codes and data while moving toward theoretical categories. The process of writing memos was maintained throughout the research process. Writing memos advances the analytic work of the researcher. Memo-writing is considered an imperative method in grounded

theory because it encourages the researcher to analyze the codes and data at an earlier point in the research stage. It keeps the researcher immersed in the analysis and promotes a level of abstraction for the emerging ideas. Charmaz (2006) advises writing memos in informal, unofficial language because they are intended for personal use.

The process of memo-writing used in this study, which is proposed by Charmaz (2006), constitutes of writing early memos, writing advanced memos, and using memos to raise focused codes to conceptual categories.

Early Memos. In early memos, the researcher recorded what he saw happening in the data and used early memos to "explore and fill out … qualitative codes, which are used to direct and focus further data collection" (Charmaz, 2006, p.80).

Advanced Memos. In advanced memos, the researcher identified and categorized data related to the topic, delineated how each category arose, and highlighted the beliefs and assumptions that support each. According to Charmaz (2006) this is when the researcher places the topic within an argument and relates how it "looks and feels like" from different perspectives, and finally, makes comparisons (p.80).

Using Memos to Raise Focused Codes to Conceptual Categories

In using memos to raise focused codes to conceptual categories the researcher first evaluated which codes best represented what is occurring in the data. Then, in a memo, turned them into conceptual categories for the analytic framework that was developing throughout the research. Finally, the researcher used narrative form in the memos to give each category a conceptual definition and analytical treatment. During this process, the researcher "goes beyond using a code as a descriptive tool to view and synthesize data" (Charmaz, 2006, p.91). Thus, a major part of memo writing is based on handling some

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codes as conceptual categories to analyze. Writing memos on focused codes facilitates the transition into the next phase of the research process by (1) helping build and clarify the researchers' categories, (2) examining the data covered by the category and highlighting variation through comparisons within and between categories, and (3) identifying gaps in the analysis that might require further data collection.

Saturating Theoretical Categories

In grounded theory, the researcher stops gathering data when the categories are saturated. This means seeking new data no longer reveals any new properties for the category or no new theoretical categories are emerging. The researcher in this study went back to interview certain teachers individually to seek more data based on identified gaps in the emerging conceptual categories that require more work and more data to be sought in order to strengthen those categories. Again, the aim is not to seek repetition of the same events. Glaser (2001) asserts this point by stating that saturation is not witnessing the same pattern repeating again and again, it is when new properties of a certain pattern stop to emerge (as cited in Charmaz, 2006)

Theoretical Sorting, Diagramming, and Integrating

Charmaz (2006) argues that sorting, diagramming, and integrating memos are inter-related processes. Researchers use these strategies in grounded theory as part of the theoretical development of their analysis. Through sorting, the researcher theoretically integrates the categories and compares them at an abstract level. Diagrams help the researcher see the range and direction of the categories and the way they are connected (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) provides guidelines for the process of sorting, comparing, and integrating memos:

"1. Sort memos by the title of each category

2. Compare categories

3. Use your categories-carefully

4. Consider how their order reflects the studied experience

5. Think about how their order fits the logic of the categories

6. Create the best possible balance between the studied experience, your

categories, and   your theoretical statements about them."(Charmaz, 2006,

p.117)

Sorting and diagramming provided the researcher with the initial analytic frame of the

study to commence writing the first draft.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this research stems from it being a case study. A case study

does not provide a strong basis for the generalization of results to the wider population.

Another limitation is that the researchers' subjective feelings may influence the case study

(researcher bias) especially that the secondary researcher is a member of the school's

community. However, the researcher implemented several strategies to meet the quality

criteria mainly in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Quality Criteria

Whatever the type of research is, meeting quality criteria is a concern that can be

approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and how the data is

collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and how the findings are presented. For this study, the

researcher adopted Merriam (2009) quality criteria for qualitative research. To ensure

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Merriam, 2009), the researcher used the following strategies.

To enhance credibility, the researcher used the method of member checks. Ample literature has made member-checking an accepted and even expected practice (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) argues that even though member-checking is mostly used to go back to the research participants to get their confirmation on data, researchers can use those back to the field visits to find more material for the elaboration of categories. Within the process of member-checking, the researcher took the preliminary analysis of the data back to some of the participants and asked whether if the interpretation of the data is true. Here, participants were able to recognize their experience in the interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher mainly performed line-by-line coding. In line-by-line coding, each line of the written (transcribed) data or number of lines were named by the researcher and coded (color-coded) using qualitative data analysis software QDA Miner by Provalis. Using line-by-line coding in studying the data generates novice ideas that are potential to be sought that are grounded in the data. This method reduces the possibility of the researcher superimposing his/her presupposed concepts on the data.

To enhance the possibility of transferability, which according to Merriam (1998) is the extent to which the results can be transferred to other settings, the researcher used thick description. The researcher provided rich thick description of the data and experiences conveyed by participants in addition to a description of the context of the study. Thus, readers can determine how similar the experiences and context of the study are to theirs and to what extent findings can be transferred.

Dependability includes consistency in the study, especially in terms of whether the analysis process aligns with the standards for the selected research design. The researcher used audit trail as a strategy to ensure dependability. The researcher used the audit trail process suggested by Thomas and Magilvy (2011) where (a) the researcher defined the purpose of the study in detail; (b) the researcher discussed the study sampling criteria and explained how and why the study participants were selected; (c) the researcher clearly delineated the data collection method and tools; (d) the researched explained and discussed in detail the data analysis process used in the study; (e) the researcher thoroughly discussed the presentation and the interpretation of the results; and (f) the researched discussed the steps and strategies used to insure the data credibility in the study (Thomas &Magilvy, 2011).

Confirmability is the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed or supported by other researchers and ensure that the data and interpretations of the results are not based on the inquirer's imagination. To enhance confirmability, the results and interpretation were examined by an outside expert at several stages of the data collection and analysis process.

Adequate engagement in data collection is another strategy that was applied when the researcher was trying to get as close as possible to participants' understanding of a phenomenon. The strategy deals with the questions of how long the researcher needs to observe, and how many more questions should the researcher ask. The researcher achieved this in the study through the process of saturating theoretical categories, which is discussed in the data collection section. According to Merriam (2009), adequate engagement is achieved by probing and gathering data until the data and findings feel saturated. Thus, by

saturating theoretical categories, the researcher in this study was able to exhaust the study

field and ensure that nothing of significance to the study has been missed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In this section, I will present the results that emerged from the interview with the principal and the focus group. I organized the results according to the three main phases pertaining to the school-wide change initiative. Phase one presents the principal's efforts in understanding the school's environment and its working especially in terms of reaction to change. Phase two presents the actions taken by the principal before the planning and implementation of the change initiative. Finally, phase three presents the strategies and actions implemented to manage resistance and affect change. Tables 2 and 3, which are referenced in the course of the results section, include the frequency of codes from the principal and focus group interviews respectively.

Table 2

Table of Frequency of Codes from the Interview with the Principal

Codes	Frequency
Building strong communication channels	10.00
Holding onto past/norms/status quo	9.00
Influence	7.50
Promoting shared decision making	6.67
The principal spending ample time with staff and faculty	6.52
Resistance by the majority to past attempts for change	6.52
Principal looking for active agents of change	6.00
Principal having an intrinsic drive for change	5.78
Building a leadership team	5.78

The principal learning about the school's current situation, structure, and community	5.00
Extra work required/resistance	4.25
Lack of documentation	4.15
Change is challenging / Change easier said than done	4.15
changing work conditions	3.50
highlight the positives of change	3.00
Introducing and familiarizing the idea of change	2.52
Resistance - Previous Principals	2.52
Awareness that change takes time	2.52
Fear of change	2.00
loss of power	1.00

Table 3

Table of Frequency of Codes from the Focus Group Interview

Codes	Frequency
Personal Interest	9.00
Promoting teachers Agency / empowering teachers	8.00
Inclusion/collaboration in decision making	8.00
Realizing the interest for the school and students / Acknowledging the value of change	7.00
Supportive environment	7.50
Realizing the difficulty of change	5.50
A pre-existing drive for change among a group of teachers	4.50
The school leadership trusting Teachers	4.50
Two groups emerging among teachers	4.00
Establishing open communication	4.00
An understanding approach from the LT / Non-conflictive approach toward resistance	4.00
Having a common goal as a driver for change	3.56
teachers are listened to	3.60

Resistance/no personal interest	3.60
Fear of change	3.00
Clear and thorough communication	4.00
Skepticism toward the success of change	2.00
Sense of Pride toward the school	2.00
Reciprocal connection between school and teachers in terms of development and interest	2.00
The LT promoting collaboration	2.00
Absence of an authoritative approach	2.00
Sense of belonging to the school	3.00
Change based on school needs	1.00
Overcoming the fear of change through support	2.00
Change based on contextual needs	1.00

Phase One:

Getting to Understand the School's Environment and its Workings

The questions the researcher prepared for the principal interview started by asking

for an overview of the school-wide change initiative that she led at the school. However,

the principal thought it was important to talk first about the period that preceded the change

initiative. According to the principal, the idea of a comprehensive large-scale change plan

was still not quite considered by the school board during that period. However, she asserted

that she had the drive and determination to make substantial changes in all aspects of the

school. It is during this period that the principal managed to understand the workings of the

school on the administrative and instructional level and to build a clear idea of its cultural

landscape especially in terms of the culture's attitude and reaction to change. She also

became aware of the initial impediments to change, mainly the pervasiveness of norms that

protect the status quo. This pervasiveness was supported by a stagnant environment that is not accustomed to change, personal interest in maintaining the status quo among members of faculty and staff, and a feeling of skepticism that any change can take place, accompanied by a sense of fear of change. The incidents and perspectives reported by the interviewee in this phase reveal the principals' awareness of the aforementioned impeding factors while building a clear understanding of the micropolitical landscape of the school.

The principal started by sharing the context of her appointment as acting principal during the first two years of her principalship. She recounted that after two principals resigned within a period of around 6 years, from 2000 to 2006, the school Board of Trustees (BoT) appointed her as acting principal for temporary appointment until the school could find someone who has the leadership experience and background to assume a more permanent position. Someone who also possesses the capacity to plan for and carry out major school change plans. The principal said, upon the resignation of the last principal, the BoT had no time to start and complete a recruitment process to find a principal with the desired profile. Thus, the BoT decided to appoint someone from within the school faculty who would function as acting principal to manage affairs until a more "suitable principal" is recruited. However, the principal mentioned that she only came to this realization after several years into her principalship. Even though she was appointed at first as acting principal, the principal said she had since then the desire, drive, and intention to start making changes at school from day one:

> Since I became principal, of course I had from the beginning the intention to make a change. I did not know how and what it was going to be. I did not have a full strategy or a full plan of how to make the change, but I knew that there was a

need for it. There should be change and it should aim at improving the school in all aspects and areas.

Albeit, she said she knew she needed to take her time during her first two years as an opportunity to build a better understanding of how the school operates at the administrative and leadership level to be able to manage the school effectively and efficiently before embarking on any major change initiative.

From day one, I intended to make some changes especially in terms of teaching and learning, which I had already started working on as a coordinator and teacher, but I wanted to understand how the school is operating first.

The principal showed she was aware from day one that making a change in the school would not be an easy straightforward endeavor. The principal quoted one of her close colleagues, whom she said had previously taught at the school and knew it well, who warned the principal upon assuming her role by saying: "It is quite impossible to straighten a yard-long cucumber."

It is during this period she said she started to become more aware of the factors that would impede any change attempt. What will follow are the factors that the principal has identified as potential impediments to the change she is intending to initiate.

Existing Factors that Could Impede the Initiation of Change (the Resistors)

The principal related that as acting principal she started implementing small-scale initiatives at the level of the curriculum and teaching methodologies. According to her, she had thought about these changes when she was still a faculty member, she called them "very minor self-initiated attempts". While attempting to initiate those small scale changes along with building a good understanding of the schools' workings, processes, policies,

operations, finances, etc., the principal said she started to realize that the main impediment to change resides in factors ensuing from the fact that the school had been going through a long-stagnant phase and there was high proclivity to maintain the status quo by different stakeholders within the school community. This impediment was also referenced by teachers during the focus group. One teacher said: "There were teachers who were so used to working the way they had always worked and were never required to make any changes in years, only to maintain what they are doing." Another teacher commented that although she started teaching at school in 2009, there were teachers who were still teaching through very conventional ways; "I was shocked to find teachers still teaching with such conventional approaches." The principal and focus group teachers concurred that the majority of faculty and staff showed resistance to change initiatives especially at the beginning.

According to the principal, this inclination to hold onto the status quo was driven and exacerbated by several factors that she discussed during the interview, which were mostly concurrent with what the teachers in the focus group conveyed as well. The factors include lack of structure and proper documentation of school policies and procedures, individuals having personal interest and benefit in maintaining the status quo, a predominant culture not accustomed to change, and a fear of change among members of faculty and staff as shown in Table 2.

Pervasive Norms that Protect the Status Quo

Holding on to past norms and the status quo was among the highest coded challenges that the principal talked about in the interview as referenced in Table 2 and emerged as the main impediment that characterized the school culture back then. The principal said she

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saw it as a major resistance to change. One that she thought to be the main factor in the failure of the previous attempts to change.

According to the principal, the period during the Lebanese civil war and post-war played a major role in driving the school into a stagnant state. During that time, the school mainly endeavored to survive the turmoil that the country was facing, resume operation and sustain what it has been offering to cater to the neighboring community. The principal also mentioned that maintaining working conditions and preserving transitions and norms was highly valued during that phase, especially for the school's survival. According to the principal and teachers in the focus group, this stagnation characterized most of the school environment. Quoting the principal:

> I often heard staff, faculty, and even BoT members say that it is better to keep the school as it is … they often raised the question of why we should change things … and commented that we have always done things this way, why should we change now.

According to the principal and several teachers, having a penchant for preserving norms and traditions was evident in what was valued in the school. The majority of people were questioning the need for change and found things to be "ideal" as they are. The principal conveyed that the challenge did not reside in agreeing on the type of change and in whose interest it falls, but rather an issue of realizing the need for change. She said she needed to focus on the "why" before the "what" and "how". Teachers in the focus group said that a good number of faculty and staff demonstrated strong resistance toward the idea of reconsidering norms and habits and opening to different and new possibilities. One teacher said that this resistance to change was even conveyed by some individuals to the

extent of expressing their objection by saying: "We are abandoning our traditions and values."

The principal attributed this strong resistance to consider change to the long retention of many members of the staff and faculty. She explained that many if not most of the staff and faculty had been working at the school for a long time; more than 20 years. She said that most of the resistance came from those individuals: "They were the ones who had the strongest attachment to how things have always been done" at school. The principal also stated that the attachment to past norms and proclivity to maintain the status quo was quite evident within faculty members and that she saw this first-hand when she was a teacher. She even attributed a major cause for the failure of the last two principals to induce change to the strong resistance among the faculty members and their adamant attachment to the status quo. The principal remembered and mentioned the attitude of teachers when the previous principals were working on introducing changes to pedagogy. She used to be a faculty member back then. She said:

> They used to say that it is better to keep the school as it is and saw no value or reason behind the change that they are supposed to make… they resisted a lot and always questioned why we should do this.

