

Principals' perceptions of school identity: logo, vision and practice

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of the concept “school identity” as reflected in principals' perceptions of their school logo, vision and practice.

Design/methodology/approach – In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 principals from Israeli elementary, junior high and high schools. The content analysis of principals' interviews, including open, axial and selective coding and confirmatory qualitative analysis was used to examine the principals' perceptions regarding the school's logo, vision and practice.

Findings – The principals' perceptions of the logo, vision and practice comprised five main features: academic, traditional, national, organizational and social-ethical. Different types of relationships were found between these features: correspondence by appearance, correspondence by non-appearance and incongruence.

Research limitations/implications – The study suggests a new theoretical model for generating the concept of school identity. The study demonstrates that incongruent findings may be viewed as complementary rather than conflicting when establishing a school's identity.

Practical implications – The findings can promote an understanding of the function of school logos and vision statements in school practice, and help develop and maintain school identity. All these may affect the surroundings that come in contact with the school principal, such as parental decision on school choice and governmental activities.

Originality/value – To date, no study has investigated the meaning of school identity based on the principals' perceptions regarding the school logo, vision and practice. The findings can facilitate the development of an ecological approach, which can help in understanding the meaning of school identity and its effect on students, staff, parents, wider community and national policy.

Keywords Values, Principals, School identity, School logo, School practice, School vision

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

A school's identity can be perceived through three dimensions: its logo, its vision and its practice. A school's logo [1] can provide knowledge about the values and identity of the school it represents due to visual literacy, the ability to understand and create visual messages (Hattwig *et al.*, 2013). Logos are important to schools since they advertise a school's identity to its members and stakeholders instantly and in a nutshell. A school's vision statement is an important factor in shaping and publicizing school identity (Berson *et al.*, 2015). School practice refers to tools, artifacts and organizational structures (Kurland *et al.*, 2010), that define a school's identity through its actions.

The main goal of this study was to explore the meaning of the concept “school identity” through school principals' perceptions of their school logo, school vision and school practice and to develop an integrative approach toward understanding the meaning of school identity. Different types of relationships between principals' perceptions regarding features of their school's logo, school vision and school practice were explored as well.

Theoretical background

The study dimensions: School logo, school vision and school practice

The logo is a symbolic expression of an organization, indicating its approach to building it, preserving it and modifying it. Logos help members view their organization through a unique “symbolic frame” that consists of symbols representing the organization's “life,” i.e., its identity, values and policies (Bolman and Deal, 2017). Within the framework of



institutions of higher learning, which are educational organizations with some similarities to schools, several studies have dealt with university logos, focusing on both pedagogical and marketing aspects (e.g. Baruch, 2005; Delmestri *et al.*, 2015). However, no in-depth research was found concerning school logos.

A vision statement is defined as a mental image of a possible and desirable future for the organization and represents the organization's common values and ethical aspects (Kopaneva, 2013). A school's vision statement is composed of three central components: purpose, desired future image and core values that constitute the basis for realizing that purpose (Gurley *et al.*, 2015).

Organizational practice is defined by the organizational environment, which includes artifacts and tools that are externalized representations of ideas and intentions used by practitioners in their practice (Spillane *et al.*, 2001). Investigation of school practice involve both observing school practice as it unfolds and asking school principals about their perceptions regarding school practice (Orr, 1996). Curricular frameworks, teacher protocols and school structures have been found as defining components of school practice (Ouston, 2018).

Values in school logos, school vision statements, school practice and their features

Values express beliefs that define a desired situation and serve as a criterion of morality through which organization members can judge their organization's conduct and assess outcomes (Ryu, 2015). The logo is a visual element that reflects social and ethical values. The logo should be able to "broadcast" the organization's core values and provide social significance to the organization (Park *et al.*, 2014). A school's vision statement reflects its ethical role, specifying the social and ethical values to which it aspires and educates (Ereh *et al.*, 2012). School practice is reflected by educational and administrative activities toward equality and equity among students (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2015).

