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Developing Excellence Leadership and Autonomous Motivation among Beginning Teachers in the Arab-Bedouin Community in Israel: A Self Determination Theory-Based Intervention Program

Haya Kaplan*, Huwaida Alatawna-Alhuashla, Bosmat Bar-Nadav, Khaled Al-Said

Kaye Academic College of Education, Beer-Sheva, Israel
Email: *kaplanh@kaye.ac.il

Abstract

Heights in the Negev is an innovative program for promoting leadership and excellence among Arab-Bedouin beginning teachers (BTs). The program was designed to meet the needs of teachers during their induction period, to en-hance their leadership skills and to help achieve change in the Bedouin edu-cation system. The intervention is based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017), which highlights the role of the psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy in promoting autonomous motivation and optimal functioning. The article presents a qualitative case study that fol-lowed three cycles of the program during its first four years. The participants were 35 BTs (11 men, 24 women) and nine school principals. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and feedback questionnaires were used as research tools. Data analysis revealed that participants' motivation to choose a teach-ing career was mostly autonomous, and that they experienced need-support both in the program's workshops and at their schools, where organizational intervention took place. Participants demonstrated an autonomy-supportive leadership style, for example by leading educational initiatives for the school and the community and were positioned as influential figures in their schools. According to school principals, the teachers demonstrated proactive leader-ship, active engagement in school activity, and autonomous motivation, taken together as teaching excellence. The research shows that BTs can be leaders despite their struggles. It also shows how change can be generated in an au-thoritative and centralized education system such as the Bedouin-Arab one.

1. Introduction

Heights in the Negev is an innovative program for promoting teaching excellence and leadership among BTs from the Bedouin-Arab community. The program runs in the Negev region of southern Israel.

A teaching intern who participated in the program reported that it had given him the courage to dream, act, and pursue his goals. We learn from the intern's quote that he initiated collaborations with colleagues and generated change, demonstrating an organization-oriented approach and responsibility beyond himself.

> After finishing the program, I dare to do things that I didn't dare to do before, that I didn't think I could do. Thanks to the program I think more about the school and not just about teaching. I take the lead and contribute to the school and create partnerships with other teachers. When I saw that I was successful, it gave me motivation to continue. It's important for me to lead changes in my society and I'm in the right direction (intern, first year of the program)

These are the words of an intern, new to the profession and to the Bedouin-Arab education system. One may wonder: how can an intern at the beginning of his professional career make a difference within a structured system in a collectivist-hierarchical society?

The professional literature indicates the complexity of teachers' induction period. These initial years involve numerous struggles and pressures, requiring the teacher to adjust on multiple levels: personal, emotional, professional, and organizational (Schmidt et al., 2017). In addition to these challenges, BTs from the Bedouin-Arab sector cope with culture-specific difficulties. The Bedouin-Arab society of southern Israel is collectivist-hierarchical and patriarchal in nature (Al-Said, 2015). A centralized educational climate prevails in many Arab schools across the country (Watad-Khoury, 2013). Young teachers in these schools have lower status than their more senior counterparts (Kaplan, 2021a). *Heights in the Negev* was developed to help young teachers meet these challenges and to generate change in the Bedouin-Arab education system and its induction culture.

The intervention program is based on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The theory focuses on the psychological needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. According to SDT, experiences of need satisfaction give rise to autonomous motivation, positive emotions, wellbeing, and willingness to invest (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Because of the cultural and social characteristics of the Bedouin society

and its school system, supporting the autonomy of Bedouin BTs required special consideration. Above all, we had to consider whether a leadership program that supported BTs' autonomy would lead to the expected outcomes.

We begin the article by presenting the Bedouin-Arab society and its education system. Then we will look at the world of BTs in general and in the Bedouin community. We will then lay out the theoretical foundations of the program and the research, and then introduce the program, the rationale for its development, and its underlying principles.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The Bedouin-Arab Society and Its Education System

The participants of the program and the accompanying research belong to the Bedouin-Arab society of southern Israel, which is a collectivist-hierarchical and patriarchal society (Oplatka & El-Kuran, 2020). In a collectivist society, norms and practices favor the interests of the social group over the needs and goals of its individuals; this is in contrast to an individualistic society, which favors the individual's needs and goals. The social structure of the Bedouin society is based on hierarchical structures, tribalism, loyalty to one's social group (family, tribe), adherence to strict codes of honor, and obedience to a parental-male authority (Al-Said, 2015).

The Bedouin towns of southern Israel are at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, with high unemployment rates and low levels of education, compared to other Israeli sectors (Oplatka & El-Kuran, 2020). Despite accelerated modernization in the Bedouin society, it still holds on to traditional-patriarchal customs. Therefore, despite the rise in education and employment among Bedouin women, their status is still inferior to that of men, who have traditionally held all authority (Al-Said, 2015).

Bedouin schools reflect the norms of the society; relationships between teachers mimic those between members of the nuclear and extended family (Abu Asbah, 2006). The traditional and frontal teaching methods in these schools reflect the traditional-patriarchal character of the Arab society (Alian, 2013). In the same vein, the organizational culture in many Arab schools is strict and their educational climate is centralized and authoritative (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2016; Watad-Khoury, 2013). In addition, the principals' leadership style is influenced by cultural considerations and tends to be authoritative and centralized (Arar & Oplatka, 2013; Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2016). The demographic compound of the school community—students, teachers, and principals—is determined by their tribal affiliation, which affects the relationships and management style in the schools (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2016) as well as the attitudes toward BTs (Kaplan, 2021a). A similar picture was obtained in schools of other collectivist cultures, such as in East Asia (Kaur & Noman, 2020) despite differences between the cultures.

External motives drive the career choice of many Bedouin teachers, particu-

larly female ones. These include limited vocational options and family pressures to take up a job that does not interfere with the woman's domestic duties (Hadad Haj-Yahya et al., 2021). However, the school climate, organizational culture, and management style give rise to feelings of alienation, frustration, stress, and decreased motivation (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2016; Elbadour et al., 2021).

Thus, the reality of BTs in Bedouin schools is unpleasant. The teachers report low levels of motivation among their students, lack of cooperation or involvement of parents, discipline problems, and limited support from senior teachers and administration (Kaplan, 2021a). The external motivations behind the career choice and the conditions at the schools make induction difficult for the young teachers, who are expected to keep a low profile and fit into their social positioning as young and inexperienced. This reality underscores the importance of nurturing young and proactive leadership in Bedouin schools. At the same time, it also indicates the enormous challenge of our program.

2.2. The Reality of BTs and Particularly Bedouin-Arab Ones

The early years on the job have an important role in shaping a teacher's professional identity (Kaplan et al., 2016). Yet this early period is considered one of the toughest in teachers' careers, often giving a sense of daily survival struggle (Schmidt et al., 2017). These feelings stem from the gap between the school reality and the professional knowledge, sense of teaching competence, vision, and values that the young teacher acquired in his or her training. Studies have shown that teachers' initial interactions in the school are frustrating, as they confront pedagogic, emotional, and social hurdles while attempting to adapt to the school's organizational culture (De Neve & Devos, 2017).

Similar difficulties face BTs in Bedouin schools. The usual struggles of a new teacher, however, are enhanced by the complex reality in the Bedouin-Arab education system (Watad-Khoury, 2013). Studies conducted in this population indicated pedagogic-professional difficulties as well as ecological-organizational ones. These included problems in the communication with principals, teachers, and parents; lack of discipline-specific knowledge; and problems adjusting to the organizational climate (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2012).

