

The Administrative Creativity Among Arab Public Kindergarten Principals in Israel and Its Relationship in Achieving Competitive Advantage

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Abstract: The study on competitive advantages is based on two views: resource-based view and competence -based view. The current study aimed to identify the degree of kindergartens' principals' administrative creativity and its relationship in achieving the competitive advantage degree of the Arab public kindergartens in Israel from the kindergarten's principals' perspectives. The study sample consisted of (378) public kindergartens principals who were chosen by using convenience sampling. The study results showed that the competitive advantage degree of kindergartens and administrative creativity among public kindergartens principals were high. There are significant differences at the competitive advantage degree and administrative creativity degree among public kindergartens principals from the perspectives of study sample due to the years of experience only. Moreover, there is a significant positive correlation between the administrative creativity degree among Arab public kindergarten principals and the competitive advantage degree of public kindergartens. Depending on the study results, the researcher recommends that the education ministry should find out new inventive ways of choosing creative kindergartens' principals. What is more, educational institutions must invest in human skills, and develop unique resources to create difference and acquire competitive advantage.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Administrative Creativity, Principals, Kindergartens, Israel

1. Introduction

Rapid changes in educational institutions have become inevitable due to many economic, social, cultural and technological developments. The educational institutions in the current era face many challenges represented in their need to raise the level of their performance and effectiveness in order to adapt effectively to the requirements of accelerating changes. kindergartens, like other educational institutions, seek to take advantage and improve the quality of educational outputs and increase the creative climate [1].

Kindergartens are considered a central part of the educational system. Kindergarten principals play a central and influential role in developing children's educational and social lives. At the same time, they are responsible for the kindergarten management and the learning process, coping with the acceleration of technological progress and globalization, the

increasing competition between kindergartens as well. They are responsible for implementing the core curriculum. They are in charge of communication with parents and the community, and are also in charge of the organizational issues of the kindergarten. At the same time, they are under the supervision of a regional supervisor, who work in conjunction with instructors who are experts in the curriculum, and provide guidance to the educators [2].

Creativity is one of the most important and valuable resources in the institution, and its importance lies in the fact that it is responsible for producing new and useful ideas. In order to secure a place in the competition, the institution must acquire a creative identity. In such a changing environment, creativity ensures problem-solving skills, decision-making and critical thinking for the institution's survival and outstanding institutional performance [3]. They add that administrative creativity is one of the components of institutional creativity,

and it may result in the higher levels of the institution when there is cooperative democratic leadership, open communication and feedback.

The importance of administrative creativity appears in the educational system and its role in achieving the goals of educational institutions and their excellence in work, in order to face the existing administrative problems and carry out tasks and work with high efficiency [4]. Creativity constitutes an outlet for these institutions to solve their problems, and therefore their future development does not depend on human staff only, but rather on the provision of a distinguished type of workers, and on creative individuals in various areas. This led these institutions to diversify their management methods at work, abandoning old administrative policies or modernizing them, providing infrastructure, and employing new innovative technologies that were not previously known, so that these institutions would be more competitive and face future challenges. Paying attention to the human factor that possesses distinguished skills, competencies and knowledge is very essential, and therefore administrative creativity is the most secure strategic choice for institutions in the face of various potential challenges [5].

1.1. Theoretical Background

Creativity is one of the most important pillars of competitive advantage. If organizations want not to be left behind in the competitive race, they must take steps and procedures to provide services or develop new technologies to produce these products and services with confidence and at low cost, so creativity is the ability to identify some of the means that help in achieving its leadership position over the competitors [6]. Employee creativity could contribute to competitive advantage for the organization; hence, it is considered as one of the most significant aspects of an organizational environment [7]. Employee creativity is a process which transcends the regular behavior, which an employee undertakes to arrive at creative outcomes [8]. Creativity and innovation are precious resources for gaining competitive advantage [9]. Human resources are the most important asset of organizations [10]. To sum up, schools' most important human resource is teachers and the teachers' personal advantageous degree of competitiveness is important to school development where creative attitude of teachers would add to the value of the educational institution.

Modern educational institutions all pursue competitiveness, and there are studies that explore the competitive advantage of schools [10, 11]. However, there are few studies of preschool institutions on this issue [12]. Competition in education continues to take place today. The changes in the environment, the demands of society, customers or government have caused increased systematic efforts to create competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage refers to defeating competitors and occupying an advantageous position in the market [13]. Despite the fact the institutions have more or less certain resources, but resources are scarce, valuable and hard to imitate will provide a sustainable competitive advantage [14]. The

resource-based view theory refers to resources possessed by an institution. It emphasizes that competitive advantage comes from held resources, which include human resources (experience, educational training, and relationships), financial resources or physical resources (equipment, geographical locations, channels to obtain raw materials), and organizational resources such as control and coordination system, corporate culture, reputation, and internal and external relationships of the organization [14]. Educational institutions must develop unique resources to create difference and acquire competitive advantage.