Five main features may reflect school ethical values in logos, vision statements and school practice (Delmestri *et al.*, 2015):

- (1) Academic features reflect the importance of knowledge, research, learning and excellence as tools for reducing social disparities.
- (2) Traditional features reflect common attitudes toward equity based on the country's history and heritage. It may also foster religious identity.
- (3) National features reflect attachment, love and caring for the country that put national needs above individual needs. They can also encourage commitment to the specific region where the school is located.
- (4) Organizational features reflect innovation, efficiency, initiative and development toward promoting students' and teachers' potential.
- (5) Social-ethical features emphasize respect, fairness, equality and contribution to the community.

The relationship between the study dimensions: school logos, school vision and school practice

According to Baruch (2005), a logo may represent the vision and practice of an organization. Therefore, in a school context, the logo, vision statement and practice seem to have shared meanings and roles, as the school logo constitutes a visual reflection of the school's vision and practice.

The logo usually presents only a partial picture of the organization it represents and depends on proper interpretation, so different interpretations concerning the conjectured

meaning of the logo may arise (Baruch, 2005). This may lead to a lack of congruence between the school's vision, school practice and its logo. Another possible incongruence between school logo, school vision and school practice may occur when the logo is old and linked to tradition, as compared to the dynamic vision strategies and school practice that are modified and renewed in accordance with the current policy of the organization (Nippard, 2013).

Obviously, the school logo, as a visual medium, cannot reflect all the values that appear in the school vision statement and are expressed in its practice. However, effective school logos will reflect a school's key values alongside the school vision and practice (Meyer *et al.*, 2013).

Generating the concept of school identity

The concept of organizational identity is debatable. One of the most fundamental questions is whether organizational identity is a metaphorical device or a real organizational phenomenon (Nippard, 2013). Previous studies argued that in order to create a strong-collective organizational identity, it is necessary to clarify the organization's values and make sure that they are clear and visible to all (Meyer *et al.*, 2013; Gioia *et al.*, 2014; Pérez and Del Bosque, 2014). In a school context, we may relate to school identity as a means to differentiate between schools through their fundamental values and their organizational decisions, such as establishing special pedagogical programs (DiMartino and Jessen, 2016). This study explores school identity through a school's stated distinct and enduring key values, which can be expressed *inter alia*, by the school's vision statement, its logo and its practice.

Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) proposed a model of an organizational identity based on three interfacing components: strategic vision: the main idea expressing what the organization hopes to achieve in the future; organizational culture: the internal values and beliefs that embody the heritage and organizational practice; and corporate image: the outside world's overall impression of the organization. These three components interact constantly and lead to a strong organizational identity that contributes to the organization's success.

Balmer (2012) proposed a multiple-identities model in which organizational identity is a result of interactions between three main organizational sub-identities. First, actual identity – the organizational practice, how its values are actually manifested; second, communicated identity – how the organization communicates outwardly and how it is perceived by the public; and third, desired identity – the vision, which shapes the organization's strategic direction.

In a school context, these two models can be united into one that combines the three components of Kavaratzis' and Hatch's (2013) model and the three main sub-identities of Balmer's (2012) model. The result is a triangular model with three vertexes (Figure 1).

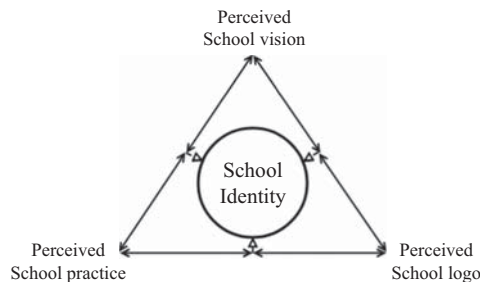


Figure 1.
School identity
as a reflection of
principals' perceptions
of school vision,
school logo and
school practice

The first vertex, perceived school vision, combines strategic vision and desired identity; the second, perceived school practice, combines organizational culture and actual identity; and the third, perceived school logo, combines corporate image and communicated identity. This study shows how interaction among these three dimensions can generate the concept of school identity, by taking into consideration the congruence and the incongruence between these dimensions.

The relationship between the study dimensions and school identity: Toward affecting the principals' surroundings

According to DiMartino and Jessen (2016), logos are symbols of organizational identity and not only marketing tools. The logo plays an important role in reflecting and preserving organizational identity. It is a central component in forming corporate visual identity, and its symbolic significance helps translate the inner world of organization members into a visual reality (Meyer *et al.*, 2013). In a school context, the school logo reflects the school's distinctiveness and uniqueness. It contributes to building a self-image and group identity for its members, and strengthens the school's sense of unity (Foroudi *et al.*, 2017).