Such difficulties may compromise the teachers' emotional well-being and lead to burnout and diminished professional functioning (Kaplan, 2021a). A problem strongly associated with these struggles is high rates of teachers leaving the profession, especially quality teachers. This phenomenon worries many countries, including Israel (Shapira-Lishchinsky et al., 2019). In Israel, dropout rates among teachers in the Arab sector have been on the rise, while still being lower than in the Jewish sector due to scarcity of job alternatives (Maagan & Zilbershlag, 2015). This may mean that the teachers who stay in the profession experience low and controlled motivation.

2.3. Self-Determination Theory: The Program's Theoretical Basis

The program at the heart of this research is based on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Drawing on a humanistic outlook on human nature, the theory maintains that all people have three basic, and universal, psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The need for relatedness is the strive to conduct close, safe, and satisfying connections with others in one's social environment, to be part of a community, and to feel appreciated and protected. The need for competence is the individual's aspiration to experience oneself as capable of fulfilling plans, goals, and ambitions. The need in autonomy is a person's desire to be self-determined and possess authentic self-expression, meaning, independence, and free choice.

SDT distinguishes between autonomous and controlled motivations. For a teacher, autonomous motivation is linked to enjoyment and gratification from teaching (intrinsic motivation). Autonomously motivated teachers identify with the profession and the values it reflects and understand its meaning for them (identified motivation); they experience a sense of choice, as teaching becomes part of their identity (integrative motivation). In contrast, teachers with controlled motivation are driven by extrinsic motives (for example, fearing a principal's reaction) or introjected motivation (a sense of pressure, guilt, or shame). According to SDT, intrinsic motivation is inherent, while extrinsic motivation can undergo internalization and become an integral part of the self. SDT claims that optimal functioning in teaching is tied to autonomous motivation, as well as to active and high-quality engagement, emotional and social adaptation, and contribution to one's environment. A key to optimal professional functioning in teachers, according to SDT, is when teachers feel that their psychological needs are met (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Based on this theory we chose the name for our program: the Hebrew word for *heights* includes the initials of the central concepts of SDT: relatedness, autonomy, competence, and autonomous motivation. Relying on the theory, we believe that in order to promote leadership and excellence among young teachers, they need to be nurtured in an environment that supports their psychological needs. Yet one can ask: considering the characteristics of the society, is autonomy important for Bedouin-Arab teachers? According to the cultural relativism approach, the need for autonomy is a Western idea that is insignificant in traditional cultures, which emphasize conformism, obedience, and interdependence within the family (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003), or in this case dependence on authority figures from the school. Taking this approach, one could claim that because Bedouin BTs internalize the communication patterns and relationships in the Bedouin society, then supporting or suppressing their autonomy will have little effect. According to SDT, however, psychological needs are universal and innate (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Previous studies have confirmed the applicability of the theory in collectivist cultures (Ginevra et al., 2015; Jang et al., 2009), including the Bedouin community in Israel (Kaplan, 2018, 2021b; Kaplan & Assor, 2019; Kaplan et al., 2014).

However, studies examining need satisfaction among Bedouin teachers have

focused on in-service teachers (Katz & Cohen, 2018) or preservice teachers (Kaplan & Madjar, 2017). The study population of the current research—interns and new teachers at the induction stage—has been scarcely researched from an SDT perspective. The few relevant studies conducted with this population have indicated that teachers had experienced frustration of their psychological needs (Kaplan, 2021a; Elbadour et al., 2021). The current research offers an additional investigation into the applicability of SDT among BTs in the Bedouin-Arab society; specifically examining whether supporting their psychological needs contributes to their motivation and functioning.

2.4. The *Heights in the Negev Program*

The central goal of *Heights in the Negev* is to integrate into the Bedouin education system excellent educators with autonomous motivation, leadership skills, and a proactive approach, so that they can lead change in the school and the community. The program also seeks to encourage the teachers to persevere in the education system over time.

Several partners have joined forces to run the program: Kaye Academic College of Education, which runs a four-year teachers' training program; the Ministry of Education; education departments in the local municipalities; and schools from the Bedouin sector. The participants of the program are teachers during their internship (fourth year of training) and post-internship (the year after completing their degree and obtaining a teaching license). The new teachers are placed in schools across the Negev region by the Ministry of Education. The program candidates must complete an evaluation process and undergo personal interviews. The following are the admission requirements:

- Academic excellence (top 15th percentile), based on a grade average from years 1 - 3 in the college and two recommendations by college instructors from their program.
- Social excellence: experience in community volunteer work during their education studies.
- Autonomous motivation for teaching, identification with the profession, its values and purpose, and desire to lead significant changes in the Bedouin education system.

The program offers the teachers reflective and experiential workshops, facilitated by Arab-speaking Bedouin facilitators. The workshop sessions utilize methods such as experiential learning, phototherapy (learning through photography), and arts. They combine internal personal work of the teachers and theoretical conceptualization. To support their psychological needs, program participants initiate and implement social or pedagogical projects at their school or community.

The methods employed in the workshops support participants' psychological needs, as identified in previous research (Assor et al., 2002; Kaplan & Assor, 2012; Reeve, 2006; Reeve et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020). As an example, au-

tonomy can be supported through a dialogue that encompasses multiple and original points of view, discussion of emotions, or identifying teachers' interests and inner resources. Relatedness is supported when participants and facilitators get to know each other and when the group becomes a safe place. Competence is supported through nonjudgmental feedback and by encouraging teachers to set optimal goals, for instance when planning a new project.

Some topics have a special focus in the workshops: being proactive and agentic; creativity and innovation in education; coping with challenging situations; being guided by vision and values; meeting inspirational leaders; what is motivation and how to promote motivation in students.

An important goal of the program is strengthening the young teachers' engagement and proactivity. According to SDT, initiating and implementing projects is a way of supporting teachers' needs and promoting their autonomous motivation (for teaching or leading changes). The initiatives help support the teachers' psychological needs in multiple ways. For example, by allowing them to develop new areas of interests (thus supporting their autonomy); by encouraging them to set optimal goals, learn new skills, receive supportive feedback, and experience success (thus supporting their competence); and by enhancing connections and collaboration between BTs and senior teachers or other figures in the school and the community (thus supporting their relatedness).

In addition, a facilitator from the program visits the schools twice yearly, meeting the principal and presenting the program and its goals. The facilitator also supports the teachers in running their projects, brainstorming ways to implement them, collaborating with other teachers, and presenting the projects to the school staff. These school visits include the BTs, who advocate for themselves and communicate their needs to the principal. In addition, the teachers are supported by a mentor-teacher from the school. The facilitator also meets the mentor-teacher and encourages him or her to establish a consistent, autonomy-supportive relationship with the teacher (Kaplan & Israel, 2020).

After completing the two years of the program, the graduates continue to belong to the *Heights in the Negev* community, participating in two yearly meetings. Some of them become mentors to younger teachers.

2.5. Leadership of BTs

Leadership of teachers is not a new concept. Programs for nurturing teachers' leadership skills have been developed and studied, some of them focusing on the social and geographic periphery (Bar-Zohar & Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020). According to the OECD (Pont et al., 2008), programs aimed at cultivating school leadership can help improve schools, raise the quality of teachers, and decrease teachers' dropout. Studies have demonstrated the effect of these programs on strengthening leadership qualities and proactive engagement among teachers (Douglass, 2017; Bar-Zohar & Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020).