Competence-based view theory refers to the ability of the institution to integrate resources to elevate performance or productivity [12]. It emphasizes that competitive advantage comes from organizational competence, which is the cumulative effect of overall organizational learning. Organizations must have the competence to integrate operational resources, convert them to important production ability, and realize and promote their performance in the market to form their competitive advantage [15].

This study has attempted to combine both theories to develop the content of competitive advantage. Thus, this study intends to explore the competitive advantage of preschools from the perspectives of kindergartens principals. In terms of the theoretical basis of competitive advantage, some studies have applied resource-based view [14], while others have applied competence-based view [15]. This study applies these two theories in conjunction with study results relating to preschools [16], with the intention of confirming the applicability of these two theories to preschool institutions.

The competitive advantage has become the focus of attention of kindergarten institutions that live in great competitive conditions, and thus it is considered a strategic tool through which it can face various circumstances and challenges. Competitive advantage refers to the characteristics, capabilities, core competencies and aspects of the institution's superiority and its distinction from competitors in the market [17]. While competitiveness is defined as distinct skills, techniques, or resources that allow the institution to produce values and benefits for customers that exceed what their competitors offer and confirms its distinction and difference from those competitors from the point of view of customers who accept this difference and distinction, as it brings them more benefits and values that outperform what other competitors offer. Creativity, innovation and development are essential resources in institutions to build their competitive advantage [18].

Competitive advantage can be realized by improving the ability of human resources. The distinctive competitiveness of the educator is the ability to strive for excellence, to focus on it, and to satisfy parents and students by creating better educational performance and quality, and to outperform other competing teachers [10]. They believe that the analysis of the distinctive competitiveness of the teacher is an important factor in improving school competitiveness and educational quality. Furthermore, the competitive advantage in educational institutions can only be achieved by addressing

the quality of service to its customers, including the students as the main customers [19].

One of the keys to success in facing educational competition is the creation of innovative educational service activities, and that institutions should work on developing strategies to improve parent and child satisfaction and not stand idle while waiting for students to join them. Kindergartens' principals play a role in developing creative ideas and drafting innovative program concepts to make the kindergarten known to the public [20].

Based on the foregoing about the importance of administrative creativity and its role in achieving competitive advantage, and because of the severe shortage of studies that specialize in administrative creativity in early education and because of the importance of achieving competitive advantage in kindergartens [12, 21, 22]. The researcher saw - within the limits of his knowledge - that the issue of the relationship between administrative creativity among principals in Arab public kindergartens in Israel and the degree of achieving competitive advantage has not been addressed, so this study came as a preliminary attempt to investigate the degree of administrative creativity among kindergarten principals and its relationship to achieving competitive advantage.

1.2. Current Study

The current study is the first to examine the concept of competitive advantages among Arab public kindergartens in Israel. The unique job description of kindergarten principals' work is so complex, and includes both administrative and pedagogical aspects as well. This may play a significant role in determining and achieving the competitive advantage among kindergartens.

The reality of public kindergarten institutions is characterized by obvious differences between them in terms of management, excellence and creativity. The kids' recruitment competition is intense, low birth rates among the local community, the rise of private kindergartens, and the increasing parents' awareness of choosing a good kindergarten offering good quality services, the parents' expectations, create severe and intense competitiveness among kindergartens. This make many parents concern about their kids' future, and think deeply before enrolling their children in these institutions. On the other hand, it is obvious that the decrease in the number of enrolled in certain kindergartens, may create a new reality in which the local authorities might reduce classes or end operations of these kindergartens due to insufficient students and consequently they will disappear from the market. The researcher asks which reasons and factors are behind closing these institutions.

Since there is a lack of studies regarding the competitive advantage of kindergartens, the current study referred to relevant research findings to develop the content of competitive advantage [12, 21, 22]. Based on previous research findings, the current study aims to examine the degree of competitive advantages among Arab public kindergartens in Israel, and whether there are statistically

significant differences in the degree of competitive advantage in kindergartens due to academic qualification, and educational experience. Finally, the current study aimed to identify the degree of kindergartens' principals' administrative creativity and its relationship in achieving the competitive advantage degree of the Arab public kindergartens in Israel from the kindergarten's principals' perspectives. Thus, the first research hypothesis stated that what is the degree of administrative creativity among kindergarten principals in Israel from principals' perspectives. The second hypothesis stated that What is the degree of achievement of competitive advantages in Arab public kindergartens in Israel from principals' perspectives. The last hypothesis stated whether there is a significant correlation between administrative creativity among kindergarten principals and the degree of competitive advantage in Arab public kindergartens in Israel.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 378 Israeli-Arab kindergarten principals. The participants were selected using convenience sampling from four educational districts in Israel. 43.5 % of the participants has first degree in early age education and, 27.3% has master degree. Only 14.6% has less than seven-year experience, however, 64.4% has more than 15-year experience.