An organization's vision and identity are interrelated and mutually influence one another. On the one hand, an organization's vision defines its identity (Kantabutra and Rungruang, 2013). On the other hand, the organization's vision also stems from its identity, since the identity of the organization influences its aspirations and the manner in which it will evolve in the future (Pérez and Del Bosque, 2014). In a school context, the school's vision has considerable influence on shaping and preserving school identity (Kopaneva, 2013). Thus, similarly to the school logo, a school's vision may also have powerful influence on shaping the school's identity.

Organizational practice includes artifacts, tools and organizational structures that reflect the attitudes of the organization's members and are essential in establishing the organization's identity (Ouston, 2018). In a school context, school practice is reflected through pedagogical tools and a variety of social-ethical activities (Spillane *et al.*, 2001), all which contribute to defining school identity.

The social-ecological model is a model that uses a wider perspective to help in understanding the organization's effect on its entire ecological system of wider and wider circles of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Shapira-Lishchinsky and Ben-Amram 2018). In our study, the relationships between the study dimensions and school identity logos may affect different layers of the social-ecological model, for example, the interpersonal layer. School principals have direct contact with their surroundings, such as their students and teachers and this can promote academic features, such as student achievement. Other effected layers are the organizational layer, where the principals' actions toward school effectiveness can be seen by promoting organizational features such as teachers' fulfilling their potential through professional development programs; the community layer, by principals interacting with parents on social-ethical features, to convince parents that the school's ethics fit their own; and the layer of public policy that is comprised of laws and principles, which refers to the principals' educational process toward strengthening national and/or traditional features.

Method

The Israeli context

In the state's early years of existence, Israeli educational institutes were divided along ideological-political factions. This shaped and imparted a particular school identity of its own. This method was canceled due to the ratification of the "state education law" (1953) which aimed at creating one national-educational system with the same common identity (Gibton, 2011).

The education system in Israel is centralized under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and consists of three levels: elementary, middle and high schools. Almost all the schools in the education system are public, and are generally divided by their language of instruction: Hebrew in the Jewish sector (secular public schools, religious public schools and ultra-Orthodox independent schools) and Arabic in the Arab sector (Shapira-Lishchinsky and Zavelevsky, 2019).

Today, the Israeli education system is going through a decentralization process. This process allows school principals to have more power and autonomy, enabling them to shape their own vision and promote new initiatives and practices (Shapira-Lishchinsky and Litchka, 2018). Schools are a platform for social change as they engage not only students, but also the parents and the wider community. The parents are central “community agents” and play an integral part in the school’s environment (Addi-Raccah *et al.*, 2018).

During the last decade, the Ministry of Education led the “controlled selection areas reform” by which the students and their parents can choose their school (Israeli Ministry of education, 2011). This reform forced schools to engage with environmental factors and to change goals, norms and internal procedures to fit in their community. The competition between schools increased and principals paid special attention to school marketing and branding based on school identity (Wilkins, 2011).

This context encouraged us to explore principals’ perceptions of school identity by logo, vision and practice as relevant to the many circles of school context such as students, staff, parents, wider community and national policy.

The study sample

We interviewed school principals in 24 public elementary, junior high and high schools in three districts: Northern Israel, Tel Aviv and central Israel. Schools were chosen by means of cluster sampling combined with stratified sampling. This enabled us to select institutions from specific strata within each cluster – each district constituted a cluster in the sampling method. From each cluster, we randomly selected schools from different educational levels (elementary, junior high and high schools). Those schools constituted the research strata. We contacted 34 school principals, of which 24 agreed to participate in the study (70.5 percent response). The high response rate was perhaps in part due to our promise to maintain anonymity regarding their identity and their school’s identity.

Research tools

We used the following tools to analyze the data:

- Documents – logos and written vision statements were shown to the school principals during the interviews to elicit their interpretations and perceptions of the documents.
- In-depth interviews – semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principals to examine their perceptions regarding their school logo, vision statement and school practice.

Research procedure

First, authorization from the Ethics Committee of the academic institution was obtained. Then, the logos and written vision statements of the 24 participating schools were downloaded from the school websites. Before the interviews, the principals were promised anonymity and discretion to reduce social desirability bias. During the interviews, we asked the principals about their perceptions regarding their school logo, vision statement and school practice.