The principal was quite aware of the resistance that used to take place among teachers especially through refusing to do what is required of them; "they simply refused to do it." The main form of resistance according to the principal and teachers in the focus group was manifested through the power this large group of teachers had especially when they coalesced to resist decisions or actions or disagree with a decision. The principal said that this was most evident during meetings where this large group asserted its presence and

opinions and objected to ideas or decisions for change. Teachers in the focus group also said that this large group had a lot of influence among teachers and would also assert its presence in places like the teachers' lounge. One teacher added that this resisting and opposing attitude by a large group of teachers was sometimes even manifested in a form of bullying: "It is not only that there were teachers who did not want to change the way they have done things, but they also criticized other teachers who were trying to make some changes, they would kind of bully them and be cynical about it."

Lack of Documentation and Policies

One of the factors that, according to the principal, exacerbated the strong inclination to maintain the status quo was a lack of formal delineation and documentation in terms of job discerptions, policies, procedures, etc. She referred to the time she spent trying to understand her job and duties as a principal and that of others, although she had been at the school for more than 10 years, as follows:

> I spent a lot of time during the first year getting to know what my position is in
> the first place. What does it entail as principal…this is what I mainly focused
> on… to mainly learn more about my position especially that there weren't
> many documents at school that I could refer to that include the details of the
> principals' job and duties at the school.

The principal said that despite the school's long history and heritage, it lacked formal documentation of policies, procedures, and job descriptions. According to the principal, things were done out of "institutional memory;" carried out in individuals' actions based on the habit of doing things. She quoted staff members often saying "this is how we have always done things," "we know how things work, there is no need to have

them written or documented." The work was mainly carried out based on routines and procedures that were not documented in any form. Moreover, the principal found that the insistence on perpetuating those internal informal processes was to a large extent helping in maintaining the status quo rather than allowing for opportunities for change. She explained:

> Because there were no clear descriptions of who does what, and in whose capacity is a certain function and what are his/her responsibilities, then these became mostly subjective and based upon the personal discretion of every individual or group of individuals.

The principal said she felt at times that staff members were reluctant to give a clear description of what is within their purview in terms of responsibilities and how some processes operate, "intentionally leaving a margin of ambiguity." She explained that the lack of clear formal documentation made the knowledge of adopted operational procedures mostly reside within the staff-member who became the sole reference, allowing a staff member to manipulate those processes according to his/her personal interest or benefit, or avoid assuming responsibility or accountability in cases of error. The principal gave an example of an incident in this respect. The example involves an incident that took place among one of the accounting personnel. The lack of clear and updated systems of tracking cash flow and budgeting provided loopholes that permitted one staff member to embezzle funds and direct registration fees to her personal account. The principal's close involvement with the school operations at that time made her raise questions that lead to this discovery. Although the individual was asked to resign, the extent of this kind of behavior and the scope of cover-up among staff members became a subject of concern. Investigating further into this incident became more challenging when certain staff members would respond to

the principal's inquiries by denying responsibility for certain functions. The principal said

staff members would reply by saying "this is not within my responsibility," and she added,

"I had no formal documentation or process to prove otherwise."

In terms of teaching and learning, the principal said the school lacked

documentation of the planned curriculum. There was some documentation within some

departments and was not easily accessible. There were no policies or guidelines to unit

design, teaching approaches, or pedagogy, and no clear articulation of what quality

education should look like at the school. Teachers, according to the principal, were teaching

based on their own and often long-established methods, and those methods were not

aligned under a school-wide vision of teaching and learning. While some teachers were

working on developing their teaching approaches and providing students with new learning

experiences, many were keen on maintaining traditional methods.

Identifying Personal Interest in Maintaining the Status Quo

A main factor identified by the principal that played a major role in maintaining the

status quo and resisting change was personal interest. Personal interest was among the

highest-ranked codes in the focus group data analysis as demonstrated in Table 3. Teachers

in the focus group attributed teachers' commitment or non-commitment to the school-wide

change initiative primarily to their personal interests. One teacher said about teachers who

resisted change at first:

> There are some who believe that there is no added value for them as individuals so
>
> why should they put the effort to change, and attend workshops and stay for
>
> afternoon meetings and invest time in research and planning

Talking about teachers who were against the change, the principal said she knew several teachers who did not show explicit and open resistance, but she knew they were against the change initiatives because it did not serve their best interest. It would require them to change their working habits and, invest additional time in planning, attending meetings and professional development events, collaborating with peers, engaging in research and trying new methods, investing more time with students, and attending more to students' individual needs. She explained that many of those teachers were only present at the school when they had classes to teach and were used to just cover their teaching load and use the rest of their time either teaching part-time in other schools or attending to personal matters. Although according to the law and school policy, the school has the right to ask those teachers to be present at school full-time, the principal explained that this was never asked of them before, so it became the norm to not be available at the school beyond their teaching hours. Other teachers were also approaching retirement and had been at the school for more than 30 years. According to the principal and teachers in the focus group, these teachers did not see any long-term benefit for them in putting the effort into the change. According to the principal, "they wanted to be left in peace," especially if the new ways conflict with the individual's personal interest or require him/her to change working conditions.

Another incident that the principal related to personal interest as an impediment involved the financial aid process at the school. There was no clear or formal process for financial aid applications and grants. It used to be discussed directly between the family and the school principal or chief financial officer, and they would decide on the amount of financial aid to be given without resorting to a committee or formal documented criteria.

The principal mentioned that there was transparency in the process and the discounts used to appear in the budget, but the decision for financial aid was mostly based on the discretion of the school's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), which is how it had been for many years. As the school started working on clear policies, processes, criteria and establishing a committee for financial aid that includes different stakeholders from the school community, the CFO and a group of parents resisted this new approach. The CFO also took the matter personally claiming that the requests to formalize the process and include the committee members in the decision-making process showed a lack of trust in his decision and work. The parents also resisted because the new process required them to fill out detailed forms about their financial situation. This incident and the loss of power by the CFO that it entailed, in addition to some other decisions that aimed to create clear structures and policies for financial operations, lead to the resignation of the CFO, even though he was always included in all meetings and decisions pertaining to building those policies and processes.

Fear of Change

Another ensuing factor that was poignantly mentioned as impeding change by the principal and teachers is fear of change. One teacher said:

> There were many who believed that there is no added value for them as individuals to be part of the change so why put the effort into it…, however, there are others who were afraid of change, or they underestimated their capacity to undergo change.

The fear of change was according to the perspective of the focus group teachers one of the reasons why some teachers did not jump on board and resisted any change initiative.

Participants attributed this fear to the teachers' lack of confidence in their capacity to change. One teacher mentioned that because some teachers have been teaching for a long time, more than 20 years in certain cases, using the same approaches and methods, they feared "getting out of their comfort zone." Another teacher said that some teachers did not think they have the capacity to change, especially at first. She said: "I am someone who used to fear teaching outside the box and I used to believe that the traditional way is the only approach."

As presented so far, the data in this phase reveal that during the first two years, the principal started building a good understanding of the school's workings and its micropolitical landscape. This included a clearer and more realistic and contextual understanding of the challenges ahead, an awareness of the predominantly stagnant environment, and proclivity to maintain long-standing traditions, norms, and the status quo.

The realization of the manifestations of the long stagnation and strong proclivity to maintain the status quo along with the ensuing factors, lead the principal to take certain actions and adopt strategies that will be revealed and delineated through the results in the following sections.

Phase Two:

Actions Taken by the Principal Before the Planning and Implementation of the

Change Initiative

Two years after the assignment of the principal, she started to earn the trust of the Board of Trustees and its chair. The principal said that during her meetings with the Board and BoT chair, they highlighted that she has managed to establish herself as a leader for the school and demonstrated managerial capacity in addition to succeeding in implementing

small-scale initiatives. Upon the recommendation of the BoT chair, the BoT decided to extend the principal's contract and change it from acting principal to principal. The BoT also decided to commence work on the school's six-year extensive renovation and development plan, which is described in the school background in Chapter 3. The principal explained that because she lacked the experience in carrying out such major projects, the BoT chair was to dedicate an adequate amount of his time to mentor and assist her throughout the project, given that he has lead such initiatives in the past in other major institutions. At the same time, the principal was required to complete a diploma in school leadership while working on the project design phase.

This is when the principal said she started to set the stage for the actual planning and implementation phase of the school-wide change and setting its strategic plan in collaboration with the BoT. She knew that she needed to prepare the school environment to be more conducive for the school-wide change initiative before she begins to officially talk about it with the school community. The results from the principal's and focus group interview show that she took the following actions:

1. Adopted non-conflictive strategies to avoid challenging deeply rooted norms and triggering resistance

2. Mobilized support for the change among pro-change individuals

3. Built a leadership team supportive of the school-wide change initiative

4. Started to gradually introduce the idea of change

Adopting Non-conflictive Strategies to Avoid Challenging Deeply Rooted Norms

It shows through the principal's narrative that she had consciously decided not to drastically shake the status quo and trigger resistance. This is evident in the approaches she

followed before planning for change started to take place and during the planning and implementation phases of the school school-wide change initiative.

During the second phase, the principal used two main political tactics to avoid triggering resistance. The first tactic involved remaining close to the faculty and staff and demonstrate that despite her new role she is still part of the teachers' group. The second tactic centered on assuming the role of the inquirer and taking the time to learn firsthand about how the school is organized and how it functions through understanding the scope of work of every staff member.

Under the first tactic, the principal stated that she made sure not to create a fissure between her and the faculty upon assuming the leadership role. She said she learned from the mistakes of the previous two principals. She was a faculty member at that time, and she witnessed firsthand how the teacher-administrator divide became a source of resistance that took place among teachers and staff members. She observed that both principals came from outside the school community and did not take time to understand its culture, norms, and practices before they started implementing major changes, especially those pertaining to school operations or curriculum. As she was a faculty member back then she said that she witnessed how those principals become alienated from the school community. They brought ideas with them and did not invite the staff and faculty to take part in the decision-making process. She observed that this approach made staff and faculty members feel threatened and marginalized which generated resistance. She also noted that teachers in particular resisted someone who approaches them in an authoritative manner. Teachers in the focus group shared the same view, one of them said: "I am someone who if I am forced

to do something I will not do it… I think it is part of human nature, when something is forced upon us we tend to resist".

Thus, the principal tactfully remained connected to staff and faculty and was aware of her advantage of being perceived as one of them. Quoting the principal: "I used to spend 80 percent of my day among teachers, more than today, initially because this is where I still found myself – I wasn't far from them."

Another tactic the principal said she followed hinged on taking the time to listen to faculty and staff; directly inquiring from them about their work. She said she wanted to understand the workings of the school and "how things get done," and found that the best way to do this, especially with the lack of proper documentation and job descriptions, was to learn firsthand from the individuals themselves. They were the ones who had all the information. She said she asked them to write down a sort of draft of their job description based on what they actually do. This enabled her to learn about what they valued and strove to maintain. Even though she did it for the purpose of building a better understanding of their work, these attempts were also used to start drafting actual job descriptions that initially stemmed from the description of staff members themselves but got incrementally modified to ensure more efficiency and effectiveness in terms of school operations. According to the principal, this strategy was effective in that it did not seem as if she is imposing functions on staff members, but rather taking their perspective and then working collaboratively with them to make enhancements and changes to school operations and processes. She said she had the intent to use this documentation as a springboard to ease them into the idea of reconsidering some of these practices and ultimately engaging the

staff members in changing them. The principal asserted that even though this process took time, it achieved its goal while ensuring a smoother transition.

Building a Leadership Team Supportive of the School-wide Change Initiative

The principal said she was quite aware that the school school-wide change initiative requires building a coherent leadership team that endorses change and has the capacity to play a key role in implementing the change plans across all school divisions and departments. The intent to build such a team was very clear in the principal's interview where she explained that she aimed at finding individuals from within the school community who are familiar with its norms and power dynamics. The intention to build a strong leadership team for planning and implementing the school-wide change was among the top-ranking codes in the principal's interview as referenced in Table 2. She explained:

> I knew from the beginning that I cannot do this alone, and I needed people who have varied skills and the motivation to help lead the change…I knew that in order to make the change I need a team of people who are competent and committed to the initiative.

In the interview, she emphasized that she was also looking for "individuals who have influence." The term "influence" emerged as the second-highest code in the principal's interview (see Table 2). She elaborated that she wanted individuals who teachers trust and to whom they are ready to listen. She said that with the previous principals, she saw the negative effect of lack of trust on the ability to influence others to engage in attempts for change. She believed that seeking influential individuals from within the school community would inspire teachers to participate in decision-making, promote teachers' collaboration, and buy into the change plans.

The principal attributed the failure of previous principals and leaders who came from outside the school community to their overreliance on the formal authority of their position to enforce their decisions to carry out the change. She said that this realization led her to seek influential faculty members to assume leadership positions. Her view was if those faculty members become enthusiastic about the school-wide change initiative, then they would accordingly influence their colleagues to buy into the change initiatives. According to the principal's account, choosing such influential individuals from among the faculty played, in her opinion, a significant role in the leadership team's ability to manage and realize the change process and promote teachers' sense of ownership about it as well.

The principal's decision to start looking for new individuals to lead the change process, arose as she was reaching a realization that many of the people already in instructional supervision positions were among the supporters of the idea that things are working well and there is no need for change. During her first three years, she said she tried working with them and invited them to be part of the initiative and help her carry out the changes among faculty. She offered them professional development opportunities to help them hone their pedagogical and leadership skills. However, she realized early on that they are not willing to invest time and effort to take a lead role in her school-wide change initiative. She explained:

> This does not mean that I directly succeeded in identifying the right people.
>
> Maybe at the beginning, I focused on some people but I found out that they
>
> were not what I was looking for, so I backed up a little.

In this phase, the principal realized that change cannot be carried out without having a supportive team with her. She also found that this change and the work it entails does not

fall within the personal interest of several individuals who were already in leadership positions. Consequently, she started working on restructuring the school's organizational chart redistributing instructional supervisory functions, and creating new leadership positions for new individuals:

> Given that I wanted to make a change and I knew that it needs time, I was always, as I was present among teachers, looking for individuals who had influence over others. Like who can be with me and help me in making this change, and how can I make room for them in the leadership team.

In addition to looking for influential individuals among faculty and staff, she said she also started looking for those who had extensive teaching experience, and some of them already carried coordination duties. She saw that they had influence over other teachers, in the sense that they had a voice during meetings and teachers listen to them. However, she soon realized she could not rely on most of them to be taking part in leading the school school-wide change initiative. She found they too had a high proclivity to maintain the status quo. Giving an example about one of those teachers, she said:

> So mainly my initial criteria were people who had been for a long time at the school, and I found had influence over others. However, I directly realized that he cannot help me much in making change; he talks more than what he does. Although we stayed on good terms, I realized that I could not rely on him to be an agent of change at the school. He was someone who thought that the school was doing well and that there is no need for change.