2.2. Measures

The measurement tool in this study consists of three questionnaires:

Demographic variables questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by the researcher and included self-reported questions for job title, academic qualifications, educational district and educational experience.

Competitive advantage questionnaire: The Competitive Advantage Test was developed by Chen [12] and modified by the researcher. The current questionnaire includes 19 items. It measures three major domains: competencies, tangible and intangible resources for kindergartens. Participants respond to each statement using a five-point Likert-type response format (totally disagree = 1 to totally agree = 5). In the present study Cronbach Alpha were as follows: tangible resource ($\alpha = .75$), intangible resource ($\alpha = .71$), and competence ($\alpha = .87$). All the items were with a load level greater than .4.

Administrative creativity questionnaire: The Administrative Creativity Test for kindergartens principals was developed by Sadiqq [1] and modified by the researcher. The current questionnaire includes 23 items. It measures three major domains: fluency, authenticity, analysis and linkage, flexibility, and sensitivity to problems. Participants respond to each statement using a five-point Likert-type response format (totally disagree = 1 to totally agree = 5). In the present study Cronbach Alpha were as follows: fluency ($\alpha = .77$),

authenticity ($\alpha = .73$), analysis and linkage ($\alpha = .82$), flexibility ($\alpha = .80$), and sensitivity to problems ($\alpha = .79$). All the items were with a load level greater than .4.

2.3. Research Procedure

The study was conducted among Arab public kindergartens principals and aides, in 2021 and it lasted four months. The study sample was obtained by convenience sampling in four educational districts in Israel. After obtaining the needed approvals, a digital instrument was sent to the study participants to be filled. The study's purpose and participant rights (e.g., anonymity) were explained. Ninety-eight percent of the principals agreed to take part.

2.4. Data Analytic Plan

Means, standard deviations for research variables were examined. One Way Anova was examined to assess the difference between means of the current study variables.

3. Results

Table 1 shows that competence value is relatively very high (4.26, .96) as well as intangible and tangible resources which attained high degrees (3.97, .87) and (3.97, .87) respectively. The results showed that there are no statistically significant differences on all competitive advantage components due to academic qualifications and geographical

areas, but the differences are statistically significant due to the years of experience variable.

Table 1. The means and standard deviation of Competitive advantage dimensions.

No	Competitive advantage dimensions	Mean	SD
1	competence	4.26	.96
2	Intangible resources	3.97	.87
3	tangible resources	3.79	.87
	total	4.08	.86

Table 2. The means and standard deviation of administrative creativity dimensions.

No	administrative creativity dimensions	Mean	SD
1	Fluency	4.28	.64
2	Authenticity	4.19	.79
3	Analysis and linkage	4.16	.88
4	Flexibility	4.16	.82
5	Sensitivity to problems	3.94	.87
	total	4.14	.75

Table 2 shows that administrative creativity dimensions are relatively very high. Fluency is the highest (4.28, .64) whereas Sensitivity to problems is the lowest (3.94, .75). The results showed that there are no statistically significant differences on all administrative creativity dimensions due to academic qualifications and geographical areas, but the differences are statistically significant due to the years of experience variable.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient between the degree of administrative creativity and the degree of competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage					
Degree of administrative creativity	Areas	Tangible resources	Intangible resources	Competencies	Total
	Fluency	.51**	.55**	.64**	.63**
	Authenticity	.63**	.65**	.74**	.74**
	Flexibility	.65**	.72**	.80**	.81**
	Sensitivity to problems	.62**	.66**	.74**	.74**
	Analysis and linkage	.67**	.74**	.82**	.83**
	total	.68**	.73**	.82**	.83**

**P< 0.01

It is noticed from the results of Table 3 that there is a positive statistically significant correlation between the degree of administrative creativity among kindergarten administrators and the degree of achieving competitive advantage in Arab public kindergarten in Israel, where the value of the correlation coefficient was (0.827).

4. Discussion

The current study aimed to identify the degree of kindergartens' principals' administrative creativity and its relationship in achieving the competitive advantage degree of the Arab public kindergartens in Israel from the kindergartens' principals' perspectives.