Data analysis

The data analysis was carried out according to the following procedures.

Coding the interviews. Content analysis of the in-depth interviews included a three-stage process, as described by Strauss and Corbin (2008). Open coding included examination, comparison, conceptualization and categorization of the information. Axial coding was used to create relationships between the different categories and subcategories. Finally, selective coding was applied, which included the merging of subcategories into main categories and organizing them around a particular theory or explanation.

We used confirmatory qualitative analysis, which is based on dimensions that appear in the research literature and in existing theories. This type of analysis tested whether the dimensions also appeared in our study. We adopted this procedure, since it was likely to help assess the legitimacy of the existing theory, and strengthen and develop it (Cohen *et al.*, 2013).

Perceived school identity, as expressed by the principals' perceptions of school logo, vision and practice

In the first stage, the principals' perceptions were analyzed and classified into five main categories (features), according to the principals' narratives regarding the school logo, the school vision as expressed by the statement and school practice. In the second stage, content analysis findings were quantified. The analytical unit was the appearance of a particular element or feature in the principal's narrative regarding the school logo, school vision and school practice, which was perceived by the principal as reflecting one of the features listed. Through quantification, we could obtain a clearer picture of the perceived school identity, examine which characteristics were prominent and perform a comparative analysis between the three different dimensions (logo, vision and school practice).

Comparing principals' perceptions of their school logo, school vision and school practice

We created a table to compare the three study dimensions: logo, vision and school practice, as perceived by the principals. This enabled us to examine whether the features perceived in the logo were also perceived in the vision and/or in school practice. A comparison was done between all possible combinations of two of the three dimensions to check for correspondence.

The comparison was expressed in the present study in one of three ways:

- Correspondence by appearance: expressed by the appearance of a particular feature (e.g. academic) in both dimensions (e.g. in both the school logo and the school vision).
- Correspondence by non-appearance: expressed by the non-appearance of a particular feature (e.g. academic) in both dimensions.
- Incongruence: expressed by a particular feature (e.g. academic) that appeared in one of the dimensions (e.g. school logo), but not in the other (e.g. school practice).

This type of comparison allowed us to obtain a broad picture of the perceived school identity.

To ensure reliability of the study, each of the two research assistants performed the analysis independently. Each research assistant analyzed the characteristics perceived in the logo, the vision and school practice, as described by the principals in the interviews, and classified them using the comparison table. We then compared the results, using only those found by both research assistants.

Findings

The coding procedure of the interviews yielded five main features regarding the school logo, vision and school practice: academic features, traditional features, national features, organizational features and social-ethical features (Figure 2).

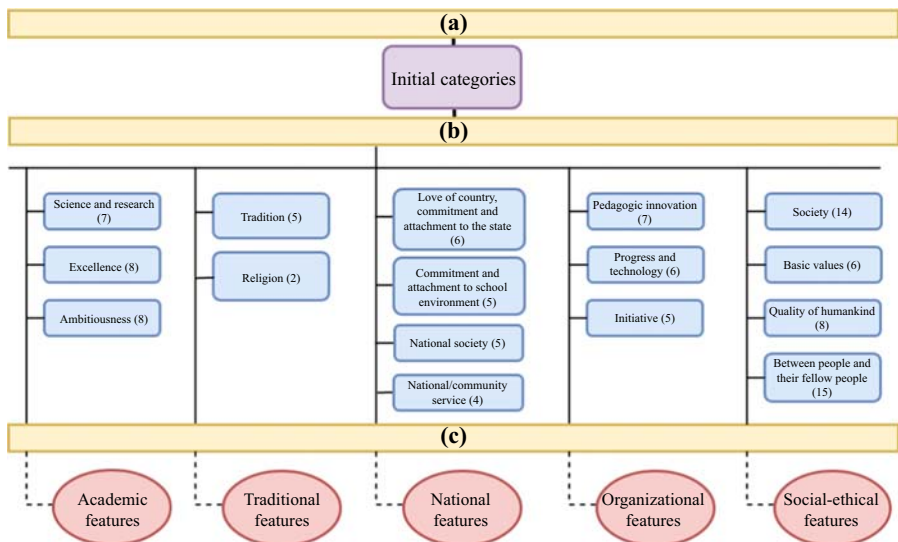


Figure 2. Distribution of correspondence in the interviews' coding stage

Notes: The numbers within the parentheses indicate the number of principals' narratives that were found for each category. (a) Open coding stage; (b) axial coding stage; (c) selective coding stage

