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### **World Education Leadership Symposium Online Conference (WELSONline)**

#### **Initiator und Leiter / Initiator and Organizer:**

Prof. Dr. Stephan Gerhard Huber

#### **Veranstalter WELSONline 2020 (seit 2009) / Host WELSONline 2020 (since 2009):**

Institut für Bildungsmanagement und Bildungsökonomie (IBB) / Institute for the Management and Economics of Education (IBB)  
Pädagogische Hochschule Zug (PH Zug) / University of Teacher Education Zug (PH Zug)

#### **Kooperationspartner / Cooperation Partners:**

Schulleitungs- und Lehrerverbände, Ministerien und Behörden sowie weitere Hochschulen und Partner / Association of school leaders and teachers, ministries and authorities as well as further universities and partners

# Leadership in Iranian schools: A snapshot

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## **The Iranian education context**

Iran has a highly centralized Education system among the developing countries in Asia. This system is based on the top-down bureaucratic model, and the Ministry of Education is exclusively responsible for the administration of all levels, including pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, and higher-secondary. The Ministry has the central authority in determining all plans, decisions, curricula, and policies with local governing units acting as implementing agencies in their respective provinces. Very limited decentralizations were implemented only by giving authority to the local education offices and principals for managing minor issues in schools (Zeinabadi, 2013). Since the revolution of 1979, the educational system has experienced qualitative and quantitative changes (Sajjadi, 2015). The Iranian government and academic scholars believe that quality education is the critical variable to survive in the competitive world economy. Accordingly, educational reforms have taken place directed toward improving the quality of education. These reforms demand more excellent performance and commitment from teachers and principals.

## **Principals are in the hot seat**

Public schools in Iran face extreme pressure from a wide range of stakeholders for more accountability, effectiveness, and improved student outcomes. Principals are under inspection to raise test scores, reduce dropout rates, and improve academic performance (Zeinabadi, 2014). In today's climate of heightened expectations, they are in the hot seat to improve teaching and learning. Like many education systems, the school principal in Iran, whether elementary or secondary, is the single most important person to a school's success. As bush (2011) has mentioned, the principal's role is as central for school improvement and enhanced student outcomes.

## **Principals as instructional leaders**

In Iran, principals are mainly responsible for school leadership. The deputy principal also has duties that are almost identical to those of a principal. Although

head-teachers can decide on some educational matters, the final decision is made by the principal. Iranian research (Hallinger et al., 2018) show that instructional leadership is the predominant leadership style. In addition to routine managerial tasks, promoting an academic learning climate, and developing a supportive work environment, Iranian principals perform the following leadership tasks to improve the quality of teaching and learning: They

- Supervise and evaluate instruction
- Coordinate curriculum
- Allocate and protect instructional time
- Monitor student progress
- Provide instructional resources
- Provide different opportunities for teacher professional development

### **COVID-19 and a new challenge for principals**

Due to the prevalence of corona disease and its red status in most cities, school education is held virtually. Although this situation has created a new challenge for principals, it has been a turning point for schools. Iranian schools have moved away from traditional methods of education and realized the importance of virtual education.

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