Consequently, the principal decided to reconsider her criteria. She started looking for individuals who are taking initiative in their own work even if they do not have extensive

experience. A compromise she said paid off in the end. The compromise she made in the criteria, however, did keep influence at the top:

> When I found the person whom I thought could be the head of middle and
> upper school I found someone who was young hardworking and motivated.
> Someone who students used to listen to and respect and even looked up
> to… I also saw in him someone who influenced faculty members and
> someone whom they listen to and respect. Someone who started to make
> interesting changes inside his classroom although he was relatively new at
> the school.

After three years of being appointed, the principal took the first major step in restructuring the school organizational chart, mainly pertaining to instructional supervision. The individuals whom the principal had been scouting for were appointed in leadership positions along with a restructuring of the responsibilities of many positions. A new head of the preschool division was appointed to be fully dedicated to the preschool division as opposed to the previous HoD who was heading preschool and cycle one. The newly appointed HoD was a preschool teacher who had been at the school for around four years. A new HoD was appointed for lower school (grades 1 to 6) to replace the previous HoD who was head of cycle 2 (grades 4, 5, and 6) and middle school division. The newly appointed HoD was also a faculty member. A new HoD was appointed to be in charge of the middle and upper school divisions (grades 7 to 12). He was also a faculty member who had been at school for four years. Before him, there was no HoD for the upper school division. There was only a supervisor who handled student behavior and carried out logistical work, and who did not take part in academic matters or instructional supervision

functions. A new coordinator for the special education department was appointed who was also a faculty member. This major restructuring was also preceded and followed by changes in department coordinators by appointing new people who were also current faculty members.

Intentionally Promoting the Notion of Change

Another action that emerged from the principal and focus group interview when talking about the phase right before the planning and implementation of the strategic plan is "intentionally promoting the notion of change". The principal was trying to render the term 'change' more familiar among faculty. The way the principal put it, she wanted people "to get used to talking about change and get used to the sound of it without it triggering a defensive attitude". She said she would intentionally drop the term "change" in as many meetings as possible and allow faculty to reflect on the term with regard to their experience. This approach was accompanied by another strategy to intentionally demonstrate that what can be characterized as 'change' does not need to be drastic, that it could start with small-scale initiatives and small steps that stem from the needs identified by the school community members. The principal or instructional supervisors would suggest small changes to be introduced by teachers who showed openness to new ideas or strategies to implement in their classrooms. They will then highlight how those strategies would aim at addressing a challenge that teachers have personally identified. Once they implement the new strategy, the change and its impact on students will be then shared during a department or division meeting. The principal explained that the main purpose of this strategy was for "teachers to highlight the positive outcome and impact on students' learning that this slight change in strategy or approach had". Teachers in the focus group said those pockets of

change and the discussions that followed took place in almost all departments and divisions, creating a ripple effect that resonated across the school. These actions were perceived by most interviewees to have set the stage for the coming phase.

The principal and teachers in the focus group agreed that this strategy might have eased the fears of many teachers toward change. At the time, the strategy provided participating teachers with a sense of empowerment that encouraged them to assume a participative role in the forthcoming major school-wide change initiative. Teachers in the focus group largely concurred with this notion. They highlighted the encouragement provided by the leadership team which motivated them to initiate and take part in school-wide change initiatives. One teacher said: "Even before we started hearing about the school change initiative, we were given opportunities to try new things, especially things that we are interested in and the school would provide us with the resources we needed." Another teacher highlighted the supportive role of the subject coordinator by saying:

> she used to encourage me to try new things even if we tried and it did not
>
> work we did not use to worry that this thing is going to affect our image or
>
> position at school. So, we always had the space to work and try things and
>
> see how to reach the results that we want even if it was not done at a fast
>
> pace…

The principal said that the leadership team also used this strategy as an opportunity to identify teachers who had a readiness to embark on an extensive change process. As the following parts of this chapter will show, the school leadership used this information to build a critical mass of teachers that according to the principal and teachers in the focus group played a paramount role in the success of the school school-wide change initiative.

Phase Three:

Managing Resistance During the Planning and Implementation Change Phase

According to the principal, the actions taken in phase two prepared the school for the launching of the official planning for and implementation of the school-wide change initiative. The leadership team was mostly mobilized and active. Ideas of change and small initiatives have started to gain momentum and resonate across the school, and several teachers have started to show motivation to try new initiatives. This is when the principal said she announced the school's future direction to start working on a 6-year extensive strategic plan that will encompass changes in all areas of the school. As plans for buildings and grounds were being drawn, the principal initiated the planning for the teaching and learning among the school faculty and staff. The principal and teachers in the focus group talked about several strategies that the school followed, which played a major role in the success of the planning and implementation phase and managed resistance. The strategies aimed at creating a participatory approach to leadership and create genuine opportunities for all faculty and staff to take part in decision-making. The actions also aimed at building strong communication channels between the leadership and faculty. Another key strategy that emerged from the principal and teachers in the focus group revealed the school leadership's differentiated approach in managing groups of teachers, mainly those who were pro-change and those who were still against change.

Involving Faculty and Staff in Decision Making

During the official planning and implementation phase of the school-wide change initiative, the school leadership followed strategies to promote teachers' engagement and participation in decision-making pertaining to main tenants of the strategic plan. These

strategies were implemented through several actions and activities and mainly included

discussing and revising the sections related to the school's mission and vision for

education, the learner profile the school aspires to realize, and the appropriate pedagogy

that would ensure the attainment of its vision. The impact the school wishes to have on its

students was at the core of those discussions and events. Almost the same actions and

events were mentioned during the interview with the principal and with the focus group

teachers. They all conquered that those actions raised among many teachers a sense of

ownership and appreciation for playing an integral role in the school-wide change initiative,

especially in its design and planning. One teacher said:

> I can still remember the long meetings with the whole faculty and staff in the
>
> old assembly before it got renovated when we were reviewing the mission
>
> statement and deciding together on a common vision for the school for the
>
> coming years … I guess because of this kind of inclusion in decision making,
>
> we got encouraged to jump on board and be enthusiastic about the process.

Two of the main actions were mentioned by the principal and the teachers in the focus

group as promoting teachers' participation in the planning for change phase and helped

build a common vision and direction shared by all stakeholders. These included engaging

teachers in identifying areas for change through peer observation, and engaging teachers in

deciding on the direction of the change.

Engaging Teachers in Identifying Areas for Change Through Peer Observation

The principal and four teachers gave an example of a strategy that was implemented

by the leadership team. It was a peer observation program. Throughout a whole term during

the initial stages of the strategic planning phase, the leadership team asked all the teachers to attend classroom observations with at least 10 other teachers from different subject matters. With every observation, teachers were asked to write down on a specific form what they have observed about students' engagement during the session. Teachers would write about how much students were engaged, what was the type of engagement, and what can be done to get them more engaged in the learning process. All the data and ideas were gathered and synthesized. The data and outcome were then discussed in large group meetings among teachers and the academic leadership team. The data collected from peer review was used to delineate areas that the school can work on to promote students' engagement in learning. According to the principal, the significance of this exercise was that it focused the attention on the students and not the teachers. Teachers in the focus group said it helped teachers construct an idea about what is happening in other classes and hence in the school in general and encouraged teachers to look outside of what is happening in their own classrooms. Teachers concurred that this exercise also helped break the isolation and promoted peer collaboration and engaging in discussions about pedagogy and curricula, which eventually constituted an integral part of the school routine during the change process. The strategy also generated a consensus among teachers that there was indeed a lot of work that can be done to increase student engagement, and that this work and effort should stem from the needs of students and teachers at the school.

Engaging Teachers in Deciding on the Direction of the Change (the What and How)

The principal and the teachers made several references to the meetings and events that were held at the school with the participation of all faculty and staff members in different working formats to revise the school's mission statement, create the vision for the

new strategic plan and agree on common goals and objectives related to teaching and learning. The main meetings took place in a workshop format and during in-service days so as not to have faculty and staff members engage in such work during weekends or in the afternoon after a long day of work.

Many of the meetings hinged around questions related to what type of student does the school want to graduate and with what attributes - what do we want to see students doing at school - how should learning at this school look like. The insight from the peer observation provided material for discussion as well. Having a common goal and vision or direction for the future was mentioned by teachers in the focus group as a main driver for change. Teachers concurred that this gave them common goals to strive for, including the decision to seek international accreditation. One teacher conveyed this as "it gave the school community a direction and common goal or purpose for everyone to work towards." The teachers also conveyed that having an active role in the process of coming up with the school goals and vision created in them a sense of "ownership" and "responsibility" and a challenge they committed to meet. One teacher expressed this notion by saying: "No one wanted to be the reason for the school to fail in achieving the goals, especially after witnessing the hard work, effort, and investment that was put into the process."

Differentiated Management of Teachers' Responses to Change

The interviews revealed the salient role of the principal and the school leadership team in understanding the emerging new dynamic and ability to navigate the micropolitical environment especially during the process of change. During the initial interview with the principal, she referred to teachers as if belonging to two groups, those who were with the school-wide change initiative and those who were not with the initiative and resisted it

whether passively or actively. The teachers in the focus group said that during the first stages of the school-wide change initiative process, when the meetings with faculty and staff started taking place for reviewing the school's vision and setting the goals, two groups among teachers started to emerge. One group included teachers who were open to the ideas and plans of change and were willing to take part in the initiative albeit with different levels of enthusiasm, especially during the preliminary phases. The other group included teachers who were highly skeptical about the school-wide change initiative and resisted it. Two teachers even mentioned that some teachers in the second group were often cynical when they referred to the change plans: "They sometimes used to say that we were working and putting effort for nothing, and that we should not trouble ourselves." The distinction between these two groups endured throughout the change implementation phase with varying intensity and dynamics. Upon inquiring further about the emergence of the two groups after the initial coding phase, the principal and focus group teachers noted that the resisting group constituted the majority of faculty and staff especially during the initial stages of the change initiative. However, they expressed that this changed with time as more members started to jump on board the change plans. I will henceforth refer to the first group as the pro-change group and the second as the resisting group.

The principal managed these two groups through a differentiated approach. The subsequent presentation of results, henceforth, will mainly expand on the actions and approaches taken by the principal and school leadership to manage the resisting group, and the actions taken to empower and expand the pro-change group.

Managing the Resisting Group

As the two groups started to emerge, the principal talked about strategies that she and few leadership team members followed to manage the group of resisting teachers to contain the "negative impact" on others. Especially, that some of the resisting members had influence among teachers. The principal saw that the change initiatives were not within the interest of those teachers especially after she tried on many occasions to align the school's goal toward change with their personal interest and agenda. She reported that she failed despite all her efforts to break through their resistance. Therefore, the principal mainly used her personal connection with this group stemming from the fact that they have been colleagues to contain the impact of their resistance. She kept those teachers "close" as she said and did not make them feel threatened by the change plans. An example that the principal gave is that she used to talk to them individually in an informal setting and ask them to be more supportive of the changes: "I used to talk to them 'bil mawneh'". She said she approached those teachers on a personal basis because they had been colleagues and there was already trust established between them. She also would ask them to support younger teachers as they are trying new initiatives instead of being cynical about the potential impact of the actions taken by those teachers. She explained:

> I used to always say; let's try, let's give this thing a chance and see what happens – why should we judge before trying – plus we can always try something different or go back to the way we do things.

The principal said that this approach "used to mitigate the resistance as opposed to me saying for example that you have to do this because I say so." She also said:

Sometimes I used to tell them: do it for me, especially if it is something small, just give it a chance… I used to also talk with those who had high voices during the meetings alone or beforehand and kind of make sure they just go along with it.

Another strategy the principal used to manage resisting teachers is related to using her formal power in retaining or dismissing teachers who have reached the age of retirement. As per the Lebanese law, a school does not have the right to dismiss a tenured teacher without paying full compensation commensurate to that of the teacher's pension. As most of the resisting teachers were close to the age of retirement, their compensation for dismissal would amount to large sums of money the school could not afford to pay at once. However, once they reach the age of 64, then the school can ask them to retire and they receive their pension from the national pension fund. As almost all of those teachers had an interest in resuming teaching beyond the age of 64 at school, this card was used by the principal to manage their resistance. She did this by asking the first teacher to retire after he reached 64. The principal explained that he was one of the loudly resisting teachers. Other teachers within this group became less resistant to change, at least actively, after this incident fearing that the school would let go of them after retirement age.

Building and Expanding the Pro-change Group

The salient role of the leadership team and middle management was paramount in forming, supporting, and expanding the pro-change group. The principal talked extensively during the interview about the role of one of the leadership team members, who used to be a teacher at the school, in managing to build and lead a group of teachers in one of the divisions that mainly contained the majority of resisting teachers. Upon interpretation of the

data collected, it became clear that the pro-change group did not completely emerge by coincidence but was to a large extent intentionally formed. A previous section of this discussion already discussed the intentional formation of the leadership team by the principal. The members of this team were also part of the pro-change group along with a number of teachers. As a result, pro-change group created a critical mass that, with time, included the majority of teachers. With the support of the principal, the newly appointed HoDs, all from the pro-change group, managed to identify and encourage teachers who had the readiness to be part of the school-wide change initiative. These groups of teachers in the different divisions and departments became part of a larger group that included leadership team members as well.

As the principal explained, the strategy consisted of identifying teachers who have a readiness for change for the purpose of building a group of teachers who would start to drive the change forward. Two teachers in the focus group highlighted the imperative role that the presence of teachers with a readiness for change played in the success of the school-wide change initiative. They explicitly conveyed the statement that if those who already had a readiness and predisposition to change were not numerous at that juncture, the school would not have managed to succeed in its school wide change initiative. This notion was elaborately conveyed by one of the teachers:

> I am one of the people who used to always say that we need to make a change and start changing our approaches, and then I was given a chance by the administration with other colleagues and we entered into the change. There used to be a lot of discussions between faculty in terms of who agrees and who doesn't, and some voiced their opinion that they do not want to change because they are used to the

way they teach. But because there was "yeast" [a catalyst] already present there, the

school managed to succeed with the change. And this is definitely the right of the

admin to do this, I am not criticizing it.

Another teacher also supported the notion by saying:

I want to assert one thing: if there were not a group of teachers who aspired for

change but were not given a chance to make it before, and then acted when the

opportunity was given to them, the school leadership would not have been able to

carry the change

One teacher explained that the expansion in the number of teachers in support of

the change came as a result of the actions of the principal and leadership team, namely,

allowing them the discretion to contribute to the decision-making process. He noted that

they were not given the chance and opportunity with previous principals to voice or

implement their ideas: "If a teacher had a new idea or an initiative, he/she was not to be

listened to," "all decisions came from above."

Those comments by the teachers highlight the notion that there had always been

teachers at the school who had a readiness and drive to initiate and be part of change

despite its predominantly normative environment, but they were not given agency and were

only asked to carry out decisions.

In what follows, the factors and actions that supported the formation and expansion

of the pro-change group in addition to the main emerging actions that strengthened the

alignment between the interests of individual teachers in this group and those of the school

will be presented. These include: fostering personal interest in change, promoting teachers'

sense of pride toward the school, promoting teachers' agency and sense of empowerment, and establishing open and continuous communication and collaboration.