Unique features expressed through perceptions of the school logo

The following are examples of the principals' perceptions regarding the features of the school logos: first, academic features – a check mark (“✓”) was perceived as symbolizing excellence and academic achievement; second, traditional features – an open Bible in the center of the logo was symbolically perceived as representing religious tradition; third, national features – a mountain near the school was symbolically perceived as connection to the country; fourth, organizational features – a contemporary font design was symbolically perceived as innovation; and fifth, social-ethical feature – identical shapes in different colors were symbolically perceived as acceptance of diversity.

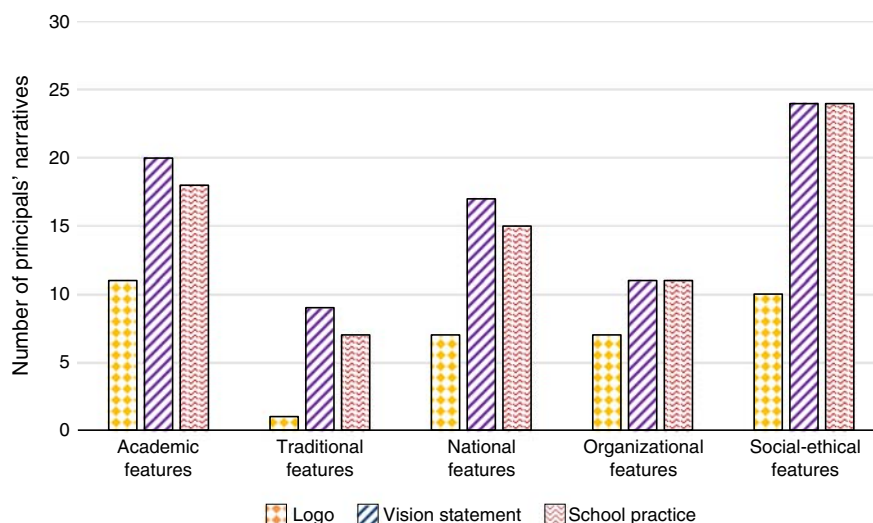
The first-four features also appeared in previous studies that analyzed logos of educational organizations (Delmestri *et al.*, 2015) and were confirmed in this study. However, the social-ethical feature did not appear in earlier studies dealing with the analysis of logos. This is an added value of the current study.

Figure 3 summarizes the data quantification and presents a comparison of the three dimensions examined in the study, in terms of the features they reflect, as perceived by the school principals. It shows which of the features are prominent in each of the study dimensions, making it possible to observe differences between the various features. Thus, we see that regarding principals' perceptions of their school logo, academic features appear in 11 narratives, social-ethical features appear in 10 narratives, national features appear in seven narratives, organizational features appear in seven narratives and traditional features appear in one narrative. Analysis of the principals' perceptions regarding their school vision and school practice was analyzed according to the same procedure.

Correspondence between perceptions of the school's vision and school's logo

We analyzed the principals' perceptions of their school's logo regarding each of the five features and compared the findings to the principals' perceptions of their school's vision (Figure 4).

Academic features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in ten principals' narratives. For example, at a high school in



Note: One logo may reflect several features

Figure 3. Main features of the perceived school identity, according to the frequency of their appearance in different dimensions

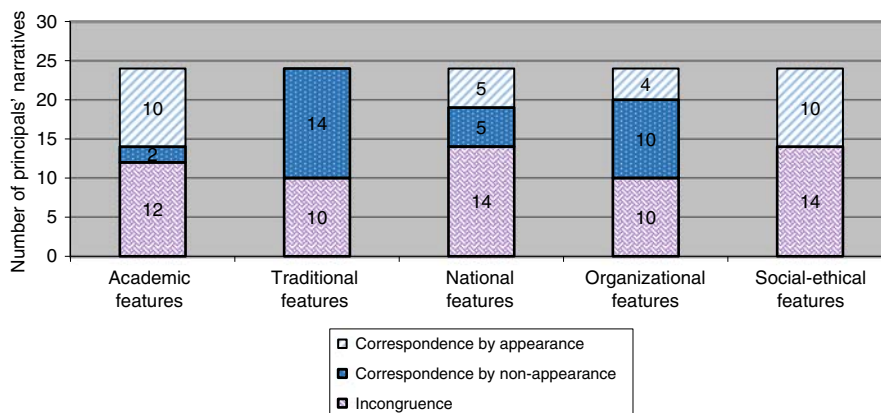


Figure 4. Comparison between principals' perceptions of the school logo and school vision, according to the main features of the perceived school identity