4.1. Administrative Creativity

The results of the degree of administrative creativity among kindergartens' principals' in Israel was high in all five

dimensions. This may be attributed to the fact that the characteristic of administrative creativity is present among many principals, and these characteristics and capabilities have been developed among kindergarten principals when they have managed kindergartens. This occurred when they were provided by the opportunity to develop plans as well as by upgrading their skills through training courses and workshops.

The results of the dimensions of administrative creativity converged very closely, where fluency came first and attained a very high degree. This could be attributed to the result of the abilities and skills that kindergarten principals possess during the preparation period or the practice of work. Many kindergarten principals have high freedom to express their opinions. besides, the similarity of many problems in kindergarten and the presence of some rules and procedures that refer to specific solutions led to their rapid thinking in multiple solutions to various problems and issues within a short period of time. Moreover, kindergarten principals deal

with complex network such as assistants, professional assisting and accompanying staff, kids' parents, supervisors, as well as their interaction with the Ministry of Education and various institutions in the local community. It should be noted that the Ministry of Education holds many training courses in the area of professional development annually, which contribute to the development of principals' fluency and creative thinking.

Authenticity came second with a high degree. This could be attributed to the fact kindergarten principals attempt to distance themselves from tradition and repetition and therefore to find new ideas to solve problems related to classroom environment. The results indicate that kindergarten principals use unfamiliar methods to perform their tasks through original ideas. Kindergarten principals believe that innovation is the key to excellence and achieving competitiveness to keep pace with the latest educational, technological and administrative developments, and their desire to find innovative, renewable and unconventional solutions to the problems they face.

Flexibility came in the third rank with a high degree, due to the acceptance of most kindergarten principals for criticism and other opinion. This means that they are keen to know the opposite opinion in order to benefit from it, and are keen to make changes in work methods from time to time. This can be attributed to the kindergarten principals' possession of many experiences, and administrative skills that enable them to deal with new developments effectively. The results of the study can also be attributed to the fact that adopting the correct opinions requires benefiting from the criticism of others and the ability to adapt to different situations. Creativity also requires looking at problems from more than one perspective, and shifting from traditional methods to modern ones when managing kindergartens to get rid of monotony and routine at work.

Analysis and linking also got the same rank with a high degree. This could be attributed to the kindergarten principals' possession of problem-solving skills, the ability to analyze and organize, self-confidence and bearing responsibilities along with the modern view of the educational process.

Finally, sensitivity to problems came fourth with a high degree as well. It is observed that the nature of the kindergarten principals' coexistence with the present educational problems in the field made them anticipate other problems and find innovative solutions to them. They have the ability to predict problems and to facing them properly. This can be explained by the kindergarten principals' keenness to follow the scientific method in solving problems wisely and tactfully.

4.2. Competitive Advantage

The results related to this question showed that the degree of achieving a competitive advantage in Arab public kindergartens in Israel from the study sample perspectives came at a high degree in all areas, as the competencies area came in the first rank, followed by the area of intangible

resources, and finally the area of tangible resources. The results can be attributed to the advanced level of principals' knowledge and awareness of the importance of achieving competitiveness in kindergartens in order to maintain the survival of the institution. Failure to achieve competitiveness means regression, retreat, withdrawal, and thus staying aside. Besides that, losing this race and competition may lead the principal to lose her position, work, and thus her source of livelihood. From this standpoint, the observer can realize the extent of the principals' keenness to exercise administrative and creative skills, apply comprehensive quality components in the educational environment, and work on upgrading the kindergarten in order to gain new parents and kids. Modern management depends mainly on partnership, and is based on modern technologies and scientific methods to develop educational processes (administration, professional staff, curriculum, methods of teaching, tools and means). The results of the current study revealed that the excellence of the kindergarten has been rooted in the organization's ability to diagnose the available resources and to strengthen and enhance internal activities and events to maintain the quality of service through creative tasks and family atmosphere.

The results of the current study showed that competence attained high degree. It is an indicator confirming the principals' awareness of the importance of a constructive and organized planning process aimed at choosing the best solutions to achieve productivity by setting comprehensive, flexible and applicable goals for all aspects of work in kindergartens. Therefore, the necessary resources and competencies should be provided to achieve a high degree of competitiveness. The results of the current study can be attributed to the principals' keenness to provide a distinct and unique quality of services and high performance that may create added value for students and their families and thus meet their satisfaction. The results of the current study can be attributed to the keenness of many principals on the quality of teamwork with members of the professional staff, positive with the kids' parents, and the existence of a positive relationship with the local community. What is more, kindergarten principals are keen on having a positive relationship with the local community, and on the quality of teamwork with the staff members.