Fostering Personal Interest in Change. Personal interest was among the highest-ranked codes in the focus group data analysis as shown in Table 3. One of the questions in the focus group interview looked into the reasons that encouraged teachers to take part in the school-wide change initiative instead of resisting it. All 13 teachers in the interview, who consider themselves to have been generally in favor of the school-wide change initiative and not resisting it, answered by saying that, initially, they had a personal interest in doing so. They then mentioned that the change would also benefit the school and the students.

> …so it is within my personal interest as a teacher to be teaching in a school
> that holds such good ranking. So I am developing myself and growing as an
> educator. I have reached a stage as a teacher where it does not benefit me
> anymore to keep doing things the way I have always done and not change
> my approaches. It is also within my personal interest to improve as a teacher
> so that I would have a better profile and more opportunities. So I am
> benefiting as a teacher from all aspects; and of course, our students are
> benefiting as well…

Teachers mentioned personal interest as a main driver for change and they placed it before the school interest in their responses. One teacher said: "For me, although it was challenging and demanding, I knew that I was doing something that would benefit me personally and the school at the same time." Their responses surfaced the interplay between the personal interest of the individuals in an organization and that of the organization.

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However, they all seem to agree that the success of a change initiative is highly predicated on the alignment between the organization's interest and the personal interest of the individuals acting in it.

The principal's awareness of teachers' personal interest especially in terms of resistance to change was mentioned earlier in the results when she attributed it to one of the main reasons behind the tendency to maintain the status quo for a group of teachers. After the teachers in the focus group highlighted personal interest as a main driver for change, the researcher sought more data on this topic during the second interview with the principal. The questions sought to find out how much and how the principal and the leadership team intentionally worked to identify teachers' personal interest and align it with promoting the interest of the school. The principal said that she always explicitly emphasized the personal development and growth that teachers will undergo because of the school-wide change initiative and how it will enhance their professional portfolio. One teacher highlighted the reciprocity of the interaction between the personal interest of the teachers and that of the institution by saying: "If the school does not develop then we will not develop and if we do not develop then the school will not develop." Other quotes by teachers that referred to their interest in personal and professional development included: "It is within my personal interest to improve as a teacher so that I would have a better profile and more opportunities," and "development and change is not only for the school but for us as well."

The principal and teachers in the focus group talked about incentives that the school leadership gave to teachers especially to those who were enthusiastically working toward the change plans and working on their professional growth and student learning. The principal said many of those teachers were given leadership functions. Those were not in

the form of extra tasks or office work but in the form of instructional supervision functions like mentoring, coordinating departments, and coaching.

As the leadership team was growing and the instructional supervision organization chart expanding, the principal sought to appoint teachers who had demonstrated an affinity for the change plans and started to make genuine changes in their classrooms in instructional supervisory positions. One teacher said she was appointed as the coordinator of the Math department because of the work she had accomplished as a teacher. She said this gave her the opportunity to help impact change beyond her classroom and add to her professional experience.

In addition to providing teachers with opportunities for career advancement, the school supported the teachers' professional learning and growth that is also in alignment with the school change plans objectives. The principal also reported that the school leadership encouraged and facilitated their participation in national conferences and professional development events to share their work, the new approaches, and pedagogies they are implementing, or the results of the action research they have conducted. Teachers concurred that those opportunities served as incentives to further encouraged more teachers to be part of the school-wide change initiatives. One of the examples was shared by a teacher who, for a whole term, decided to implement flipped learning in one of the high school classes. She said the school encouraged her to do so and provided her with the resources, tools, and online platform to be able to engage students in the flipped learning experience. After implementation, she said she prepared a comparative study between the flipped classroom class and another regular class that she taught and presented the result to all faculty. She reported that, as a result, the school facilitated her participation in a national

professional development event to share her experience with teachers from different schools.

Promoting Teachers' Sense of Pride Toward the School. The fostering of personal interest was conveyed by teachers in congruence with an emerging sense of pride to be part of a school that has reached such a caliber among national schools. For several teachers, the personal interest that was fostered by the school leadership's promotion of teachers' professional growth vis a vis the school change and development also promoted a sense of pride and personal image.

> I feel proud that the school I work at is among the best schools in Beirut. If it weren't for the change and if it weren't for the development in the curriculum and teaching approaches and the new developments that we brought about we would not have reached this stage.

Another teacher said: "I feel proud when talking to colleagues of mine who work in other schools about what we do here and what we have achieved; many want to learn from what we are doing."

It is important to note that this sense of personal interest and pride was not exclusive to young teachers. Three of the teachers in the focus group who have conveyed those sentiments have been working at the school for more than twenty-five years. One of the veteran teachers in the focus group said: "At least for my personal interest as a teacher and as a group of teachers, I am proud that the school I work in is among the top-ranked schools in Beirut."

Promoting Teachers' Agency and Sense of Empowerment. Another action that the principal and school leadership seem to have engaged in, which also emerged from the

analysis of the focus group interview and the principal's interviews was promoting teacher agency. All of the teachers in the focus group expressed that the school leadership actions empowered them, and as a result, they felt trusted to take part in decision-making, voice ideas, and concerns, and take initiatives. They said they were always included in decision-making especially with matters that concern teaching and learning, and curriculum planning. Teachers said they could barely think of an incident where the school leadership forced a decision on them, and they characterized this as an absence of an authoritative approach to leadership. Teachers talked about the meetings that were continuously held and the long discussions that took place to reach agreements. One teacher said that these meetings "provided the opportunity for all to be part of the decision-making process." Teachers also highlighted that the school leadership does take teachers' opinions into consideration and does not only act as if they are listening. They underscored this as a major factor that encouraged other teachers to play a more active role in those decision-making meetings.

Teachers in the focus group highly referenced and acknowledged the agency granted to them in terms of curriculum design, development, and implementation. The principal highlighted this as a main strategy that she and the leadership team aimed for. She said she believed in the importance of having room and agency as a teacher to initiate and draw personal directions for growth. Teachers' avid expression of their agency correlated with being provided the capacity to play an integral role in creating the change and not just being actors who are doing what is asked of them. Teachers' responses emphasized that having the agency and voice in designing learning experiences mitigated resistance. Based on these responses, it became apparent that one major reason for teachers' resistance is the

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feeling that they are not part of the change and that things are enforced on them. One of the teachers noted:

> Being able to initiate and give ideas and implement what we want helped us realize that we can create the change that we want and it made a huge difference, nothing was forced upon us, we had the space and opportunity to explore.

Teachers' agency also resonated through the flexibility and opportunity the leadership has provided teachers with to exercise their capacity to adapt to change in their way. In this regard, teachers' responses revealed that the margin of flexibility that they had and the ability to practice their agency through voicing their ideas and implementing their own initiatives provided them with the room to decide how to adapt to the new requirements and how to be creative about them. This was done without being constrained by strict stringent directives that micro-managed what and how they should go about pedagogical matters, especially ones given by a higher authority. Once everyone agreed on the direction that the school wants to take, and the vision it wishes to realize, an overarching umbrella of quality education was collaboratively designed under which teachers were empowered and encouraged to find their own platform. One teacher conveyed this by saying:

> I taught my first year at school in a rather strict fashion and it was boring and I hated my life…when the school gave me the ability to design my own courses and curriculum, I literary took that advice and ran with it. I was able to be creative and now I am giving a completely online program and I designed my own curriculum and keep updating it. Today education is expanding to horizons that we could not

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have seen happen five or ten years ago and this flexibility is important during

change.

This aspect per se was highly acknowledged by all the teachers in the focus group interview. One teacher said she is the kind of person who if she is forced to do something she would block and simply do not do it. The principal explained that although the strategic change plan had its structure, timeline, objectives, key indicators, etc., it left a good margin for flexibility, mainly for differentiation in terms of teacher's capacity, interests, and creativity. One teacher conveyed this by saying: "I was given the opportunity or the room to just grow because I could be as creative as I wanted in the classroom and students can see that and they can be creative as well." Another teacher compared her experience in this school to that of her previous one:

> In my previous school, I kind of got into problems with the administration
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> because I wanted to make some changes that I found work best for me and
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> my students and they would not allow me to even though the school was
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> working on upgrading the curriculum. When I came here, I found that I have
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> a lot of space to do this…this is one of the best things. It is not only we who
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> are benefiting but the students are as well.

Teachers reported that this approach made a lot of teachers feel empowered and part of the change-building process and not just actors in it, and they found their interest to be aligned with that of the school's. Teachers also highlighted in this regard the high level of understanding by the school leadership toward teachers who were really struggling to cope with the new changes or work on changing and developing their teaching approaches. The principal said that those were mainly teachers who have been teaching for more than

twenty-five years at the school following the same traditional modalities. Teachers in the focus group highlighted that the school leadership's expectations from such teachers were quite reasonable and continuously provided them with the support and professional learning opportunities they needed. When talking about the teachers who were resisting change, one teacher said:

> The understanding approach from the leadership team lessened the resistance of such teachers because they, and everyone else, saw how supportive the school was to them as well as to all other teachers.

Establishing Open and Continuous Communication Channels. Another major strategy that emerged from the data analysis is establishing open and continuous communication that the principal and teachers in the focus group gave ample examples of when talking about the participative approach of the leadership team. They talked about the meetings that used to be held during the early phases of the strategic change plans. They mentioned that all the details and ideas about the plans were openly shared and discussed. Teachers said they always knew what was happening at the school. They felt they can always ask and inquire about matters and would always get a clear response. One teacher mentioned that even the financial details of the school are shared with teachers, which she found unusual at first. Another teacher emphasized the thoroughness of communication among teachers and the school leadership:

> I remember that from day one, things were always explained and shared in detail, especially school strategies. So, there was nothing surprising or sudden that happened and that teachers were not aware of or did not take part in deciding.

The available communication channels were varied, and this was one of the themes that also emerged from the principal's interview. The principal talked a lot about how she was keen from day one to maintain open and honest communication with staff and faculty. These communication channels were institutionalized throughout the change phases via formalized modalities such as fixed weekly meetings throughout the school divisions and departments in addition to the continuous informal ways of communication. Quoting the principal:

> As a leadership team, we made sure that there are continuous and weekly/monthly planned meetings with and among teachers and we kept continuously talking about the change and development. So for example for the academic or teaching and learning part of the plan, the people involved were the Heads of Divisions and departments with continuous discussions and meetings with teachers.

The principal also highlighted another important aspect of continuous communication and holding regular meetings. She explained that these meetings provided venues to intentionally highlight to all attendees the outcome and impact of initiatives and new ideas taken and implemented by teachers. With time, this approach mitigated skepticism toward change and new approaches: "The way I see it that this approach in communication used to mitigate the resistance and give credibility to work being achieved."

The imperative role of emphasizing the outcome and impact of school-wide change initiatives through open communication, especially for mitigating resistance, was explicitly conveyed by a teacher as follows:

During the discussions that used to take place in weekly meetings…we noticed that the different points of view that teachers had about the change came closer to each other and some really got convinced about the need for change because of how much we talked about it and demonstrated the impact that it is creating on students.

All participants pointed out that communication included promoting an exchange of expertise among teachers which also enhanced their professional collaboration. They noted that there were also planned in-service days, held several times a year, where teachers from across divisions shared new approaches and strategies they have already implemented and discussed the impacts and results these strategies had on student learning and motivation. Such opportunities helped cement a perception of change that change does not necessarily need to come from outside the institution, but it stems from the context, needs, and direction that the school community wishes to take. This was conveyed by several teachers during the interview. Teachers acknowledged the fact that most of the change initiatives stem from within the school, they were grounded in the context and not brought from outside. One teacher said: "We always said before the best change is one that is based on the needs of the school and our students, not something from outside." Another teacher said: "The challenges were often arising from when we only look at what is happening outside, and we decide to bring to school."

Ensuring a Supportive Environment. The principal's keen efforts for providing and promoting a supportive environment was the fourth-highest code emerging from the focus group interview. Teachers concurred that the supportive approach of the principal helped teachers who feared change not to feel threatened and provided faculty members with an environment that is conducive for change.

Describing the school leadership approach, teachers in the focus group asserted that the school leadership always tried not to make those teachers feel threatened. The school leadership always demonstrated understanding toward resisting teachers. Regardless of the underlying cause of resistance, teachers in the focus group concurred that the school leadership always made sure not to make individuals feel threatened because they are not responding to the school-wide change initiative and made sure not to conflict with them. One teacher said:

> We never saw a conflicting approach between the school leadership and teachers who were resisting change and voicing their opinion in meetings for example … there was always reassurance and constructive communication even if no common grounds were reached.

Three teachers in the focus group shared that they had feelings of fear at the beginning of the initiative mainly because they were so accustomed to the way they had been teaching for several years and did not feel confident stepping outside their comfort zone. They said with time they gradually overcame fear especially with the progression of the change plans and professional learning opportunities. They attributed this change to the supportive environment the school always strove to ensure. Teachers explained that the school leadership gave teachers the time and space to incrementally explore and try new initiatives. One teacher explained:

> I am someone who used to fear teaching outside the box and I used to believe that the traditional way is the best approach. However, with time I found myself exploring new ideas and ways of teaching … my coordinator was always understanding and never put any pressure on me while she always provided me with

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the support and reassurance to gradually try new approaches and ideas and I started

to see their impact on my students…this has changed me on a personal and

professional level.

The supportive environment that the school and its leadership team strove to

provide along with faculty and community members was a major theme in the data analysis

that emerged from the focus group interview. One teacher said: "I have received a lot of

offers from different schools with even a higher salary, but I did not leave, because I know

I would never find such a supportive environment that gives value to each individual." All

teachers talked about the vital part that the supportive environment played in mitigating

many of the fears and challenges. The emotionally supportive environment was conveyed

by one of the teachers to be present among the student body as well:

I often hear people say that students at this school are emotionally comfortable. So,

I believe that this is very important because at the end of the day if the teachers or

students are not emotionally and mentally comfortable, they won't be able to give or

to produce anything.

Teachers also mentioned in this regard the open-door policy the school management and

leadership have. They did not feel a sense of rigid hierarchy at the school. According to the

teachers, this ensured trust especially during times where things were challenging.

Managing the messy nature of change

The notion that change is challenging and difficult was explicitly conveyed by the

principal and teachers in the focus group. The challenge was conveyed through feelings of

doubt and tiredness and sometimes frustration. One teacher even mentioned being on the

"verge of quitting." Those challenges have the potential to discourage people from pursuing

the work and resist, feel tired, exhausted, and eventually quit, or reach burnout. Parallel to what has been discussed so far about teachers' motivation, agency, collaboration, etc., almost everyone concurred that the 6 or 7 years of the process were not always a joyride. Teachers mentioned feelings of frustration they sometimes felt for not getting the results they wanted. They, at times, felt tired and exhausted because of the extra work and long hours of researching and planning. Two teachers remembered: "We sometimes used to stay at school after classes until late in the afternoon planning and working." Teachers conveyed feeling lost at times and doubtful because things did not always seem to fall into place and the "end was sometimes vague." The principal also expressed feelings of doubt at times, of whether matters are heading in the right direction: "I sometimes used to ask myself whether things will work eventually or whether the hard work will go to waste…especially during high stakes milestones like accreditation for example."