central Israel, the principal perceived the school vision as follows: "The school focuses on excellence in academic achievements [...]." The logo of the school features a burning torch, which the principal perceived as reflecting the importance of education and knowledge. Correspondence by non-appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in two narratives. Incongruence was found in 12 narratives. For example, the principal of a junior high school in central Israel made no mention of any academic features regarding the school vision. Its logo, however, featured a large book in its center, which was perceived by the school principal as reflecting the values of learning and knowledge.

Traditional features. No cases of correspondence by appearance were found. Correspondence by non-appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in 14 narratives. That is, the principals did not mention them when discussing either the vision or the logo. Incongruence between perceptions of school vision and logo

was found in ten narratives. For example, traditional features were perceived in the logo (a Bible), but not in the perceived school vision.

National features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in five narratives. For example, a principal of a high school in central Israel noted regarding the school vision: "Those attending this school see themselves as a link in the chain of generations, and are committed to working for the future of the country." Correspondingly, the principal explained that the school logo presents two paths leading to opposite directions, which the principal perceived as representing a commitment to both the past and the future of the country. Correspondence by non-appearance was found in five narratives. Incongruence between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in 14 narratives. For example, a high school principal from central Israel stated regarding the perceived school vision: "The desired image of a graduate is one who has motivation to serve in the national service and contribute to the country." However, the principal did not perceive the logo as indicating any reference to this aspect.

Organizational features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in four narratives. For example, a principal of a high school in central Israel described the school's vision as follows: "We aspire to educate our students and instill a foundation of knowledge, values and skills needed for the 21st century, enabling self-fulfillment and leadership at work, in the world of innovative organizations [...]." Correspondingly, the school's logo included abstract geometric shapes that were interpreted by the principal as reflecting organizational movement, renewal and inventiveness. Correspondence by non-appearance was found in ten narratives. Incongruence between perceptions of vision statements and school logos was found in ten narratives. For example, while the principal of a high school in central Israel did not refer to values like progress, innovativeness and technology regarding the school vision, the principal perceived the school logo as innovative in design – composed only of text, thus reflecting organizational progress and innovativeness.

Social-ethical features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school logo was found in ten narratives. For example, the principal of a junior high school in central Israel referred to the school vision as follows: "The school constantly nurtures its students and staff, working toward fairness and community involvement based upon trust and mutual respect." The principal also made specific reference to the logo: "The school's basic values are expressed in the school's logo, [...] the leaves that appear in several colors and sizes represent the diversity and uniqueness of the school, leading to equity for all who enter its gates." No cases of correspondence by non-appearance were found. Incongruence between perceived school vision and logo was found in 14 narratives. For example, the principal of a junior high school in central Israel referred to the school vision as follows: "The school places emphasis on education based on the values of pluralism, tolerance, leadership, mutual involvement and fostering interpersonal dialogue." According to the principal's perception, the logo does not reflect any of these values.

The relationship between principals' perceptions of school vision and school practice

We analyzed the principals' perceptions of their school practice regarding each of the five features and compared the findings with the principals' perceptions of their school's vision (Figure 5).

Academic features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in 16 narratives. For example, at an elementary school in Northern Israel, the principal's perception of the vision was as follows: "We strive for constant excellence, which creates added value for all school members." Correspondingly, the principal described how the school actually promotes this vision: "Once a month,

the homeroom teachers select two outstanding students. I meet with those students and we talk about their progress in learning, about learning motivation and enjoyment [...] I check with them how they have progressed, and at the end of the meeting, they each receive a certificate of excellence."