Intangible resources are considered a significant key factor in achieving the competitive advantage. The result of the study regarding this issue seems logical, because it reflects the administration's interest and its constant endeavor to provide all human, material, financial, technological and cognitive resources in order to raise the status of the kindergarten and maintain its reputation. The principals showed relentless keenness on the importance of keeping up with what is new and the need to enroll the staff in the various educational courses and workshops. Professional training develops their experiences and their performance, refines their personalities, and contributes effectively to the improvement of the individual, collective and the institutional level. Intangible resources play essential role in achieving competitive advantage. This is fulfilled when

Kindergarten principals seem so interested in the kindergarten's reputation, and when they encourage their staffs to pursue professional development (completion courses). They use social media to post events and activities (official website, Facebook, WhatsApp), and finally they offer many different enrichment programs, (example: leadership program, foreign languages course, talented classes, music, etc.).

The principals' awareness of the importance of the professionalism of the workforce and its pivotal role in providing educational, administrative and educational services to the public of clients is very important. Principals are aware of the importance of material and cognitive resources to attract parents and their kids to enroll in kindergartens. Kindergartens would compete in the market successfully especially when they have got qualified professional staff, and when they are interested in providing various learning centers: (various educational toys and equipment), provide technological and software services, and finally when they provide financial resources to help her achieve her various programs.

Competitive advantage can be achieved by promoting principals' growth and professional development in order to systematically fulfill the needs of clients, and to deal flexibly with meeting those needs. Through training and development for educational staff, providing information technology in education and learning, in addition to providing open educational resources, and giving added value to kindergarten, attaining parents' satisfaction and loyalty, and establishing a community partnership, which is a goal pursued by all institutions to achieve a competitive advantage.

It is also evident from the current study that resources in their various forms and competencies have become a real value for the kindergarten, and one of the main reasons for its position and reputation. Therefore, principals in early childhood institutions try to draw strategies and develop plans for the development and investment of various resources. It seems that some Arab public kindergarten administrations in Israel are moving towards a new strategy in managing resources and competencies and building a positive organizational culture that recognizes creativity and innovation, rewards achievement, and maintains competencies. The results emphasize the fact that many principals strive to innovate, and to invest the available competencies and resources in order to achieve the kindergarten's competitive advantage. In sum, the human factor remains the source of creativity, innovation and the main determinant of the kindergarten's competitive advantage. The results of the study revealed that kindergartens have tangible resources, such as the availability of qualified professional staff, the kindergarten's reputation and prestige, the staff's follow-up to professional development, the use of information technology and finally the principals' possession of the skills, knowledge and abilities.

5. Conclusion

The main contribution of the present study is its approach

to identify the degree of kindergartens' principals' administrative creativity and its relationship in achieving the competitive advantage degree of the Arab public kindergartens in Israel. The findings of the current study help kindergarten principals determine what kind of administrative practices could contribute to the effectiveness and the excellence of the kindergarten. Beyond that, it contributes to deepen the knowledge about the importance of the relationship between the degree of kindergartens' principals' administrative creativity and its relationship in achieving the competitive advantage degree of the Arab public kindergartens in Israel. This study also offers valuable advice and guidance to the kindergarten principals in Arab public kindergartens. This study could assist kindergarten principals to take advantage of their competences and resources to achieve and sustain the competitive advantage of the kindergarten. Hence, the most important human resource is principal. Her personal advantageous degree of competitiveness is important to kindergarten development. Lastly, this study can be used as a starting point providing kindergarten principals profound understanding for the challenging reality. The results of the study showed that it is necessary to maintain these levels of competences and work hard to upgrade and enhance them continuously. It is necessary to conduct future studies to examine other variables effects on the degree of achieving competitive advantage in Arab public kindergartens in Israel.

6. Research Limitations

The current study has some significant limitations. First, the sample is a convenience one and has not been conducted randomly. As a result, generalization of the results is questionable. Thus, there is a need for more research based on random sampling to increase the validity of the current findings. Also, data was obtained through self-reported questionnaires, which could introduce response bias. At the end, the researcher used in his current study questionnaires to examine the correlation between the degree of administrative creativity among kindergarten principals and the degree of achieving competitive advantage in Arab public kindergartens in Israel, whose results were high. At first glance, it appears to be unexpected from the researcher's point of view. Therefore, the researcher suggests the necessity of using other methods of data collection in future studies, such as conducting in-depth interviews. Lastly, there is a need for future studies to test the research variables and to deeply investigate the relations taking into considerations of these limitations.

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