Traditionally, leaders in schools have been defined as experienced and know-

ledgeable teachers. This definition excludes new teachers, even though they are capable of contributing to the school both in formal and informal roles, and are interested in doing so (Ado, 2016). Most leadership programs are designed as professional development courses for in-service teachers. Few studies have documented programs for school leadership of pre-service teachers or BTs. However, this area has received more attention in recent years (Ado, 2016).

A literary review (Bar-Zohar & Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020) indicates that in Israel's geographic and social periphery, there are few programs for promoting leadership among BTs. The current research examines *Heights in the Negev*, a unique program for developing leadership qualities among teaching interns and new teachers from the Bedouin sector, a scarcely researched field.

2.6. Leadership in *Heights in the Negev*

Heights in the Negev promotes an autonomy-supportive leadership style that is based on SDT (Eyal & Roth, 2011) and is distinguished from controlled leadership style. The program highlights leadership that supports psychological needs and emphasizes autonomy support as a special component. An autonomy-supportive principal, for example, establishes personal relationships with the teachers, gives them free choice, considers their passions, gives rationale to organizational tasks, and provides non-judgmental feedback. In contrast, a principal with controlled leadership style is authoritative, excludes the teachers from decision-making, dictates goals and tasks, maintains a hierarchical school structure, and takes full control of all organizational processes (Eyal & Roth, 2011). The program examined here focuses on autonomy-supportive leadership and is designed for BTs.

In the literature on leadership, Bass's theory (Bass, 2005) distinguishes between transformational leadership and transactional leadership. The first is based on a personal and emotional connection and provides inspiration, meaning, vision, and a sense of mission. It focuses on relationships and supports creativity and participants' needs. In contrast, transactional leadership is based on supervision, obedience, rewards, and coercion. According to SDT, a transformational leadership style is tied to autonomy-supportive leadership, while transactional leadership is connected to controlled leadership (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to Eyal and Roth (2011), transformational leadership is associated with autonomous motivation and reduced burnout, while transactional leadership is associated with controlled motivation and increased burnout.

The studies reviewed here refer to leadership of principals. However, they point to SDT as a suitable theoretical framework for a leadership program aimed at teachers. Since the current program seeks to promote autonomy-supportive leadership style, its facilitators model such leadership style themselves. Furthermore, they encourage the teachers to use a similar style when they teach or run projects at their schools.

As in other collectivist cultures (such as in China or Singapore), there is a ten-

sion between the traditional educational values of the Bedouin society in Israel and the Western values that the Ministry of Education is trying to instill through educational reforms. Controlled leadership is the norm in these collectivist cultures, thus educational reforms require a change of leadership style (Kaur & Noman, 2020). Similarly, BTs from the Bedouin society are likely to lean toward controlled leadership. Thus, an intervention program needs to focus on developing autonomy-supportive leadership among BTs.

Indeed, many teachers are motivated to have an impact on the education system. Yet it is important to develop their leadership orientation and skills. In our program, leadership is associated with vision, impact on others, and collaborative teamwork. It is also associated with initiating and running projects. Each of these abilities requires exploration, thus exploration is central to the program (Kaplan et al., 2016). Teachers are encouraged to explore issues such as: who am I as a teacher? What are my values? What is my vision? What resources am I bringing to school? The program also strives to nurture skills and consciousness that are associated with autonomy-supportive leadership, such as empathy and identifying needs (of the students and the school), teamwork and collaboration, creative thinking, learning from mistakes, coping with ambiguities and rejections, letting go, compromising, courage and risk taking, etc. The program also teaches methods to enhance students' motivation and SDT-based strategies that can help advance change in the school and community. All in all, the program nurtures teachers as collaborative leaders, who base their leadership on promoting the autonomous motivation of their partners.

2.7. Excellence among BTs

Excellence is a complex concept; different theories define it in diverse ways. Programs for nurturing excellence in teachers are offered in Israel and around the world (Paz & Salant, 2012). This article presents an SDT-based approach to teacher excellence.

Teacher excellence can be examined from the perspective of academic achievements, for example by considering the teachers' college record or their students' achievements in academics, art, or sport. This definition draws on a quantitative approach to excellence (Banjo, 2009). A different approach examines excellence from the perspective of motivation and values, such as a sense of social purpose or passion for helping others. This definition draws on a qualitative approach, which includes motivational, emotional, and social aspects (Renzulli, 1986) as opposed to cognitive and measurable ones. This latter approach is embedded within *Heights in the Negev* program.

According to SDT, quality teaching depends on a teacher with autonomous motivation, a sense of competence in his or her educational work, and a sense of relatedness to the school and the community. In other words, excellence in teaching goes beyond teachers' behavior and is tied to their authentic feelings about their needs. A teacher with these qualities will be able to support the psychological needs of his or her students through diverse teaching methods, creat-

ing for them an optimal environment for learning and development (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to SDT, teachers with autonomous teaching motivation support their students' autonomy, which predicts autonomous learning motivation among the students (Roth et al., 2007).

Furthermore, a quality teacher feels involved and is motivated to contribute to the students, school, and community, for example by doing volunteer work. Our program encourages such activity. Studies have found that experiences of need-satisfaction are essential to promoting pro-social behavior, including volunteer work, among the Bedouin population as well (Kaplan & Madjar, 2015).

3. The Current Research

The current research is qualitative and draws on the case study genre. The research, which extended over four years, examined *Heights in the Negev* program from the point of view of its participants and school principals.

The research questions:

- What are the characteristics of young teachers' motivation (for choosing a career in education, for teaching, and for leadership)?
- What expressions of leadership and excellence can be seen among BTs?
- How does the program support its participants' psychological needs?
- How does the program contribute to its participants and to their schools?

4. Method

Participants

Participation in the program extends over two years: the internship year (interns) and the subsequent year (new teachers). Thus, every year the program includes a new group of interns and a continuing group of new teachers. Each group has 20 - 24 participants (3 - 4 males and the rest female).

The gender disproportion reflects the situation in education colleges in Israel, where women study at higher rates than men (Mann, 2021). This gender difference is also apparent in the Bedouin society, in which women tend to take up teaching for cultural considerations (Pessate-Schubert, 2005).

The research followed three cycles of the program during its first four years. Year 1 (2018) had a mixed group of interns and new teachers (the first cycle). The new teachers in the first year of the program only participated for one year. In year 2 (2019), there were interns (new group, second cycle) and new teachers (continuing participants from the first cycle). In year 3 (2020) there were interns (new group, third cycle) and new teachers (second year of the second cycle). In year 4 (2021), there were new teachers (the second year of the third cycle). The interns in that year were not included in the study. Overall, we interviewed 35 participants—11 male and the rest female. This purposeful sample reflects the overall demographics of the program, which includes women and (few) men, interns, and post-internship new teachers, at every one of the intervention years. Table 1 shows participants according to years and groups.

Table 1. The interviewees in each of the.