Correspondence by non-appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in two narratives. Incongruence was found in six narratives. For example, the principal of an elementary school in Northern Israel who has 15 years of administrative experience referred to the school's vision statement as follows: "The student will acquire basic skills and general knowledge, and will apply them in a way that reflects aspiration for high achievement." However, according to the principal, the academic aspect is not prominent and does not play a significant role in school practice: "We have an extensive social activities program. Just look at the board. Sometimes, we also study here. There are issues that are more important than this business of marks."

Traditional features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in six narratives. For example, at a junior high school in central Israel, the school's vision was perceived by the principal as follows: "The school's purpose is to help its students become mature adults who are aware of their religious identity." Correspondingly, the principal described how the school emphasizes its vision in the curriculum: "The issue of religion is very prominent here. We incorporate religious studies from grades 7 to 9. We give three hours of religious studies a week while most schools give only two hours of religious studies a week."

Correspondence by non-appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in 14 narratives. Incongruence was found in four narratives. For example, a principal of a high school in central Israel related the following: "One of the core values of the school vision is commitment to our heritage [...] the school views itself as committed to establishing and deepening the student's connection to religious tradition and heritage." However, the principal did not refer to any school activities intended to implement this aspiration.

National features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in 13 narratives. For example, at an elementary school in Northern Israel, the school's vision was perceived by the principal as follows: "Students will develop an attachment to the place, the country, and their national identity." Correspondingly, the school principal described how the school strengthens these values: "We have many more field trips than recommended by the Ministry of Education [...]."

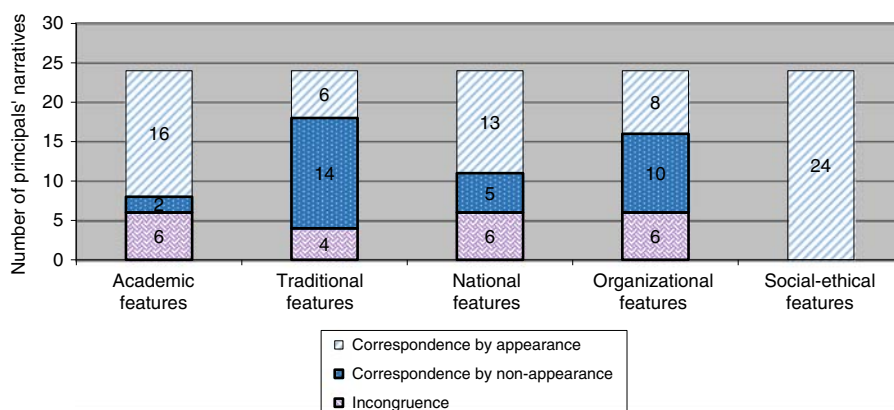


Figure 5. Comparison between principals' perceptions of the school vision and school practice, according to the main features of the perceived school identity

This has tremendous significance in terms of strengthening the students' connection with the country, and it's worth the investment."

Correspondence by non-appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in five narratives. Incongruence was found in six narratives. For example, at a junior high school in Northern Israel, the principal did not mention any national features in the perceived school vision, but did describe school programs which cultivate national identity: "The issue of love for the country is very prominent, primarily through hiking. Currently, there are five classes that are called 'Leadership and Walking through the Land' [...], in which the students learn to love the country by hiking in it and becoming familiar with it."

Organizational features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in eight narratives. For example, at an elementary school in Northern Israel, the principal stated regarding the school vision: "We believe in innovative pedagogy [...] that corresponds to the changing reality of the 21st century by maximizing the use of technology in our classrooms." Similarly, the principal described how these features are practiced in daily school life: "Another issue we have been dealing with more in recent years is the integration of our learning in a digital environment. [We have] E-classes, we have internet connection in every class, a projector, a computer. The teachers work together with digital content companies that have contracts with the Ministry of Education."

Correspondence by non-appearance was found in ten narratives. Incongruence was found in six narratives. For example, at a high school in Central Israel, the principal perceived the school's vision as follows: "The school provides instruction that is tailored to the individual needs of every student, and connects the learner with both the past and the future." However, the principal did not mention how this vision is actually implemented.

Social-ethical features. Correspondence by appearance between perceptions of school vision and school practice was found in all 24 narratives. For example, at a junior high school in Northern Israel, the principal's perceived vision was as follows: "The junior high school aspires to be a leading educational institution that develops ethical individuals who will improve the image of Israeli society." Correspondingly, the principal described various school activities that contribute to the community, such as collecting contributions for the needy and visiting old age homes. In all the schools we examined, we found features of social ethics, both in the perceived school vision and in the perceived school practice.