The messy and complex nature of change could be demonstrated through an overview of some of the emerging codes from the analysis of the participants' responses in this case study. The themes reveal expressions about a supportive environment, motivation, agency, open and honest communication, and feelings of pride, accompanied by expressions of fear, frustration, tedious work, and skepticism. However, while this complexity had the potential to result in an increase in resistance, the results show that it did not.

This last statement was manifested through the leadership team approach to deploy and invest most of the effort, time, and resources in supporting and empowering teachers by building on a group of teachers who showed a desire and readiness to change rather than

resorting to conflicting strategies to merely control resisting individuals or groups. One

teacher conveyed this by saying:

> Now at the beginning, there is no doubt that it was difficult and challenging. I
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> remember when we used to sit and discuss things and reflect and work in those
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> committee groups; it was at that time boring, it was long, it was tedious, but the end
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> result was worth it.

Realizing the difficulty and challenging nature of change was evident in the focus

group and principal interview as shown in Tables 2 and 3. The principal conveyed this

realization early on in her principalship and before embarking on the change plans. She said

this awareness has helped her remain realistic and push through with the help of the

leadership team, teachers and support from the school community and BoT members to

prevent change plans from failing and reaching another stagnation, or compelling faculty

and staff members to resist, give up, or quit. This was mainly realized through the strategies

and actions presented in this chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results that emerged from the interview with the

principal and the focus group. The results were presented according to the three main

phases pertaining to the school-wide change initiative. During the first phase, the principal

mainly took the time to identify and understand the factors that could impede the change

process at the school level. It is during this period that the principal managed to build a

good understanding of the workings of the school on the administrative and instructional

level especially in terms of the culture's reaction to change and build a clear idea of its

micropolitical landscape. She also became aware of the initial impediments to change, mainly the pervasiveness of norms that protect the status quo. During the second phase, the principal started to set the stage for the actual planning and implementation phase of the strategic plan and prepared the school environment to be more conducive for the change initiative. Results show that she adopted non-conflictive strategies to avoid challenging deeply rooted norms and triggering resistance, mobilized support for the change among pro-change individuals, built a leadership team supportive of the school-wide change initiative and started to gradually introduce the idea of change. The actions taken in phase two prepared the school for the launching of the official planning for and implementation of the school-wide change initiative which marks the third phase. The leadership team was mostly mobilized and active. Ideas of change and small initiatives had started to gain momentum and resonate across the school, and several teachers had started to show motivation to try new initiatives. The results presented several strategies that the school followed, which played a major role in the success of the planning and implementation phase and managed resistance. A key strategy that emerged from the results is the school leadership's differentiated approach in managing groups of teachers, mainly those who were pro-change and those who were still against change. The main strategies aimed at creating a participatory approach to leadership and create opportunities for all faculty and staff to take part in decision-making. The actions also aimed at building strong communication channels between the leadership and faculty and ensure continuous support during the whole change process.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will discuss the results presented in Chapter 4 drawing from the conceptual understanding presented in the literature review and using the lens of micropolitics to answer the main research questions of this study. I will discuss the principal's role in understanding the micropolitical landscape of the school with its power dynamics and the impact this understanding had on the school-wide change initiative. I will also discuss the contextual factors that impeded and supported the change initiative and the micropolitical strategies that the principal and school leaders used to manage resistance and realize the school-wide change initiatives within the context of the school. The chapter will conclude with a model for effecting change while attending to the micropolitical dynamics in a context similar to the case-study school and highlight implications for practice and research.

An Organizational Culture Clinging to Tradition as the Major Impediment to Change

This section will discuss research question one mainly the factors that impede the change process at the school level. The main factor that emerged to challenge the initiation of change at the school level and was underscored in the results as a major impediment, was the high proclivity to maintain the status quo by different stakeholders. The case-study school underwent a long period of stagnation that spanned throughout the Lebanese civil war and for about 15 years thereafter. Throughout that time, the main purpose of the school was to survive the turmoil that the country was facing, resume operation and sustain what it has been offering to cater to the neighboring community. Maintaining and sustaining the

status quo became highly valued during that phase where preserving traditions and norms was regarded as essential for the school's survival. Oplatka (2004) asserts that principals in developing countries were found to be more conservative and tend to seek stability rather than causing any disruption or change. A finding that can be attributed to the high level of uncertainty that harsh sociopolitical conditions create. These conditions in themselves, according to Altrichter and Moosbrugger (2015), interfere with what school members see as desirable and of interest and work to resist any initiative that might threaten to change them. As a result, this long period of stagnation that the school underwent cemented a school culture with a stronger attachment to the status quo and strong alienation from the notion of change.

Sarason (1990) pointed at the "sense of tradition" that "seems right, natural, and proper" (p. 35) as a major impediment that works against change initiatives. At the case-study school, it became clear that at the time the principal was appointed, the school's organizational culture was characterized by having a penchant for preserving norms and traditions. Many were questioning the need for change and found things to be "ideal" as they are. This was also reinforced by holding to expectations to maintain valued traditions that were upheld by previous school principals and current stakeholders. Teachers in the focus group and the principal concurred that a good number of faculty and staff demonstrated strong resistance toward the idea of rethinking existing norms and habits and considering different and new possibilities. Rather, they worked to strengthen the status quo, which in turn exacerbated the resistance to change. The principal conveyed that the challenge did not reside in agreeing on the type of change and in whose interest it falls, but

rather in getting the school community to realize the need for change. As such she had to address the "why" before the "what" and "how".

Consequently, we can infer that the complexity of an educational change initiative is commensurate to the extent to which this change will challenge and shake the existing status quo and reality of the school context. In the case-study school, the results show that the school context strengthened the proclivity to maintain the status quo and past norms and hence render change more challenging.

The tendency to preserve past norms is not only an attribute of the school's culture during the pre-change initiative phase but one that extends to the national culture. The tendency to preserve past norms as a cultural characteristic is discussed in Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2021). One of Hofstede's dimensions is Long Term Orientation or what he also refers to as Pragmatic. This dimension addresses the nature of the links that every society has to preserve its own past "while dealing with the challenges of the present and future" (Hofstede, 2021). Societies that score low on this dimension are considered normative societies. They prefer to preserve as much as possible "time-honored traditions and norms" and are suspicious of change. According to the Hofstede-Insights website, Lebanon has a very low score of 14/100 on this dimension. This shows that within the normative Lebanese culture, people have a high tendency to preserve norms and traditions, rather than planning for new possibilities (Hofstede, 2021). This predominant normative characteristic of the Lebanese culture as per Hofstede's model appears to have accentuated the normative tendencies within the school organizational culture, as described earlier, explaining the strong resistance to change that the principal experienced during the pre and initial phases of the school-wide change initiative.

It is not within the scope of this study to delve into the impact of the national culture on that of the school or to deeply investigate the characteristics of the cultures and subcultures at the school level. However, we can conclude that the normative cultural context on both the school and national level exacerbated the proclivity to hold onto tradition, past norms, and maintain the status quo and working conditions, which in turn further alienated the school community from the notion of change and formed a major impediment to any attempt at initiating change.

Mapping the Micropolitical Landscapes of the School

In this section, I will discuss the third research question which aimed at mapping the micropolitical landscape of the school including the formal and informal power dynamics involved, and the ways staff and faculty resisted change using their formal and informal power. Mapping the micropolitical landscape of the school, I found two landscapes that emerged from the study. The first landscape characterized the school during the pre-change initiative phase. The second landscape started to emerge during the change phase shaped by the principal's actions and persisted afterward. In this section, I will describe the micropolitical landscape of the school prior to the school-wide change initiative and the alterations it underwent throughout and after the change. I will do this while drawing on the theoretical understanding of micropolitics articulated in the literature, mainly, the sources of power that were employed by individuals to resist or to effect change, the imperative role of influence as a source of informal power, and the important role that personal interest plays as a resistor to or driver for change. I will hence refer to the landscapes as micropolitical landscape I and micropolitical landscape II.

Micropolitical Landscape I

In micropolitical landscape I, the majority of faculty and staff saw change to be an action that is against their personal interest, and as guardians to the norms they value a group of teachers and staff mobilized to resist it resorting to informal power. This group was mainly driven by maintaining the existing working conditions and the status quo. Its informal power and influence were at times more impactful than the formal power that the previous principals possessed.

Personal interest had a paramount presence and role within the micropolitical landscape of the case study school. Teachers in the focus group attributed teachers' commitment or non-commitment to change to the extent the change initiative aligned with their personal interest. The case study results asserted that personal interest of individuals cannot be overlooked or ignored especially while introducing change that does not align with those interests. As Altrichter and Moosbrugger (2015) argued, changes that a school-wide initiative entails will interfere with what school members see as desirable and of interest and as a result, are more likely to work to resist it. As Jakobi's (2015) micropolitics theory also maintained, not all behavior is motivated by the pursuit of achieving collective goals. Individuals often do not make decisions based on what will advance organizational or policy goals, rather, self-interest is recognized as a motivation for behavior within an organization (Jakobi, 2015). The school-wide change at the case study school required staff members to let go of some of their power and control over specific functions. Furthermore, the change required faculty members to invest additional time in planning, attend meetings and professional development events, collaborate with peers, engage in research and try new methods, invest more time with students, and attend more to students' individual needs, which also required extra effort and time. Within micropolitical landscape I, a large

group of teachers did not find any personal interest in putting in the extra time and effort. They saw their interest to be in maintaining the working conditions and the status quo. This resisting group had a large and effective impact.

Influence was a primary source of informal power that was integral to the micropolitical landscape of the case study school whether it was used to resist change as in micropolitical landscape I, or to effect change as we will see in micropolitical landscape II. As Hoyle (1982) also mentions, influence often resides with teachers who possess varied sources of informal power stemming from certain traits or access to resources. Influence exerts informal power that can be used to mobilize individuals or groups of people to push for a specific agenda, resist change, or effect change, and can be more powerful and impactful than formal power (Hoyle, 1982). In micropolitical landscape I, teachers mainly used close connections and coalition building, and exclusive access to information as main sources of informal power and as means for resisting change.

Hoyle (1982) mentions access to information as a source of influence and informal power. This form of influential informal power also emerged as part of micropolitical landscape I in the form of the resisting group's possession and retaining of important information especially among staff members who had a long history at the school. Retaining information and exclusive access to information is described by the literature on micropolitics as a form of informal power. This becomes especially impactful when this knowledge is exclusively present with the people who are opposed to the change, and they use it for their personal interest and/or to maintain the status quo.

Hoyle (1982) also mentions close connections as a source of informal power that is influential in an organization. The case study school had a long-established community

with a group of teachers who had been working together for many years (more than 25 years for some). In micropolitical landscape I, a large group of teachers used coalition building to exert influence and power to resist change especially during the change attempts of the previous two principals. The close connections between teachers facilitated coalition building, which was deployed in the face of change to resist it. The coalition of this predominant group of teachers with close connections generated informal power that worked against change. This led to a school-wide resistance that marginalized teachers who had a drive for change.

Micropolitical Landscape II

Micropolitical landscape II was found during and after the change period and was characterized by the emergence and eventually predominance of a group of pro-change teachers who possessed the drive to effect school-wide change and gradually acquired the informal power to influence its course. Power shifted from one group of resisting teachers in micropolitical landscape I to another group in micropolitical landscape II. The new group in micropolotical II was formed and empowered by the school principal and leadership team to effect change, as the later sections will show. Thus, the first micropolitical landscape that was mostly characterized by power residing mostly with the resisting group who constituted the majority of teachers and staff, started to shift with the emergence of a new group whose influence eventually predominated and changed the micropolitical landscape of the school. Thus, the building and empowerment of the pro-change group by the school leadership shifted the centralization of informal power from the resisting group to the pro-change group. This shift in power played a major role in the

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success of the school-wide change initiative. Interestingly, in micropolitical landscape II, the personal interest of the majority of teachers became aligned with the goals of the school-wide change initiative as the next sections will also show.

I will now move to discuss the second and fourth research questions pertaining to factors that supported and enhanced the change process at the school level and the strategies used by the school principal and leadership to manage the power dynamics at the school towards limiting resistance and realizing the intended change. These strategies are grounded in the understanding of the school's micropolitical landscape and the school's cultural context.

Using Differentiated Strategies to Manage Resistance and Effect Change

The notion of using different forms of power by the same leaders is evident in the differentiated management approach followed by the school principal and leadership team with the two groups of teachers that emerged during the change process – the pro-change group and the resisting group. The study results showed that the emergence of these two groups played a major role in the change process especially within the micropolitical landscape of the school that surfaced during that time. The pro-change group, which according to the results, started as a small group and then grew to form a critical mass supportive of change, was formed, supported, and empowered by the school principal and leadership team through strategies that are grounded in their understanding of the micropolitical landscape of the school. These strategies included actions of empowerment, sharing leadership functions, continuous support, and open communication and collaboration, which all fall under the "power with" domain. As for the resisting group, the principal and leadership team were aware not to conflict with them and avoided using

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"power over" strategies; however, the principal used negotiation and transactional approaches to control the resisting group, which mainly fall under the "power through" domain.

The strategies the principal used during the first two years - during the pre-change initiative phase - played a major role in the success of the coming phases. She managed to build a good understanding of the school's workings and its micropolitical landscape. Based on that understanding the principal and leadership team used a differentiated approach to manage resistance and succeeded in building a culture supportive of change.

The remainder of this section will discuss the strategies that the principal and leadership team used to navigate the micropolitical landscape of the school, manage the resisting group and empower and expand the pro-change group. The strategies will be categorized under three key headings (a) avoiding conflictive or "power over" strategies; (b) using power through strategies; (c) using "power with" strategies to effect change.

Avoiding Conflictive or 'Power Over' Strategies

We can infer from the case study results that upon her assignment the principal was keen to adopt non-conflictive strategies, especially when dealing with resisting individuals or groups mainly to avoid challenging deeply rooted norms. However, before discussing the strategies used by the principal and leadership team to manage the resisting group, it is important to discuss how the principal and teachers in the focus group perceived resistance.

The study results showed that the principal and teachers were aware of the multiple reasons why people resisted. Moreover, they embraced this resistance and did not frame it through a deficit perspective that blamed the teachers. This awareness also played a role in how the principal and leadership team dealt with resistance. The principal perceived

resistance as a natural element of any change process and addressed it with a non-confrontational approach based on her understanding of the school's power dynamics. Furthermore, she also realized that individuals might resist change out of their convictions; believing that what they are doing is what is best for the institution and themselves as highlighted in Achinstein et al. (2006). An example of this is individuals in the case study school who resisted change because they thought that maintaining tradition is something to be valued and was praised by the school culture and previous leadership.

The principal did not clash with those individuals who appeared to resist change at first. She remained close to all the teachers and staff and approached them from the standpoint of an inquirer who is trying to understand their stance and behavior. Ford (2010) supports this approach arguing that creating confrontational dynamics with resisting individuals will alienate principals from the individuals who they need to partake in or support the implementation of change. Teachers in the focus group interview concurred that the school leadership team was always supportive of all teachers even those who resisted, the principal was always understanding and never made resisting teachers feel threatened.