2018	2019		2020		2021
Mixed group of interns and new teachers (first cycle, year 1)	New teachers (first cycle, year 2)	Interns (second cycle, year 1)	New teachers (second cycle, year 2)	Interns (third cycle, year 1)	New teachers (third cycle, year 2) Interns were not included
9	6	6	5	5	4

The research also included nine interviews with school principals conducted in 2021. Three of the interviewed principals have program graduates (from the first and second cycle) teaching in their schools, and six currently have program participants (third cycles) in their schools.

4.1. Research Tools

Semi-Structured Interviews: interviews were conducted with some of the program participants, as detailed in Table 1. The interviews covered the following topics: the induction process, the teaching experience of a beginning teacher, the initial interactions with the mentor and the school, the concepts of *excellence* and *leadership*, experiences from the program, and the initiatives.

Year-End Questionnaire: in the concluding session of the program, we distributed an anonymous reflective feedback questionnaire that included open questions. Its main topics were the following: the reasons for enrolling in the program, the goals of the program, the staff, the meaning of the group, the activities, school visits, executing the initiatives.

Open questions and reflective writing have been used as qualitative research tools in the past (Kaplan, 2021a; Kaplan et al., 2021). Kaplan and colleagues (Kaplan et al., 2021) based their study on open reflective journals in which participants in a learning community described their experiences, emotions, and thoughts. Kaplan (2021a) employed an open questionnaire in which BTs reported on their induction experiences. Triangulation has proven these tools to be trustworthy and to produce rich qualitative information, thus they were used in the current research.

Observations: three to five observations were performed each year of the program. They took place during diverse activities, including routine sessions, special sessions such as ODT or phototherapy, ceremonies, and presentation of the program to policymakers (school principals and inspectors from the Ministry of Education).

4.2. Procedure

Data collection was performed by an external evaluation team. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Some interviews were conducted in Hebrew while others were conducted in Arabic and translated to Hebrew. The relevant ethical guidelines have been maintained.

4.3. Data Analysis

The content of the interviews was thematically analyzed (Shkedi, 2003). The analysis was done by years and according to groups of interns, new teachers, or principals. It included several steps (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Shkedi, 2003). First, after a holistic reading of each interview, we performed an inductive analysis that focused on interviewees' interpretations of reality and classified the information into initial themes. Then, the information was further classified into themes that reflected the theoretical framework of SDT, such as types of motivation or experiences of need-satisfaction. In other words, the analysis followed a methodological pattern partially focused on theoretical criteria. Criteria-focused content analysis is an accepted approach in qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The information relating to the organizational schoolwork was supported by the protocols that documented the school visits. At the third stage, we conducted a mapping analysis to create the complete thematic picture. Findings from the other research tools were analyzed according to the themes and incorporated into them.

To examine the reliability of the research, three interviews were analyzed by the research team. This allowed us to discuss disagreements about the themes or the appropriate citations to represent each theme. During the process we considered the level of agreement between the researchers, came to an agreement on the analysis tools, and reached a consensus.

5. Findings

In this section we present testimonies from the two groups. First, we present the point of view of the program participants. Then we bring the perspective of principals from schools where the program participants work (some principals were interviewed while their teachers were enrolled in the program, while others were interviewed after the teachers had completed the program).

6. Participants' Perspective

The information obtained from participants brought up five central themes. First, autonomous motivation for choosing a career in education (some participants acquired their autonomous motivation through internalization). Second, the workshop as a need-supportive environment. The third theme—expressions of leadership among participants—had three sub-themes: conceptions regarding leadership; motivation to be a leader, which is in fact motivation to participate in the program; and transformative versus transactional leadership styles. The fourth theme was the contribution of the initiatives to the teachers and the schools. This theme included two sub-themes: the initiatives leading to experiences of need-satisfaction and to positioning in the school. The fifth theme was the program as promoting a need-supportive environment at the school.

Theme 1: choosing a career in education

Among all the young teachers in the program, the reasons for choosing

teaching as a profession were autonomous and mostly based on altruistic considerations, i.e., the aspiration to support students and help promote the Bedouin society. According to a participant:

I wanted to contribute, help, and share the knowledge I have. This could be social, cultural, educational, point of view. So, I said, let's start going in that direction, do something to support the society where I live from different aspects. At school I try to be not only a math teacher, I try to give the students values that go beyond that. I see negative things and I try to improve them (intern, interview 1, 2018).

The main factor that made me be a teacher is the feeling that I should contribute to society. I can teach and enrich the children with values and insights and life wisdom for their future, so that they get far beyond their dreams. This is how I think we can improve the situation of the population in our surroundings (new teacher, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

The reasons for choosing teaching as a profession are also related to intrinsic motivation, which is reflected in a tendency toward education from a young age.

I remember myself from a young age, I used to bring children from the village, and we would sit like that in a room, and I would teach them. So I've had this feeling from a young age and when I grew older, this feeling grew with me. And I would like to have influence in our sector, to be a good teacher, to help students, to change society a little (new teacher, interview 27, 2020).

The findings indicate differences between men and women. Whereas men were driven mostly by autonomous motives, for women, choosing education was also affected by cultural considerations and family influences (extrinsic or introjected motivations).

The truth is that in our society everyone says, "teaching is the easiest and simplest", and all the circumstances push you to go to that field: the admission requirements at academic institutions, your parents, or society. In a conservative society like the Bedouin one, I can't work in any job, my father would not allow me any kind of job. Only if it's a respected job with a degree, teacher, nurse, doctor. Girls are not like boys (intern, interview 2, 2018).

A program participant said she wanted to study psychology, but her family objected. In the end she chose teaching and settled on a discipline that was "close to things I liked in my youth".

And then I said I'm going into teaching and there was a kind of agreement in our family that being a teacher was the most preferred occupation for girls and they accepted it because of these reasons and also because I like the discipline and it's close to other subjects I liked in my youth. So I walked into this field and walking into it I wanted to keep changing things

for the better (new teacher, interview 3, 2018).

Some women took up teaching reluctantly because of family pressure, but by their fourth college year they came to identify with the profession and expressed autonomous motivation to be teachers.

> I never thought I would be a teacher. And one day my father came and said, "tomorrow you are going with your uncle to register for Kaye College". And I didn't know what Kaye College was. The next day I went with my uncle, and on the way he explained to me about teachers and how they work, because he is also a teacher. And I started first year in math. I would sit in the classroom and cry. "Where am I, why am I here." And after one year of failure, I decided again what I like to study. What I read, what I enjoy. I connected everything and found I wanted to be an Arabic teacher. And now I am a teacher and I'm really proud of myself, and I don't never-ever want to change my profession and my specialty, and I'm very proud of myself (intern, interview 22, 2020).

This citation shows that although the student started out with controlled motivation, she later made an autonomous choice of discipline, as her exploration of the field enabled her to identify her needs. From that point on her motivation was autonomous.

Theme 2: the workshop as a need-supportive environment

Participants reported different ways that their needs were supported in the group during the workshop, both by the workshop facilitator and their peers. The workshop is described as a supportive place where one can rejuvenate, share challenges, and "recharge". In peer-learning sessions, participants listened to each other and shared insights from their own experience. The workshop facilitators have made it a safe space that provided a sense of belonging. The workshop provided the tools to cope with the job, creating a sense of competence to meet the challenges of education. In addition, the workshop facilitators encouraged the teachers to express their unique selves and fulfill their passions, which supported their autonomy. This is how an intern responded to the question, "How did the program contribute to you?"