Due to the fact that the principals were the ones describing their perceived school practice, and they have a vested interest in promoting their school, we tried to reduce social desirability bias by assuring them anonymity and discretion. Evidence of reduced bias may be seen in several statements in which principals criticized their school practice. For example: "Regarding the use of new technology at school, I feel I am doing less in that area than in other areas. That is because in truth, the school does not really promote this issue. It is just written in the vision statement."

Another example from another principal: "As to the third section of our vision statement, which talks about a respectful communication among all school members, no one really puts it into practice. I feel very bad admitting this, but that's the truth." Thus, it seems that at least some of the principals felt comfortable enough to admit incongruence between their school's vision and their school's practice.

To summarize, the current study examined three dimensions of school identity as perceived by school principals: the school logo, the school vision and school practice. The study found that each of these dimensions reflects five central features: academic, traditional, national, organizational and social-ethical. In addition, the study found correspondence by appearance, correspondence by non-appearance and incongruence between the perceived logo, the perceived school vision and the perceived school practice.

Discussion and conclusions

Our findings indicate that investigating different aspects of school identity based on principals' perceptions of school logos, school visions and school practice is an important process for better understanding the meaning of school identity. According to the social-ecological model, this understanding may affect the entire ecological system surrounding school principals and their schools which include students, staff, parents, the wider community and national policy. This may be done by promoting different features such as academic in interpersonal relationships, organizational by encouraging school excellence, community, by emphasizing ethical values among parents and public policy by educating for national and traditional features.

Combining the theoretical models proposed by Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) and Balmer (2012) reveals that school identity is generated by the interaction between the perceived school logo, school vision and school practice. The incongruence that appears between the study dimensions may be perceived as complementing each other and can actually contribute to school identity by complementing one another (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). As a result, this broadens and can strengthen the school identity concept.

While the study yielded a number of features that can be used for the analysis of school identity, the presence of the social-ethical feature in all the narratives is the main innovation of this study. The dominance of social-ethical features implies that the social-ethical element is a fundamental factor of school identity in Israel. Therefore, school principals, who are the leaders in designing school policy, should take into account the school's social identity and make sure that their school policies are aligned with its social-ethical context.

The generated school identity model that has been suggested in this study has theoretical significance. This study has broadened the organizational identity model (Balmer, 2012; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013) to encompass the school context as well. It has shown that each of the three dimensions, school logo, school vision and school practice, has an impact on understanding the concept "school identity."

Regarding the applied level, the model presented above may help principals be more aware of the correspondence between their perceptions of their school logo, school vision and school practice, thus enabling them to develop and preserve their school identity by integrating these three dimensions into one cohesive identity. In addition, the model presented in this study can be used as a strategic tool when planning educational changes. Examining the relationships among the three dimensions, logo, vision and practice according to the five features – academic, traditional, national, organizational and social-ethical, may aid principals in redesigning school identity and implementing new policies. As described above, according to the social-ecological model, these changes may affect not only the school principals, students and staff, but can also affect the parents' selection of schools, the wider community and also may strengthen the national policy toward promoting societal values.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

School identity was elicited from interviews conducted with school principals. Their answers may have been influenced by social desirability bias, despite the efforts taken to reduce its effect by promising anonymity and discretion. Furthermore, this study solely focused on school principals' perceptions. To reach a more in-depth understanding of school identity, additional observations and interviews are necessary.

Another limitation of the study is the differing "life spans" of logos and vision statements. Oftentimes, logos are designed in the early days of an institution's existence and remain unchanged or are only moderately revised, while vision statements undergo more frequent modifications. This must be taken into account when comparing perceptions of school logos and vision statements. Nevertheless, the different dimensions

presented here as reflections of school identity may serve as a basis for further research in the area. One last limitation of this study is that it only included public schools in Israel. Further research should be done to compare other educational sectors such as private schools, or to conduct comparative research in other countries and determine whether trends are similar or different.

Note

1. In this paper, the term “logo” relates to the school’s insignia as it appears on the school’s internet home page.

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Further reading

Shapira-Lishchinsky, O. (2018), *International Aspects of Organizational Ethics in Educational Systems*, Emerald publication, Howard House.

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