Using 'Power Through' Strategies

The study results reveal that the principal exercised several 'power through' strategies and mainly relied on negotiation and transactional strategies especially with resisting individuals or groups. Power through is facilitative power where leadership strategies are transactional such as through a system of rewards and sanctions with negotiation playing an important role (Smeed et al., 2009).

Using Negotiation as a 'Power Through' tactic. Based on the study results, the principal used negotiation as a 'power through' tactic. According to Smeed et al. (2009), negotiation is an important aspect of a 'power through' approach where the principal engages in negotiation with staff instead of being the major and sole authority that enforces policies or processes.

The first example is when dealing with staff members who held back information especially about their work and processes. As the principal was aware that certain staff members used their exclusive access to information as a tactic to maintain the status quo and serve their personal interest before the institution's, she decided to negotiate access to this information by spending time with them and directly inquiring from them about the details of their work. She then used the acquired knowledge to invite them to collaboratively develop new processes and procedures. This ultimately led to drafting actual job descriptions that initially stemmed from the description of staff members themselves, but got incrementally modified through an extended process of negotiations to ensure more efficiency and effectiveness in terms of school operations. This strategy was effective and helped the principal avoid clashing with her staff. Through this tactic, the principal did not seem as if she is imposing new functions on staff members, but rather taking their perspective and then negotiating with them in terms of what can gradually be changed and enhanced to make the work more effective without drastically and suddenly changing the working conditions for those individuals.

The principal also used a negotiation-based tactic to manage the group of resisting teachers who had influence accentuated by their seniority at school and to contain their impact on other teachers. After realizing that the change initiatives were not within the

personal interest of those teachers, the principal mainly used her personal connections with them, which she built when they were her colleagues for a long time. She kept those teachers "close", as she said, and did not make them feel threatened by the change plans. The principal said that she used to talk to them individually in an informal setting and wished for them to be more supportive of the changes. She said she approached those teachers "bil mawneh" because they have been colleagues for a long time. The term "bil mawneh" that the principal used is found in colloquial Lebanese Arabic and does not have an equivalent in formal Arabic. The concept of "bil mawneh" or "yamoun" has social dimensions and connotations in Lebanese society. An article written in "Al Raai" (2012) explains that the social connotations of the term "yamoun" refer to those who can influence others and make them respond to their request based on the good social connection they have sustained with them over the years. The specific use of this term signifies the influence-based connection between the principal and teachers, which is contextually socially understood and which she used to influence those teachers to mitigate their overt resistance and seek their support. The principal said that she would ask them to support younger teachers as they are trying new initiatives instead of being cynical about their potential impact. The principal believed that this approach helped mitigate resistance as opposed to her using an authoritative or "power over" approach which might have trigger stronger resistance.

 Using Transactional Strategies. According to Smeed et al. (2009) "power through" is transactional in nature involving a system of rewards and sanctions, which is also part of the negotiation that could take place. The tactic that the principal used toward resisting teachers who reached the age of retirement is an example of a transactional power

through strategy. As the study results showed, almost all of those teachers had an interest in resuming teaching beyond the age of 64 at school. After asking the first teacher to retire at the age of 64, the principal used this card to negotiate with other teachers who were about to retire but were interested in staying at the school. The principal established the condition that teachers' possibility to remain at school after retirement is predicated on their response to the school-wide change initiative. The negotiation did not entail that they have to be fully on board, but at least they should refrain from resisting and influencing others to resist change. According to the principal, this tactic also influenced other teachers within this group who not only became less resistant to change but started to take part in the change initiatives.

Using 'Power With' Strategies to Effect Change

Most strategies that proved successful in the realization of the school-wide change initiative were consistent with the 'power with' domain approaches in the Smeed et al. (2009) model and literature discussed in Chapter II. They were the highest coded strategies and emerged as major themes from the study results. The strategies that fell under the 'power with' domain played an integral role in aligning the personal interest of teachers with that of the school under the objectives of the school-wide change. The pro-change group started as a small group and then grew to form a critical mass supportive of change. The study results show that the group was formed, supported, and empowered by the school principal and leadership through strategies and actions of building trust and close relationships, empowering, promoting shared decision making, providing continuous support, and ensuring open communication and collaboration which all fall under the 'power with' domain. According to Smeed et al. (2009) schools where 'power with' is the

predominant type of power exercised are likely to have shared or participative approaches to leadership where principals are mostly focused on "empowering" staff and faculty and there is a high degree of trust between the principal and them. Such trust is gradually built through open communication and the support of staff and faculty.

Empowering Teachers through Promoting Teacher Agency. In the discussion about teacher agency presented in the literature review the studies presented concluded that the realization of agency results from the interaction of individual efforts, available resources, and contextual and structural factors as they come together in specific and always unique situations (Priestley et al., 2012; Campbell, 2012). Connecting the aforementioned to the case study, teachers' avid expression of agency correlated with being provided the capacity to play an integral role in creating the change and not just actors who are doing what is asked of them. Based on the responses of the teachers, it became apparent that one major reason for teachers' resistance is the feeling that they are not part of the change and that things are enforced on them either from a higher authority or from outside the school. Teachers' responses emphasized that taking part in decision-making encourages teachers to be participative and not resist the change initiatives. Thus, the structure of a participative approach to decision-making provided teachers with the ground to exercise their agency. They all reiterated that "being able to initiate and give ideas and implement what we want helped us realize that we can create the change that we want and it made a huge difference that nothing was forced upon us."

Teachers' agency also emerged from the opportunity the leadership provided teachers to exercise their capacity to adapt to change in their own way allowing them the flexibility needed. In this regard, teachers' responses revealed that the margin of flexibility

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that teachers had, which was also part of the structure, and the ability to practice their agency through voicing their ideas and implementing their initiatives provided them with the room to decide how to adapt to the new requirements and be creative and innovative in doing so. This was done without micromanaging or constraining them with strict directives about what and how they should go about planning pedagogical matters, especially ones given by a higher authority. Once everyone agreed on the direction that the school wants to take, and the vision it wishes to realize, an overarching umbrella of quality education was collaboratively designed under which teachers were empowered and encouraged to find their own platform and strategies.

The case-study results showed that there were always teachers at the school who were ready to exercise their agency but were not provided with an enabling context to demonstrate their capacity to do so. The autonomy and voice that teachers had in curriculum planning within the agreed-upon overarching guidelines along with the participative approach of decision-making followed by the school leadership were critical enablers. In addition to providing open communication, and support for teachers, the 'power with' strategies have created the structural context that permitted teachers' agency to thrive. This aspect was repeatedly acknowledged by all the teachers in the focus group interview.

Inviting Teachers to Take Part in Decision Making. As I discussed in the previous section, including teachers in the decision-making process at the school was a main 'power with' strategy followed by the principal and the leadership team that empowered teachers and got them on board the change process instead of triggering resistance. Starr (2011) argues that it is human nature to resist change especially if the

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people responsible to implement and live the change did not take part in the process of deciding and creating it. The study results show that the main actions that the principal took at the initial planning phase of the school-wide change initiative were to include all stakeholders including all teachers in setting common goals and a strategic vision for the change, one that stems from the school community. Teachers mostly participated in decisions about matters and strategic goals that were relevant to them; the curriculum, the student profile, the teaching and learning approaches, and the needs that teachers and students had to improve the quality of education at the school.

The principal and teachers in the focus group interview concurred that those participative actions raised among many teachers a sense of ownership and appreciation for playing an integral role in the school-wide change initiative, especially in its design and planning. The study results highlight two of the main actions mentioned by the principal and the teachers in the focus group that promoted teachers' participation during the planning-for-change phase and helped build a common vision and direction shared by all stakeholders. The main strategies included engaging teachers through several meetings and venues in identifying areas for change through peer observation, and engaging teachers in deciding on the direction of the change, both the "what" and "how." The study results asserted the imperative role that a participative approach to decision-making plays in supporting the management of change. Involving teachers in school-based decision-making processes facilitated the management of change.

Promoting Open and Continuous Communication. Maintaining open and continuous communication channels with all stakeholders, resisting teachers as well as the pro-change group, was a main "power with" strategy adopted by the principal and

leadership team. The communication channels were varied and became institutionalized throughout the change phases via formalized modalities and fixed weekly meetings throughout the school divisions and departments in addition to the continuous informal ways of communication. These meetings provided venues to intentionally highlight the outcome and impact of initiatives and new ideas taken and implemented by teachers. In addition to fostering collaborative rather than conflictive dynamics within the school community, this approach also mitigated skepticism toward change and new approaches and subsided the fear of change. Bennet (1999) asserted that "intentional communication strategies and strategic shared decision-making processes, together with a greater understanding of politics, will move schools towards reform more effectively" (p.199). Bennett (1999) advances that it is within the expanded responsibilities of principals especially during the process of educational change to provide opportunities for dialogue where stakeholders could seek clarification and take part in and question actions and decisions made. Creating, facilitating, and maintaining those channels of communication helped the principal and leadership team immensely in working with the different groups with conflicting interests within the school. This was a crucial element in the case study, especially that two groups of teachers with conflicting interests emerged during the school-wide change phases.

Establishing open communication channels also helped cement a perception that change does not necessarily need to come from outside the institution, but it stems from the context, needs, and direction that the school community wishes to take and this is achieved through continuous and open communication.

Maintaining Trust and Building Close Relationships. The principal tactfully remained connected to staff and faculty and was aware of her advantage of being perceived as one of them. She actively worked to maintain this trust by inviting teachers to take an effective role in decision-making and make them feel listened to. The study results show that the principal intentionally spent time with teachers and made sure to remain close to them and not create a fissure upon assuming the principalship role. She wanted to maintain the relationship and the trust she had established when she was a teacher and when teachers considered her as a colleague. She was also aware of how the teacher-administrator divide and lack of trust became a source of resistance that took place among teachers, staff, and the previous two principals. She said that she used to spend 80 percent of her day among teachers and that this is where she still found herself. Teachers in the focus group interview acknowledged the trusting environment at the school and felt that they are genuinely listened to. Smeed et al. (2009) asserted that the success of 'power with strategies' is highly predicated on the trust between principals and staff and the ability to work collaboratively. Thus, institutions, where leaders build relationships as a 'power with' tactic, are characterized by a high degree of trust and are more likely to succeed with initiating change.

Ensuring Continuous Support. Smeed et al. (2009) argued that "the more successful a principal is in maintaining the trust of staff, assisting them to adapt to change…, and empowering them, the more that principal is able to exercise the ideals of power through and power with" (p. 27). According to Smeed et al. (2009) empowering requires also offering ample support to staff and faculty. The leadership team's keen efforts to provide and promote a supportive environment was the fourth-highest ranked code

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emerging from the focus group interview. Teachers concurred that the supportive approach helped teachers who feared change not to feel threatened and provided faculty members with an environment that is conducive for change. As per the results, some teachers voiced that although they felt fear at the beginning of the change process, the support provided to them by the school leadership and trust helped them get out of their "comfort zone." They explicitly attributed this change to the supportive environment the school always strove to ensure. Teachers explained that the school leadership gave teachers the time and space to incrementally explore and try new initiatives. Teachers in the focus group concurred about the vital part that the supportive environment played in mitigating many of the fears and challenges and facilitating the implementation of the change.

Conclusion

In this section, I will draw and highlight implications from the case study and present them in a model that delineates a grounded process for initiating and effecting change that can guide leading change in a context similar to that of the case study school.

The case study underscores the importance of achieving educational change by transforming the school toward continuous self-renewal rooted in its unique identity by adopting a bottom-up approach to change. This is important especially in a school context with a long history and an organizational culture deeply rooted in tradition. Similar to the case study school context, the country is characterized by an openness to western ideas, trends, and developments that is often met with clinging to tradition and a high tendency to preserve as much as possible time-honored traditions and norms (Hofstede, 2021). The study showed that prior to initiating change plans and actions, it is imperative for the school principal to have a good understanding of the school's culture and identity and build an

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understanding of the culture's reactions and attitude to change, coupled with building a thorough awareness of the school's micropolitics - mainly power dynamics and personal interest versus the interest of the institution. We can infer from the case study results that the long period of stagnation that the school underwent and the predominant normative characteristic of the country's culture played a major role in strengthening proclivity to maintain the status quo. Those elements of the school context were magnified within similar cultural norms celebrated at the national level. The study also reaffirmed that the complexity of an educational change initiative and its chances to have a transformational impact is commensurate to the extent to which this change will challenge and shake the existing status quo and reality of the school context, which was mainly reflected in micropolitical landscape I. Those contextual challenges are met by implementing differentiated micropolitical strategies to manage resistance and effect a bottom-up approach to change, which in the case study school lead to impactful change grounded in institutionalized sustainable processes and distributed power in a school culture invested in self-renewal anchored in its unique identity.

A Micropolitical Model for Effecting Sustainable Change

Figure 2 presents a model that delineates a grounded process for initiating and effecting change in a context similar to that of the case study school. The model underscores the importance of achieving educational change by transforming the school toward continuous self-renewal rooted in its unique identity. Each item in the model will be elaborated in separate figures in the following subsections.

Figure 2

A Micropolitical Model for Effecting Sustainable Change

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Governing body supportive of change      │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                      │
                                      ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
              │ A transformational leader cognizant of the school culture and │
              │ committed to its  identity                                     │
              └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                      │
Improvement                           ▼
Goal  ───────►  ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
                │ Transform the school toward continuous renewal rooted in       │
                │ identity                                                       │
                └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘


              ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          ┌───│ Understanding the school's culture and identity               │
          │   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
          │
          │   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │   │ Understanding the members' culturally based reactions and      │
          │   │ attitude to change                                             │
          │   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
Process ──┤
          │   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │   │ Building a thorough awareness of the school's micropolitics    │
          │   │ (power dynamics, personal interest)                            │
          │   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
          │
          │   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          └───│ Using differentiated micropolitical strategies to manage       │
              │ resistance and effect a bottom-up approach to change           │
              └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                      │
                                      ▼
              ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          ┌───│ Impactful change grounded in institutionalized sustainable     │
          │   │ processes                                                      │
          │   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
Outcome ──┤                           │
          │                           ▼
          │   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          └───│ Power distributed in a school culture invested in self-renewal │
              │ anchored in its identity                                       │
              └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Note. Each box in the model will be elaborated in the following figures.

Governing Body Supportive of Change

Change cannot be accomplished without support at the school macro-level. The

drive and plans for change need to be endorsed by the governing body or any external

macro-level entity with a direct impact on the school. The governing body's support

especially for the school principal during times of change is imperative to provide him/her with backup and support, especially against resistance. The governing body also ensures that resources for change are adequately provided.

The Principal's Profile

Figure 3

The Principal's Profile

- Has a desire and drive for change
- Exercises agency for leading change
- Has the capacity to use different leadership approaches and strategies
- Embraces the vision of the school and endorse preserving its core identity

The principal's profile suggested in the model was a major catalyst for change in the case study school. The profile highlights the principal's intrinsic drive for change and the agency she had with the support of the Board of Trustees to lead and guide the school-wide change initiative.