> You won't believe how much. Really. I would work four days a week and end up with negative thoughts, I was really broken. And on the weekend, I have the workshop. I hear everyone, I get my energy there. Then I start the week with something new, with positive energy, with a push. Even the other participants try as much as they can to give me suggestions about what to do, even though they have their own problems. I see it as this bank of tools, of energies that I can charge from at the beginning of the week (intern, interview 26, 2020).

Participants reported feeling a strong sense of belonginess to the group. "I felt that I belong to the group and the facilitators. It was wonderful, awesome, in my

opinion" (new teacher, feedback questionnaire, 2018). It seems that the group bonded over time. During the workshop, participants shared personal stories and emotions. As an intern said: "There was a sense of togetherness, not of separating people" (feedback questionnaire, 2018). The bonding was so intense that some participants compared the group to a family. "I felt like a strongly-attached family, where people support and encourage each other" (intern, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

Participants indicate that the program facilitators support their needs:

The facilitators were lovely. They listened to all the participants and answered all the questions they were asked. They also supported us and taught us new methods (intern, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

The teachers felt that the program developed their sense of competence, making them feel that they can cope successfully with the challenges and believe that they can make a difference. Participants indicated that they felt anxious at the beginning of the year, but the program helped them to dare, cope with their fears, and succeed.

When I chose to be a teacher, I wanted to make a difference. But there's no one to encourage or support you. You have your goal, but not the people to support you. But in the program [I understood that] I want to and I am able to find that within myself. All the time I would listen and absorb. Then I would think at home, what do I need, how to overcome the difficulty, what to do. I kept learning new things. It's inside me. And I found, I got all the tools from there (intern, interview 25, 2020).

Participants' responses to the year-end questionnaires also indicated how the sense of competence was enhanced. The following are responses to the question: What did the program strengthen in you"?

"Confidence and the ability to make a difference"; "to believe in my abilities, that I can make progress and succeed and achieve my goals"; "confidence, an ability to lead"; "it gave me personal abilities to cope with systemic failures".

Participants experienced the workshop as an autonomy-supportive environment, i.e., one that gave them an opportunity to shape an authentic professional identity and commit to making a difference and be leaders. Participants described how the program encouraged them to dare, engage, and implement their plans.

The message we got was not to be afraid to change things. That you can do unusual things that you like (intern, interview 13, 2019).

Participants also reported that they were able to bring their authentic selves into the group and express themselves freely.

I got to know my own strengths and weaknesses (new teacher, feedback

questionnaire, 2018).

I managed to share my knowledge out loud without being shy (intern, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

Theme 3: expressions of leadership among program participants

This theme was quite saliant in the interviews. Participants wanted to develop themselves as leaders in order to contribute to society. They perceived the program as a place that could help them promote themselves as leaders, identify their own leadership qualities, understand their self-expectations, and learn how others perceive them. Many participants reported that they wanted to join the program to develop their leadership skills and position themselves as leaders in the eyes of their surroundings. This theme contains three sub-themes: conceptions of leadership; motivation to be a leader, which is in fact motivation to participate in the program; and transformative versus transactional leadership styles.

Theme 3.1. Conceptions of leadership

Participants conceptualized leadership as commitment to fellow human beings, such as giving personal care to students. Leadership for them is reflected in teamwork and responsibility toward the group. A leader possesses special qualities, such as an ability to work under pressure, patience, and problem-solving skills. The leader is proactive and contributes to the Bedouin society.

Interviewee 16 described the teacher as a caring leader who gives his students personal attention.

Being a leader is being like a father to the children. It means getting to each one personally. Seeing what problems they have at home (new teacher, interview 16, 2019).

Several interviewees emphasized that the teacher is a leader who works in a team rather than alone. A leader is responsible for the success of the entire group, recruiting partners and motivating them to act. When a leader has an idea, he or she finds partners to help them execute it.

Leadership equals educational initiatives. To bring an idea, and everyone implements this idea. The ideas I had, I didn't implement them on my own. I included many teachers in the work and this is a kind of leadership (intern, interview 10, 2019).

Program participants see the teacher as a proactive leader, who has ideas for projects that may improve the quality of education in the Bedouin society.

The program gave me a lot. It helped me become a leader, to think outside the box. Not like an ordinary teacher who comes, teaches, and goes back home. My outlook at school is going to be different than that of other teachers (new teacher, interview 28, 2020).

Theme 3.2. Motivation to become a leader, which equals motivation to

participate in the program

The motivation to enroll in *Heights in the Negev* was linked to a desire to have an impact on the school and the society. This can be defined as autonomous motivation. Program participants were interested in leading educational, social, and cultural changes. They believed that the program was meant to "strengthen the teachers, and also to make them a meaningful part of society, so that they can make a difference" (new teacher, feedback questionnaire, 2018); or to "train the teachers to be innovative initiators in their schools" (intern, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

I wanted to develop my personality regarding leadership, because today as a teacher you are also kind of a leader in the classroom and I wanted to enhance that. Not just at the school, also in society, in the school staff, in different frameworks (intern, interview 11, 2019).

A new teacher says that she is committed to promoting social change. It is important for her to devote herself to advancing her community. The program nurtures her commitment to foster social change and provides tools to realize these goals.

I have the passion to change things in society. If I see something that I don't like, I try to change it. I try to do something else. And then I find myself in this program, because I love to be an initiator and give to society. I have the desire to change, I have the initiative (new teacher, interview 29, 2020).

Theme 3.3. Transformative versus transactional leadership styles

The teachers seemed to adopt a transformative leadership style. Their leadership was always presented in the context of contribution and devotion to others – students, peers, school – and of leading a change through collaboration. New teachers described leadership as an experience of working for the school's benefit. They also associated the planning and running of projects with an experience of transformative leadership.

I experienced leadership on the [special activity] day at school. Me and another teacher were responsible for sites of student activities. There I felt leadership. I felt responsible for the activity sites, I had to make them worthwhile, different and with added value for the students and the school, I felt like a leader (new teacher, interview 30, 2020).

An intern described how the program encouraged her to see herself as a leader. The leadership style she envisioned was transformative: a daring, creative leadership committed to the surrounding community.

[The program] made me think more about creative thinking, thinking outside the box. You always have to take the step, even if you have doubts. You always need courage. Do what you think of. [The program] also made me think about leadership. You start with a small group in the classroom, then the teaching staff, then the whole school. Then you rise, rise and expand.

And how can you be a leader in your society, make a difference in your community (intern, interview 11, 2019).

A new teacher reported that the program made him realize that leadership based on hierarchy and obedience is not true leadership, so now he is seeking more egalitarian, partnership-based leadership.

At first leadership to me was to tell people what to do and have them do it. But that's not a leader. I've learned to include others. You can be a leader even in your first year, like what happened here. I found the ideas, the initiative, and everybody work with me, even though they have more teaching experience (new teacher, interview, 2019).

Theme 4: the contribution of the initiatives to the teachers

Two sub-themes derive from theme 4. The first discusses the teachers' initiatives as promoting a feeling of need-satisfaction; the second focuses on the initiatives' role in positioning the new teachers at their schools.

Theme 4.1. The effect of the initiatives on teachers' experiences of need-satisfaction

As part of the program and with the support of the program staff, the teachers initiated projects at their schools. This has evidently led them to feel need-satisfaction and autonomous motivation.