The principal profile in the case study school holds characteristics that broke with the typical profile often delineated within the cultural context of Lebanon and the region as described by Oplatka (2004) and Karami Akkary (2014). The principal's high degree of change initiation goes against the low degree of change initiation that predominantly characterizes principals in developing countries and the context of Lebanon. According to Oplatka's (2004) review of twenty-seven studies that investigated and highlighted the characteristics of principalship in developing countries, principals in developing countries were found to be more conservative and seeking stability rather than causing any disruption or change, whereas a major function of principalship in developed countries during the

1990s was the initiation of change. Furthermore, the study conducted by Karami Akkary (2014) in public and private schools in Lebanon showed that principals, among other roles and characteristics, assume limited responsibilities as agents for school change. Thus, the principal's intrinsic drive for change and the agency she had with the support of the Board of Trustees to lead and guide the school-wide change initiative broke the contextual predominant characteristic of principals as described by Oplatka (2004) and Akkary (2014). This appears to have contributed to the enabling conditions for initiating and sustaining the transformational change witnessed at the case school. It also contributed to the principal's determination and persistence as she attempted to break the long stagnation that the school was going through and realize the change.

The principal was already cognizant of the school culture and identity for she had been a member of faculty for several years. She assumed her principal role while already valuing and embracing the school's unique identity and history. The principal did not approach the school with a vision that is disconnected from the school's. She embraced the school's vision that stemmed from the school's history and legacy, its community (of which she was a member), and long-standing Board of Trustees. The school's vision aligned with her own vision as a professional educator and a seeker for change.

The principal's ability to use a wide repertoire of leadership strategies and follow a differentiated approach that is grounded in a deep understanding of the individual as well as the collective value systems proved highly effective in the case study school as opposed to restricting strategies to one approach to leadership.

Hence, seeking and building such a profile for principals is considered imperative to effect change in a contextually similar school.

Understanding the School's Culture and Identity, and its Reactions and Attitude to

Change

Figure 4

The School Culture and Reaction to Change

- Identify the traditions that characterize the organizational culture pertaining to change?
- What is the school's Identity?
- What do community members perceive as central, distinctive, and enduring to their school?
- How does the culture perceive change?
- How does the culture react to change?

As the model suggests, it is imperative for the principal to identifying what

members perceive as central, distinctive, and enduring to their school, and a principal

should be careful not to clash with the school culture and tradition. It is important to honor

the school's preexisting identity and collaboratively seek ways to transform the school

toward renewal rooted in its identity. The principal in the case study school already had a

good understanding of the culture itself - being a member of the school community. She

was familiar with the school's core values, the kind of students the school wants to

graduate, the pride in the school's history and resilience, and the ability to survive

adversity. However, during the pre-change initiative phase, she got a chance to gain an

additional and in-depth understanding of the aspect of the culture as it reacts to change –

how the school community perceives change and how do members of that community react

to change.

The principal also managed to build an understanding of the aspect of the school

culture that overvalues maintaining the status quo and working conditions, which proved to

be the main impediment to change. Understanding the school culture's reaction and attitude

to change largely falls within the understanding of the school's micropolitics, which in turn

inform the strategies and actions to effect change.

Building a Thorough Awareness of the School's Micropolitics (Power Dynamics,

Personal Interest)

Figure 5

The Micropolitical Landscape

Identify where power reside.
  • Who has the most influence?
Identify desired working conditions.
  • What is valued in the status quo
  • What is being protected and why?
Identify and account for personal interest especially when it disagrees with change initiatives
Identify agents of change
  • Who values change and aspires to take part in the school change initiative?
  • Who has shown change initiatives within their classroom or department?

Before the initiation and planning for the change, the principal should take time to

build a good understanding of the micropolitical landscape of the school. This

understanding and mapping helped the case study principal realize the high proclivity to

maintain the status quo and identify what people value in the pre-existing working

conditions, in addition to identifying and building a connection between the personal

interest of groups or individuals and the aims of the change initiatives. This period also

enabled the principal to understand the power dynamics at the school and most importantly,

identify the members or potential members of the pro-change group. The model suggests

key identifiers that principals seeking change should look for as they are mapping the

micropolitical landscape of the school before planning for or implementing change. This in turn will provide them with an understanding of the workings of micropolitics within the school and decide on the appropriate approaches and strategies.

Using Differentiated Micropolitical Strategies to Manage Resistance and Effect a Bottom-up Approach to Change

Figure 6

Micropolitical Strategies to Effect Change

1. Initiate goals for change that stem from the school community and its unique identity.
2. Follow a differentiated management approach - support and empower teachers' change initiatives while managing resisting individuals.
3. Identify and integrate individuals with a drive and readiness for change into the leadership team and leadership functions.
4. Create structured opportunities for teachers that help align their personal goals and interest with the goals of the school and change plans.
5. Reward, support and celebrate change initiatives, as a way to establish it as the new norm to offset stagnation, and provide incentives
6. Support teachers to find their own pace for learning during change and not feel pressured, allowing room for creativity and exploration.
7. Provide continuous support, establish trust, and maintain continuous and open communication throughout the change process.

The principal's work during the first two years - during the pre-change initiative phase - played a major role in the success of the planning and implementation phases. This in turn guided the principal to adopt the approaches mentioned in Figure 6. Central to the approach is using differentiated strategies to manage the resisting group while focusing more on building and empowering a group that is a proponent of and driver for change. It is also important to refrain from using conflictive or power over strategies to address resistance especially the one stemming from the perceived misalignment of the aims of

change with the personal interest of individuals or groups. Principals should work at aligning the personal interests of individuals and groups with the goals of the school change initiative. As the case study showed, this alignment will facilitate the process of mobilizing additional advocates for the change and shift the weight of power from resisting groups to a pro-change cohort.

Hence, a principal cannot force a school-wide change plan unless she/he manages to make its aims, processes, and outcomes valued by a critical mass among those that will be affected by it the most. She/he needs to let the change find its place within the culture, gradually, and through a rather bottom-up approach as a means to leading change within strongly held traditions. To achieve this, the model suggests the following strategies:

1. Initiate goals for change that stem from the school community and its unique identity. Create structured opportunities for teachers that trigger change initiatives. Such as taking part in evaluating the needs of the school and take part in setting the strategic directions and goals for the school-wide change.

2. Follow a differentiated management approach and deploy and invest most of the effort, time, and resources in supporting and empowering teachers by building on a group of teachers who show a desire and readiness for change rather than resorting to conflicting strategies to merely control resisting individuals or groups and enforce the change plans.

3. Identify and integrate individuals with a drive and readiness for change and a good level of influence into the leadership team and delegate leadership functions to them. As change expands the work of the principal, the building and presence of a

team with leadership capacity supportive of the school change and familiar with and sensitive to the school culture and traditions is imperative.

4. Create structured opportunities for teachers that help align their personal goals with the goals of the school and change plans. Creating a participative approach to decision-making and providing teachers with the prerogatives to develop curricula, and decide on the strategies and approaches they would like to explore.

5. Reward, support, and celebrate change initiatives, as a way to establish it as the new norm to offset stagnation and provide incentives. Encourage and support individual teachers who show readiness and potential to explore and implement new strategies and approaches that cater to the needs of their students and create opportunities for them to share their work with faculty and the community. Provide such teachers with incentives such as professional development opportunities and opportunities to pursue their professional goals.

6. Support teachers to find their own pace during change and not feel pressured, allowing room for creativity and exploration. As the case study showed, teachers need to adapt to the new expectations of change, and adaptation cannot take place within strict and rigid directives; each adapts at their own pace and based on their capacity and readiness.

7. Provide continuous support, establish trust, and maintain continuous and open communication throughout the change process. As change is challenging and accompanied by feelings of fear, skepticism, frustration, and doubt, providing a network of support and communication plays an integral role in mitigating those factors.

These strategies aim at building an organizational culture that is self-renewing, true to its identity while being continuously open to change and improvement, and where working conditions are driven by change goals, and organizational interest is in alignment with the interest of all stakeholders. Formal and informal power will hence be distributed and exercised to protect the drive and momentum of continuous progress and improvement.

Implications

Implications for Practice

This case study presented an understanding of how school principals can use micropolitics, especially positive micropolitics, to drive change within their schools as a strategy to manage resistance to change and build an organizational culture that is true to its identity while being continuously open to change and improvement. The findings of the study and model presented in the conclusion might help schools and leaders within the Lebanese context account for the factors that might hinder change initiatives at their schools with an awareness of the role of micropolitics in understanding resistance and effecting change. It can also inform both in-service and pre-service programs aimed at preparing school leaders. The grounded model hinges around the leadership's support for teachers who show a drive and readiness for change to create and empower a critical mass amidst the long-stagnant change-resisting context and school culture, while tactfully managing the resisting group. The expansion of this group will eventually shift the micropolitical landscape of the school where formal and informal power is distributed and exercised to protect the drive and momentum of continuous progress and improvement as the study showed. In addition to providing a substantial grounded model for effecting

change in the Lebanese context, the study and replication of the model could offer

policymakers on the national level a better understanding of leadership and change,

especially within the cultural and social context of the country.

Implications for Research

This study built on previous research to promote the understanding of the change

process by focusing further on the positive aspect of micropolitics. This in turn help fill the

gap found in the literature on "positive" micropolitics in addition to filling the gap found in

Lebanon and the Arab region with respect to research that takes micropolitics in schools as

a theoretical lens to frame the research. The study responds to the urgent need to learn

about leadership and management of change across national and cultural boundaries and

within the specific and unique social context of a country (Oplatka, 2004). The study also

responds to the calling for a solid understanding of the workings of micropolitics to help

school principals navigate the power dynamics of their institutions (Flessa, 2009).

The case study supported two main notions accentuated in the literature that

respond to the authoritative top-down approach to principalship predominant in the context

of Lebanon. The notions include: (a) school principals, especially novice ones, cannot rely

only on their formal authority and hierarchical power during change (Ball, 1987, as cited in

Caruso, 2013), and (b) school leaders need to let go of their adherence to a top-down,

hierarchical model of leadership so that teachers may exercise decision-making authority

(LeChasseur, 2016). Within an absence of an effective education reform agenda on the

national level, and a normative culture impacted by long stagnation, the case study

described the experience of a leader who broke the predominate characteristics of

principalship in Lebanon and presented a grounded model of how change was achieved

within the contextual and cultural factors of the school. Further research could be done to generate additional insights on applying the model presented in the study in schools aiming for change within different contexts in Lebanon. The examination of the implementation of the model in different schools could help add to it and refine it.

The study showed that the normative cultural context on both the school and national level exacerbated the proclivity to hold onto tradition, past norms, and maintain the status quo and working conditions, it would hence be interesting for further research to delve into the impact of the national culture on that of the school especially during change.

APPENDIX A

Individual Interview Questions – Principal

1. Can you first briefly present an overview of the change initiative that you have led at school, and identify what you characterize as change?

   a. How were the plans constructed?

   b. Who contributed to them?

2. Did the change process instigate any disruptions in terms of routines, work conditions, work expectations? If yes, what are they?

   a. How did it change the status quo?

   b. Did it cause the shifting of power from certain individuals to others within the school structure? Elaborate in what manner.

   c. Did the change affect the personal interest of certain individuals? Describe if yes.

      i. Can you think of examples?

      ii. How did they react?

3. How did people react to the change?

   a. Was or is there any resistance from any member in the school toward the change process and plans? If yes, please describe it.

      i. What do you consider as acts of resistance?

      ii. Please explain through examples.

4. Who are school members who have influence on the course of the change initiative, be it positive or negative?

   a. Can you identify three to five key individuals or constituencies whom you perceive to yield power that affects the change initiative in a negative and/or positive way? What criteria did you use? Please explain how they yield this power.

5. What strategies have you implemented that you found helped in managing resistance and motivated teachers to be part of the change process?

   a. Do you listen to teachers' reasons for resistance? What do you do with the input? Can you give examples?

   b. Are there formal channels of communication in place with all school stakeholders especially teachers? What are these?

   c. In cases of difference in opinion between you and the teachers concerning decisions related to the change process, how do you deal with it? Can you give examples?

I probed further on whether the strategies used by the principal were toward the conflictive or collaborative triggering her to identify them through instigating examples.

6. Did you try strategies that did not succeed in managing resistance? Why? Can you give examples

APPENDIX B

Focus Groups Interview Questions – Teachers

Introduction to Focus Group Interview

Good evening and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk

about the change process in our school. As most of you know me, My name is Rabih Murr and I am working on my graduate degree thesis at the American University of Beirut. The purpose of the session is to learn about your perspective to the change process that the school has been undergoing for around 5 years.

During the session, I am not looking for right or wrong answers, rather different points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments. I will be tape-recording the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and I cannot write fast enough to get them all down. We will be using first name during the session, and I will not use any names in my final paper. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Well, let's begin.

Questions:

1. Can you first briefly overview the change initiative that you have experienced at school, and identify what aspects you characterize as change?

   a. How were the plans constructed and who contributed to their construction?

2. What was the range of reactions of the teachers toward the change initiative?

   a. Can you give examples of when a change initiative was found to be not within the interest of certain teachers? What was the reaction? How was this negotiated with the principal?

b. Was or is there any resistance from any member in the school toward the change process and plans? What forms did it take? Please explain through examples.

   i. What do you consider as acts of resistance?

   ii. What, according to you, are examples of resistance?

c. What strategies do teachers resort to in order to resist unwanted change?

   i. What formal power do you have according to the school policies that allow teachers to resist change?

   ii. What informal power do teachers have? (prompt teachers about what is meant by informal power)

3. What were the strategies the principal use to gain more support for her change and to deal with resistance?

a. Do you feel that when teachers' opinion is thought, the principal takes action accordingly or ignores this kind of input?

b. Are the strategies used by the principal toward the conflictive or collaborative? Identify them through instigating examples

APPENDIX C

Consent Form
Focus Group Participation

Department of Education - American University of Beirut (AUB)

Study Title: The Micropolitics of Resistance to Educational Change: A Case Study of a Lebanese Private School

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rima Karami Akkary   **Co-Investigator**: Rabih Murr

Dear participant,

You are being invited to participate in a focus group for a research study exploring the experiences of teachers within the process of educational change. Please read this document carefully and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Description of study:

The purpose of the study is to investigate and understand the behaviors of teachers and principals during the process of school change through the micropolitics lens. It aims to identify factors that hinder and facilitate the process of change, and highlight how principals can positively use micropolitics to manage resistance, enhance collaboration, strengthen the school community and seek opportunities for change and growth. The study also aims to develop a grounded, context-based understanding that reflects principals' and teachers' perspectives to school change and resistance. After highlighting and discussing challenges of educational change, occurrences of resistance, and the strategies used to manage those challenges and ensuing resistance, the study hopes to focus on the successful strategies that helped mitigate challenges and resistance to change to achieve desired outcomes.

Around 36 teachers from the school will be invited to participate in this study. The study involves participating in one 60 – 75 minute focus group with around 12 teachers in each group. The focus groups will be audio taped to ensure accuracy, after which it will be transcribed and analyzed for general themes. If you prefer not to be audio-taped, the recorded will be turned off for your contributions, and hand-written notes will be taken instead. The researcher might need to conduct a second interview with specific participants during the theoretical sampling phase of the study after initial data is collected and analyzed. The researcher will also conduct a member check with certain participants for ensuring the quality criteria of the study.

All data will remain confidential and anonymous. None of the participants' real names or school names will be used at any point in the transcription or analysis process, nor in any write-up linked to the study.

Quotes from the focus groups may be used in the write up of the research report; however, no names or identifiers will be used. Should you prefer not to be quoted, your participation in the focus group will still be valuable. You can clarify your choice below.

If you agree, you will be sent some initial findings from the research as part of a member-checking process that serves to strengthen the reliability of the study.

Data will remain on a password-protected computer, accessible only to the researcher, and deleted, alongside with any contact information given for the purpose of this study, within three years of the completion of the study. Any transcripts related to this study will be securely stored in the office of the Principal Investigator under lock and key and only accessible to the research team.

Your privacy will be maintained in any published or written reports resulting from this study. Data will be published in aggregate with no reference to participants' nor school names or any other identifying information other than subject taught. Data will be monitored and may be audited by the IRB while assuring confidentiality.

This study is being done in partial fulfilment of a graduate studies degree in the Department of Education at AUB.

Risks and benefits:

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to you beyond the risks of daily life. Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time, for any reason.

You have the right to refrain from answering questions or contributing to discussions you are uncomfortable with or would prefer not discussing. You have the right to contribute in any way that feels comfortable and productive to you while allowing that same right to be afforded to others.

Although you will receive no direct benefits or compensation from participating in this research, your participation will help researchers and school leaders better understand the experiences of teachers in Lebanon and how to better support them and their students, and consider the ways in which educational change could be achieved through enhanced collaboration while strengthening the school community.

Contact details of investigators:
If you have any questions or concerns about the research you may contact Dr. Rima Karami Akkary at (01) 350 000 ext. 3058 or by email: ra10@aub.edu.lb or Rabih Murr at (70) 172905 or by email: rbm11@mail.aub.edu

If you feel that your questions have not been answered, or if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant in this research, please contact the Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at AUB: 01- 350000 or 01-374374, ext: 5445 or by email: irb@mail.aub.edu.

Do you voluntarily wish to participate in this study? If yes, please fill in the below. Kindly note that you will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

Signing the consent form

I have read and understood all aspects of the research study and all my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to be a part of this research study and to the focus group being audio taped. I know that I will receive a copy of this signed informed consent.

Consent for participation in the focus group (Signature): _____

Consent for audio taping the focus group (Signature):_____

Consent for quoting from the focus group (Signature): _____

Interest in receiving preliminary analysis for member checking (Signature): _____

Email address to be used for receiving preliminary analysis: _____

Participant Name: _____   Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____   Date: _____

Contact details and addresses of investigators:
Principal Investigator: Dr. Rima Karami Akkary
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Co-Investigator: Rabih Murr
Address: American University of Beirut (AUB)
                            Beirut - Lebanon
                            Phone: (70) 172 905
                             Email: rbm11@mail.aub.edu

APPENDIX D

Consent Form
Individual Interview Participation

Department of Education - American University of Beirut (AUB)

Study Title: The Micropolitics of Resistance to Educational Change: A Case Study of a Lebanese Private School

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rima Karami Akkary   **Co-Investigator**: Rabih Murr

Dear participant,

You are being invited to participate in an individual interview for a research study exploring the experiences of teachers within the process of educational change. Please read this document carefully and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Description of study:

The purpose of the study is to investigate and understand the behaviors of teachers and principals during the process of school change through the micropolitics lens. It aims to identify factors that hinder and facilitate the process of change, and highlight how principals can positively use micropolitics to manage resistance, enhance collaboration, strengthen the school community and seek opportunities for change and growth. The study also aims to develop a grounded, context-based understanding that reflects principals' and teachers' perspectives to school change and resistance. After highlighting and discussing challenges of educational change, occurrences of resistance, and the strategies used to manage those challenges, the study hopes to focus on the successful strategies that helped mitigate challenges and manage resistance in order to achieve desired outcomes.

The study involves participating in one 60 – 75 minute interview.

The interview will take place remotely using Google Meet. The co-investigator will send a secure link to the participant through his/her organization email address. Only invitees can access the meeting and only through the school email address. The interview session will be audio taped to ensure accuracy, after which the interviews will be transcribed and analyzed for general themes. If you prefer not to be audio-taped, the recorder will be turned off for your contributions, and hand-written notes will be taken instead. The researcher might need to conduct a second interview with the participant

during the theoretical sampling phase of the study after initial data is collected and analyzed. The researcher will also conduct a member check with certain participants for ensuring the quality criteria of the study.

All data will remain confidential and anonymous. None of the participants' real names will be used at any point in the transcription or analysis process, nor in any write-up linked to the study.

Quotes from the interview may be used in the write up of the research report; however, no names or identifiers will be used.

Data will remain on a password-protected computer, accessible only to the researcher, and deleted, alongside with any contact information given for the purpose of this study, within three years of the completion of the study. Any transcripts related to this study will be securely stored in the office of the Principal Investigator under lock and key and only accessible to the research team.

Your privacy will be maintained in any published or written reports resulting from this study. Data will be published in aggregate with no reference to participants' nor school names or any other identifying information other than subject taught. Data will be monitored and may be audited by the IRB while assuring confidentiality.

This study is being done in partial fulfilment of a graduate studies degree in the Department of Education at AUB.

Risks and benefits:

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to you beyond the risks of daily life. Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time, for any reason.

You have the right to refrain from answering questions or contributing to discussions you are uncomfortable with or would prefer not discussing. You have the right to contribute in any way that feels comfortable and productive to you while allowing that same right to be afforded to others.

Although you will receive no direct benefits or compensation from participating in this research, your participation will help researchers and school leaders better understand the experiences of teachers in Lebanon and how to better support them and their students, and consider the ways in which educational change could be achieved through enhanced collaboration while strengthening the school community.

Contact details of investigators:

If you have any questions or concerns about the research you may contact Dr. Rima Karami Akkary at (01) 350 000 ext. 3058 or by email: ra10@aub.edu.lb or Rabih Murr at (70) 172905 or by email: rbm11@mail.aub.edu

If you feel that your questions have not been answered, or if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant in this research, please contact the Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at AUB: 01- 350000 or 01-374374, ext: 5445 or by email: irb@mail.aub.edu.

Do you voluntarily wish to participate in this study? If yes, please fill in the below. Kindly note that you will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

Signing the consent form

I have read and understood all aspects of the research study and all my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to be a part of this research study and to interview being audio taped. I know that I will receive a copy of this signed informed consent.

Consent for participation in the individual interview (Signature): _____

Consent for audio taping the individual interview (Signature):_____

Consent for quoting from the individual interview (Signature): _____

Interest in receiving preliminary analysis for member checking (Signature): _____

Email address to be used for receiving preliminary analysis: _____

Participant Name: _____   Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____   Date: _____

Contact details and addresses of investigators:
Principal Investigator: Dr. Rima Karami Akkary
Address: American University of Beirut (AUB)
                         Associate Professor at the Department of Education
                         Phone: (01) 350 000 ext: 3058
                         Email: ra10@aub.edu.lb

Co-Investigator: Rabih Murr
Address: American University of Beirut (AUB)
                         Beirut - Lebanon
                         Phone: (70) 172 905
   Email: rbm11@mail.aub.edu

APPENDIX E

Sample of the Data Analysis Process

This section will show how the researcher used the strategies delineated in the methodology chapter to report and analyze the research study's findings.

Initial Coding

The researcher explored fragments of data (words, lines, segments, and incidents). The researcher mainly performed line-by-line coding where each line of the written (transcribed) data or number of lines were named by the researcher and coded (color-coded) using qualitative data analysis software QDA Miner by Provalis. This method reduced the possibility of the researcher superimposing his/her presupposed concepts on the data.
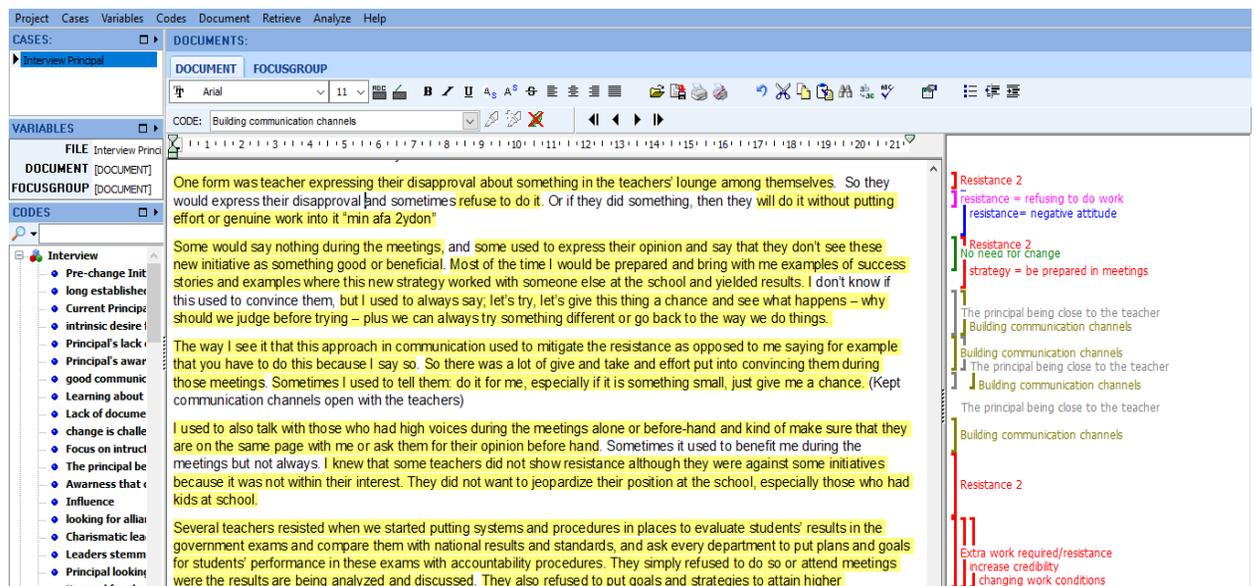
Focused Coding

      The software used for coding enabled the researcher to generate the frequency of codes based on two criteria: (a) the frequency of codes based on the occurrence of each code; (b) frequency of codes based on the number of words in each code (how much of the narrative did the code occupy). Then, the two lists of codes frequencies were compared and the most prominent codes were identified. The researcher conducted separate coding and analysis of frequencies for the principal and focus group interviews. The two lists of prominent codes were compared and crossed referenced.

Example of Theoretical Sampling

      Initial data analysis revealed codes that the researcher found to be of importance especially within the framework of micropolitics like the two conflicting groups that emerged among teachers. After initial data analysis revealed the emergence of two groups among teachers with conflicting interests, which was mentioned by the principal and focus group teachers, the researcher inquired further about this piece of data as part of the reaching saturation process.

**Using Memos to Raise Focused Codes to Conceptual Categories**

      The researcher first evaluated which codes best represented what is occurring in the data. After the researcher identified the main themes of each interview from the codes, the themes of the principal interview and focus group interview were compared while raising the data to conceptual categories using memos. To verify the themes and concepts that emerged, the researcher member-checked the themes by conducting individual interviews with the participants. The researcher also compared the themes that emerged with the literature review and theoretical background of the study.

Saturating Theoretical Categories

The researcher in this study went back to interview certain teachers individually to seek more data based on identified gaps in the emerging conceptual categories that require more work and more data to be sought in order to strengthen those categories. Again, the aim is not to seek repetition of the same events. Glaser (2001) asserts this point by stating that saturation is not witnessing the same pattern repeating again and again, it is when new properties of a certain pattern stop to emerge (as cited in Charmaz, 2006)

Theoretical Sorting, Diagramming, and Integrating

The researcher sorted and diagramed the major themes and categories using the written memos into an initial analytic frame of the study to commence writing the first draft.
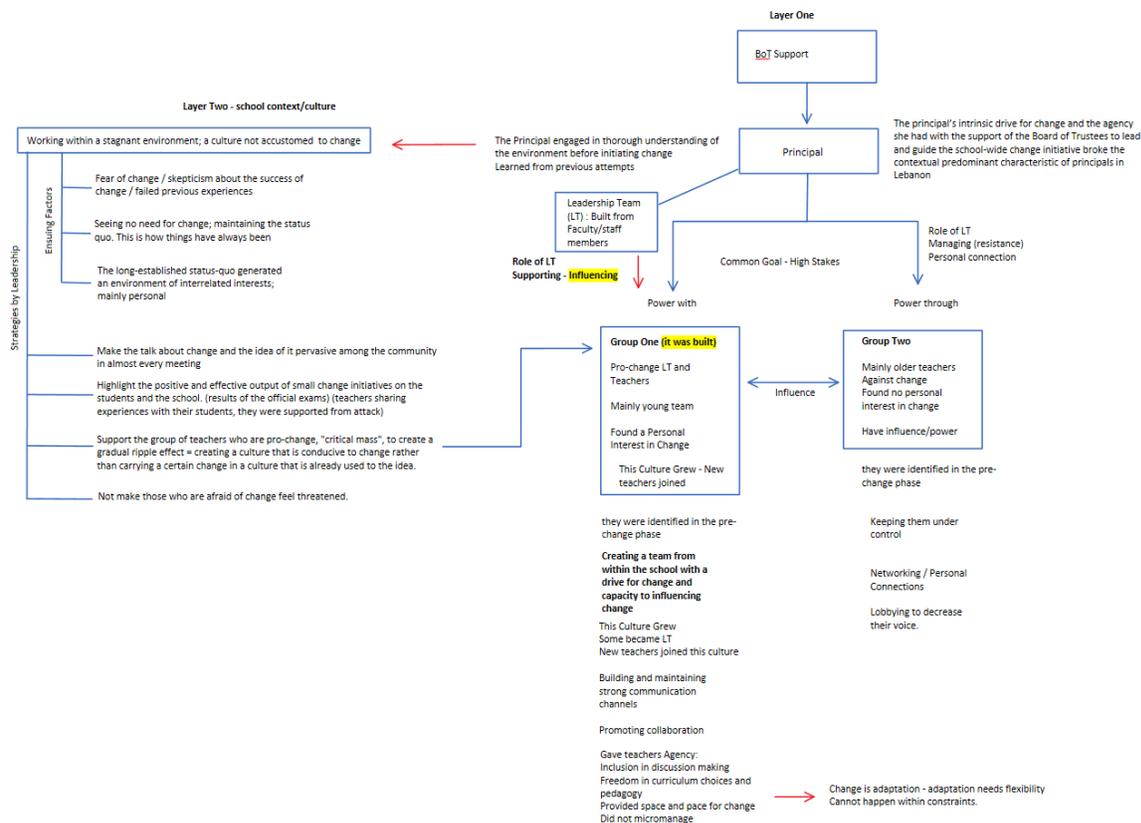
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