The interviews indicate that planning and running the projects helped the teachers enhance their sense of relatedness to the school.

The program is the real reason for my relatedness to the school. My participation in the project and the involvement of other teachers gave me an opportunity to be part of the staff and talk to everyone (new teacher, interview 19, 2019).

Program participants also indicate that the project contributed to their sense of competence. Choosing a challenging project and implementing it has made them see themselves as competent and believe in their power to achieve their goals.

Heights in the Negev showed me that there is no such thing as "impossible". If I believe in something, I have to go all the way. This idea was brought by the facilitator a lot. There will always be obstacles. If there are obstacles, you're on the right track. Keep going. That encouraged me a lot. I got a lot of help from the program. You have to be an initiator (new teacher, interview 18, 2019).

The educational initiatives enhanced the teachers' self-perception as people who had something to give to others. While they are "only" BTs, they are not "clean slates" but rather capable and resourceful people.

At first when they spoke of *Heights in the Negev*, when they presented it to the principal, it had no effect. But after running the project, I felt the im-

pact. I stood out more, people looked at me differently. I am the youngest teacher at the school. And they said, "You did something, you are strong, you did something that hadn't been done before in the school" (intern, interview 12, 2019).

The program also satisfied participants' need of autonomy. It seems that initiating and running a project has made the teachers feel meaningful and enhanced their self-perception as leaders. The teachers indicated that the project had promoted their senses of gratification and autonomous motivation.

Since [I ran the project], I have been wanting to give, to contribute, because it gives a good feeling: motivation, satisfaction (new teacher, interview 17, 2019).

When I decided to do my initiative, I felt like a leader. I felt I was in charge of [the project], responsible for the teachers bringing their students and teaching them [using the materials] I have prepared. So I was like a leader for the teachers. And making a difference at school for these teachers (new teacher, interview 30, 2020).

Theme 4.2. The effect of the initiatives on teachers' positioning at the school

The teachers felt that taking the lead on a project improved their image at the school and assisted in their induction.

The goals [of the program], I believe, is to support BTs in the best way, and the second goal is to give BTs the ability to be initiators, not just teachers who teach their lesson and go home. A teacher who has value for the school. And it gives him a different [appearance] in the staff. They look at him as a new teacher, but he is a teacher who does things that other teachers, with ten years of experience at the school, don't do (new teacher, interview 31, 3030).

In some schools, the school facilitator convinced the principal to support the BTs and help them promote the educational initiative. A participant reported that the principal proudly presented her educational project during a visit of other principals.

[During a visit at my school]…the principals took a tour of the school. And [my principal] said [to us], the principals were surprised at how you, the new teachers, did everything and took on responsibilities, and did it all without raising a commotion. Everything was beautiful and they loved it. And you are new teachers, not experienced ones. That surprised them (intern, interview 11, 2019).

The program faculty also perceived the initiatives as a platform for making the new teachers noticeable at school.

[The school facilitator] came to my school and encouraged me, "do a

project, it will help your promotion. You are a new teacher, and usually new teachers are looked at differently. Do something to change that stigma." And since then, I've been feeling that the principal, deputy principal, the people in charge – they all look at me differently (new teacher, interview 19, 2019).

The projects also had a positive effect on the relationship with the principal. An intern reported that at first, the principal objected to the project, claiming that "How can you lead a whole school? This is not the custom here. How can you do that at the school? You are young teachers." However, the project strengthened the teacher's positioning.

At the end of the year, when we met with the school supervisor, he recommended that I get a job at the school…for me it was good, that he saw me and understood me. He knew me and respected what I have done. That was enough for me (intern, interview 10, 2019).

Theme 5: the program's role in promoting a need-supportive school environment

According to participants, they felt that the school supported their needs in various ways, like the visits of the school facilitator and the educational projects. A second-year teacher said: "In fact, with this program I do not feel new" (new teacher, interview 20, 2019).

Most teachers felt that the school environment supported their need of relatedness.

Today I feel not just part of the school; I feel that I am…an important component in the system. It's a feeling of self-confidence. It allows you to truly make a difference (new teacher, interview 16, 2019).

Participants indicated that being in the program enhanced their sense of competence. They reported finding the content of the workshops applicable in their schoolwork. Furthermore, initiating and leading the school projects allowed them to see their own competence and demonstrate their talents.

The goal was to give us tools, and indeed I took some tools with me, and in the school, I implemented some of the activities I had experienced. My confidence also rose (intern, feedback questionnaire, 2018).

The school was also perceived as an environment that supported teachers' autonomy. It seems that choosing, planning, and executing initiatives has fulfilled their need to feel autonomous. In addition, the program encouraged its participants to find their own uniqueness and express it in their educational work.

I learned from all my experiences and difficulties, and I kept feeling that I was improving and advancing. I learned not to give up on my beliefs and opinions. Even though I was only a new teacher, I managed to bring innovative things to school that senior teacher had not done, and the school

supported that, they gave me room to do these things (new teacher, interview 34, 2021).

7. The Principals' Perspective

Two important themes emerge from the interviews with principals: the first relates to BTs' leadership and proactivity. The second relates to their motivation: expressions of autonomy, competence, relatedness, and autonomous motivation, that combine into teaching excellence.

Theme 1: leadership and proactivity among program participants

The principals praised the BTs from the program, noting their proactive behavior, transformative leadership, and teaching excellence. Principals described them as unusual and active educators who contribute to the students, the faculty, and the school. According to the interviewed principals, the BTs formed positive and caring relationships with their students and were autonomously motivated (to use the program's terminology). Some principals indicated that they saw the program participants as future leaders, planning to place them in the school's leadership team or at various school roles.

A school principal (interviewee 1) described one of the program graduates as an active teacher with ideas on how to support bonding between teachers and promote a positive classroom atmosphere. The principal also noted that students had enjoyed the teacher's project. According to the principal, the teacher stood out as a special staff member.

> In the first year he convinced us to purchase tablets and conduct a social activity with the students. They really enjoyed it. He is also a social leader with the teachers. Today he told me that we must have a social activity for the teachers. He also organizes special events with his students. He has his special qualities.

A school principal (interviewee 2) reported that a teacher from Heights in the Negev had helped the school beyond the job demands. He said that the teacher had been active for the benefit of the school and assumed a bright future for him as an educator in the school.

> I highly respect his work, for several reasons. He doesn't only teach according to his schedule. He contributes to the teachers. I saw that he had some knowledge of computers. So with every technical problem he helps the teachers, contributes to the school, takes initiatives. I see him as one of the teachers who will go far in our school.

Another principal (interviewee 4) described how the initiatives of a teacher from *Heights in the Negev* helped the students and carry an important educational message for the students.

> She promoted more than one project at school. In the advanced class that she supported, she introduced to the students something new called *escape*

room. She initiated a learning center for the afterschool hours and summer. This is a new thing for them. Especially in the Bedouin sector, not all the students know what an escape room is. The students said it was a new and enjoyable experience.

Another school principal (interviewee 8) reported that a program participant took on a leadership role in the school's social arena and has been pushing social issues and the school's student council. She proposed creative ideas and established good relationships with all the students.

This teacher is a special case in my school. I really appreciate what she is doing. I gave her [the role] of social education plus the student council. She really did a lot of things socially. I saw from the beginning that she was a creative teacher. Every time she surprises me, every time she brings new ideas to implement in the school.

The active engagement of the teachers makes them leaders. Several principals reported that graduates of the program had demonstrated altruistic leadership. For example, interviewee 7 described a teacher with a sense of competence, who understood her own value yet focused on working for the school and the children rather than on self-praise.

She really is a leader. She has a thinking head. She also got into [a discipline] that she likes, she must have studied it because she liked it. She came here and imparted what she had learned. She is one of the first to come and provide help. If something needs to be prepared a day in advance or on the same day, she prepares it.

Theme 2: Teachers' motivation: expressions of autonomy, competence, relatedness, and autonomous motivation that combine into teaching excellence

According to the principals, program participants were exceptional teachers that demonstrated competence, relatedness to the school community, autonomous conduct, and creative engagement, in addition to professional and interpersonal capacities.

A principal (interviewee1) described a teacher that demonstrated autonomous teaching motivation and devotion to the students and parents. Thanks to her teaching competence, the principal perceived her as an experienced teacher.

At first I had no choice so I took her for a homeroom teacher, and I was pleasantly surprised. Her connection with the parents, students… She puts her heart into it. I don't feel that she's a new teacher, she is [like] an experienced teacher with the knowledge, the methods.

Another principal (interviewee 3) noted a beginning teacher's proficiency in her discipline and her innovative teaching methods.

Yes, it's something incredible. She started with a [method of] games, a dif-

ferent educational approach, not the way things used to be. I came to one of her classes to observe and I saw something different: a different approach to the field. She also understands digital tools, computers and all these things. She teaches amazing things.

Two school principals noted that BTs felt a sense of relatedness to the school community. For example (interviewee 7),

She is liked. Teachers like to have someone who helps out. I hear from people who work with her how much she gives of herself. Who won't like someone who devotes himself, takes initiatives, gives a hand in hard times. So clearly this is appreciated.

Taken together with the content of theme 1, the information obtained from the principals indicates that graduates of the program possess autonomous motivation for teaching and for other school activities. The characteristics of teachers' autonomy and their active engagement reflect the program's SDT-based definition of excellence.

Program graduates are perceived as outstanding teachers. For example, a principal (interviewee 4) viewed a program participant as an exemplary teacher with a strong sense of competence and confidence in her professional abilities. She was also described as demonstrating relatedness to the school and being autonomously motivated to improve the teaching standard in her discipline.

She is a new teacher but she's an exemplary teacher. If I have to give out evaluation certificates, she will be among the first to receive one. I saw her support in the students, how the students treated her, how she comes prepared, she understands quickly, her relatedness also testifies to that. I think the selection of students for the program *Heights in the Negev* is very accurate. From the first day I saw the spark of excellence in her eyes, she is always willing and motivated to push forward. So next year we will give her more roles in the school and pave her way to the school's leading team.

8. Discussion

This research is a case study that examined four years of *Heights in the Negev* program. It investigated the characteristics of teachers' motivation, their expressions of leadership and excellence, and their sense of need-satisfaction. The research also examined the effect of the program on the teachers and their schools.

The findings show that program participants formed a quality group of BTs. They chose to become teachers out of autonomous motivation and for mostly altruistic considerations: to support students and promote the Bedouin society. For women, choosing a teaching career also involved cultural considerations and family influence (extrinsic motivation), but over the years they came to identify with the profession, internalize it, and express autonomous teaching motivation.

The motivation to enroll in *Heights in the Negev* was autonomous, mostly based on a desire to have an impact on the education system and the society. The

leadership of the participants was always presented in a context of contribution and engagement for the sake of others—students, teachers, and school; of collaboratively leading changes; and of being role models. The teachers demonstrated proactive behavior, took initiatives, and implemented their own ideas (satisfying the need for autonomy). In their view, a leader has special qualities, such as patience, problem solving skills, an ability to work under pressure, and a proactive approach. Most of them acquired a transformative style of leadership.

Participants in the program perceived it as supporting their psychological needs, both by the program facilitators and their program peers. At their schools, they also experienced need-satisfaction, mostly thank to the projects they initiated, which helped position them as influential teachers. The teachers set intrinsic educational goals for themselves and their students, and they report a teaching style that supports the students' needs.

These findings also find support in the principals' statements about the teachers' autonomous motivation, indicating that the program has managed to preserve its participants' early motivation for choosing a career in education. The principals report that the teachers express a sense of competence in teaching and relatedness to the school community, including the students, parents, and teachers; and that they function autonomously, proactively and creatively, expressing their uniqueness and demonstrating professional and personal abilities. The principles perceived the BTs as the leaders of the future. Together the principals label these characteristics of their teachers as teaching excellence.

The program is unique in addressing BTs, described in the literature as facing multiple struggles (De Neve & Devos, 2017). The research indicates that a program based on Self-Determination Theory, focusing on participants' psychological needs, may lead to the development of autonomous motivation, leadership skills, excellence, and optimal functioning among BTs. This is despite their difficulties and against their surrounding collectivist-hierarchical society, which positions them at the bottom of the school's social ladder (Kaplan, 2021a).

8.1. Supporting Needs (Specifically Autonomy) of Bedouin Teachers

The findings are in line with those of previous research, indicating an association between experiences of need-satisfaction and a range of positive outcomes among teachers, such as autonomous teaching motivation, self-realization, and quality investment (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Kaplan & Madjar, 2017), as well as an autonomy-supportive teaching style (Roth et al., 2007; Katz & Shahar, 2015). These lead to a range of outcomes among students that include autonomous motivation, investment, positive emotions, and optimal social functioning (Assor et al., 2002; Kaplan, 2018; Roth et al., 2007). Thus, supporting teachers' psychological needs may result in improved teaching and better academic performance of students, two important goals in the Bedouin education system.

The research also indicates that autonomy is an important need in the collec-

tivist Bedouin society. This finding contrasts with the view maintained by scholars in the cultural relativism approach (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003), in which autonomy support is culturally insignificant in traditional collectivist societies. It seems, however, that in the examined program, supporting BTs' needs has led them to be autonomously motivated, proactive, and supportive of their students' needs. These findings correspond with those obtained in countries with collectivist societies, such as in South Korea (Jang et al., 2009). Our research supports the notion that the need for autonomy is cross-cultural, despite differences between cultures in prioritizing relatedness, emotional closeness, and various values (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Program participants come from a minority group that perceives education as a path to integration into the general society (Mustafa & Arar, 2009). Over the years, changes in the Bedouin community have made education even more valued, pressuring young adults to invest intensive efforts in order to achieve academic success (Kaplan, 2018). Studies have shown that learning that is based on such internal and external pressures may lead to performance goals or to a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Al-Dhamit & Kreishan, 2016; Marzooghi et al., 2009). Teachers in our program likely face similar pressures in their college studies, even though they were accepted to the program based on their autonomous teaching motivation. While this aspect has not been investigated here, other studies have found that individuals may be motivated by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Al-Dhamit & Kreishan, 2016). According to this approach, cultivating excellence among Bedouin teachers with this learning pattern by means of supporting their psychological needs may enhance their motivation and improve their quality of learning.

The theoretical and empirical literature has shown that outstanding students have unique needs that require a supportive environment, both at home and at school (Al-Dhamit & Kreishan, 2016). The current research demonstrates how education for excellence can be implemented without using pressure, coercion, or control. A need-supportive environment can promote the students' autonomous motivation and investment, consequently improving academic performance (Deci & Ryan. 2000).

8.2. Fostering Leadership in *Heights in the Negev*

One of the program's main goals was to cultivate leadership among young teachers such that they may lead changes in the Bedouin society. The findings of the research suggest that this goal has been accomplished. According to our findings, the program has promoted autonomy-supportive, transformative leadership among the teachers (Eyal & Roth, 2011), as reflected in the way they ran projects, collaborated with colleagues, and improved their teaching. The findings also indicate that SDT is an appropriate theoretical framework for a teachers' leadership program. *Heights in the Negev* is one of few programs in Israel that seek to promote leadership among BTs.

Amit and colleagues (Amit et al., 2006) maintained that leadership stems from motivation and ability. Their research revealed several qualities important for leadership: an internal locus of control, a sense of competence, optimistic thinking patterns, and pro-social skills. The motivation for leadership that emerges from the current study is autonomous, and it reflects an internal locus of control. In the climate that surrounded them, which supported their needs, program participants developed capacities such as goal setting, proactive engagement, courage, devotion to the task, and ability to collaborate. The teachers also expressed a sense of competence and a tendency to contribute to their surroundings and lead innovation and change for the benefit of the students, their colleagues, and the school as a whole, as evident in the reports of participants and principals.

It seems that the program touched the core of teachers' ideological identity and their passion to lead a meaningful change in their society; In other words, it connected to their "inner compass" (Assor et al., 2020; Kaplan & Assor, 2019). According to Assor and colleagues, an inner compass is an activity-directing scheme that allows an individual to understand his or her basic values, ambitions, and needs. This understanding develops as the individual engages in personal and social interactions, gradually developing an awareness of how he or she feels about meaningful daily experiences. Through their inner compass, people can examine themselves and choose gratifying and meaningful activities and relationships. It seems that this definition is suited to the participants of *Heights in the Negev*, as they gradually became aware of aspects of their identity that guided them in their educational work. These identity aspects were demonstrated in the teachers' projects, innovative teaching methods, and support in their students' needs.

8.3. Excellence in *Heights in the Negev*

Few SDT-based studies have examined outstanding students (Kaplan, 2018). In collectivist cultures, such studies have indicated that outstanding students are mostly driven by extrinsic goals and focus on achievements (Marzooghi et al., 2009). An SDT-based study on outstanding Bedouin students (Kaplan, 2018) indicated that supporting students' autonomy contributed to an optimal learning experience. The current research adds to these findings by highlighting the role of a need-supportive environment in sustaining and enhancing autonomous motivation among young Bedouin teachers. As mentioned above, one of the requirements for admission into the program was autonomous teaching motivation. The research shows that participants' initial motivation sustained over several years, manifesting in quality investment in teaching or other activities benefitting the school and the community.

In the present study we have specifically addressed the concepts of excellence and leadership. However, the findings suggest that phenomenologically, leadership and excellence are experienced by teachers as one entity. Both notions draw

on self-conceptions of competence, relatedness, a sense of autonomy, and autonomous motivation for teaching and serving the community. The teachers developed an inner identity compass that included ideas, beliefs, values, and educational goals. These translated into teaching methods and interactions with co-teachers and students based on supporting psychological needs.

8.4. Excellence and Leadership among Bedouin Women

Most *Heights in the Negev* participants were female. This can be accounted for by the disproportionate rate of women, and specifically Bedouin women, in education colleges (Mann, 2021), but it seems that the picture is more complex.

Cultivating excellence and leadership among Bedouin women is a delicate matter. As in other patriarchal, collectivist societies, women in the Bedouin community are positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Al-Said, 2015). In this traditional society, women are expected to remain within the domestic space and away from the public sphere. In Western eyes, Bedouin women are a doubly marginalized group: they belong to a minority ethnic group in the Israeli society and live in a patriarchal community that prioritizes men (Ran & Josefsberg Ben-Yehoshua, 2020). The Bedouin community still considers education for women as a new idea, and some families disallow their daughters to study (Aburabia-Queder, 2008).

Although the Bedouin society has been undergoing a noticeable transition (Yahel & Abu-Ajaj, 2021), the Bedouin education system still struggles with poor academic performance and high rates of student dropout (Weisblay & Weininger, 2020). Among girls, the dropout rates in the Bedouin community are much higher than in other sectors. The reasons for that are mostly cultural, such as when certain families object to girls' education or are reluctant to send their daughters to distant schools. Other reasons include poverty, basic sustenance struggles, and a lack of vocational future (Weisblay & Weininger, 2020).

Within this reality, and despite cultural obstacles interfering with personal development and realization of autonomy, the Bedouin society is undergoing revolutionary shifts in the positioning of girls. The academic performance of Bedouin girls is higher than that of boys across all disciplines and all ages (Hadad Haj-Yahya et al., 2021). In addition, higher rates of Bedouin girls compared to boys obtain a matriculation diploma, although these rates are still lower than those of girls in other sectors. In addition, the number of Bedouin women in higher education and in the job market is on the rise (Hadad Haj-Yahya et al., 2021).

The academic success of Bedouin women can be traced to the importance of education for Arab-Bedouin women (Abu Asbah, 2006). According to Abu Asbah, education presents the Arab woman with an opportunity to break though cultural barriers and improve her status, both in her own eyes and those of her community (Abu Asbah, 2006).

Thus, it is clear why Bedouin women have autonomous, altruism-based motivation to participate in a program that promotes excellence and leadership. They

see the program as a means to socially mobilize and improve their status within their community. From their perspective, a career in education is a platform from which they can help change their society. Studies conducted among educated Bedouin women have found that they sought to have an impact, perceiving education as a working environment that can help them to serve as role models and be present in the public space (Ben-Asher, 2020).

In light of the reality of Bedouin women, we might wonder whether young female teachers can take on leadership roles and lead a change. The current research gives this question an affirmative answer. Our findings show that female teachers at the beginning of their professional path can be proactive, lead changes in the education system, and win the respect of school principals. Furthermore, the research outlines the necessary conditions for that feat to be achieved: a school and college environment that supports the teachers' psychological needs through a program designed especially for that goal.

8.5. Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

For the current research, a sample of interns and new teachers was interviewed each year. As a case study, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study that will focus on several BTs from their early steps as interns through the subsequent teaching years, using various methods such as interviews, reflective journals, observations, etc. Research of this type may grant a deeper understanding of the career path of outstanding teachers.

In addition, the current research mostly examined the perspective of BTs. It would be interesting to investigate the perspective of their colleagues, the more veteran schoolteachers, about their new peers' induction and positioning.

The findings also relate to BTs' teaching style; however, the conclusions are based mostly on self-reports. We recommend examining BTs ' teaching style through classroom observations to check the matching between self-reports and actual teaching activities.

An additional limitation concerns the subjects of the study, most of which were women. Future research could be more gender-balanced (even though the number of women reflects the reality in the program as well as in education colleges).

9. Conclusion

The article began with the words of a beginning teacher describing how the program had given him courage to dream. As scholars that lead innovative projects—such as *Heights in the Negev*—our dream is that the program will expand to other Bedouin-Arab communities in Israel. We hope that the encouraging findings from the research will assist in fulfilling this dream. We believe that a similar program may help future educators to start their professional path with a strong inner compass, evolve as future leaders, and support changes in their schools and the Bedouin society at large.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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