RESEARCH ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
COMPETENCIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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The issue of leadership competencies has been the subject of scientific research since 1980s. Through this study, it is determined whether instructional competencies of school principals vary depending on the type of school they work at and their field. Data obtained as a result of this study were associated with the effect of the field and type of school in selecting school principals on the instructional competencies of school principals. It is thought that the findings of the study will provide significant data in selecting and educating school principals, which is among the underlying factors of the effective school concept.

Key Words: Effective school, school administration, school principal, leadership, educational leadership, instructional leadership

Problem Situation

Today management science has been experiencing a process where concepts with regards to how organizations will be managed are often discussed and new approaches are suggested with research support. It is seen that the concept of leadership becomes prominent more than the traditional concept of management and administration. İman (2000) defines the concept of leadership as the power to influence others and lead them to action in line with certain goals and targets. Çalık (2003) defines leadership as being a source of inspiration to others and guiding them while being the stimulating power of the change in the organization as well as solving the problems.

Leadership is the foremost of the important issues that both theorists and implementers strive to resolve and about which extensive scientific research in the field of management have been made in 20th century (Erçetin, 2000). A leader is generally a person who can motivate, influence, give good examples and guide. Leader is the individual who has a creative and initiator role in ensuring organization to survive in line with its goals. The leader is the one making critical decisions not daily ones. Leadership involves foreseeing future, determining a realistic vision and targets for the future of the organization and collaborating people in order to realize this (İman and Turan, 2001: 43). Senge (1990) defines leaders as the designers of the organizational behaviors.

At schools, activities are conducted towards changing student behaviors in a planned and programmed manner. It is undoubtedly true that the most important factor in conducting the educational and instructional activities and consulting at school is the school administrator. The role expected from the school principle who performs the function of administering
with the legal force is now not the educational administration but educational leadership (Yörük and Akdağ; 2010:67). With the developing and changing education system, the roles expected from school administrators have become more complicated. The school administrator needs to be aware that he should change at first in order to maintain the transformation at school and demonstrate this change to his surroundings. Besides the managerial aspect of the school administrators, it is expected that they are the instructional leaders. It is necessary that administrators demonstrate effective leadership at education institutions where human resource is effectively educated.

School administrators should possess the characteristics of a leader more than a manager in order to reach the organizational goals. School principals in the recent educational entities implement some major strategies while practicing the leadership approaches. These are traditional leadership, instructional leadership, transformative leadership and facilitator leadership.

The concept of effective leadership may bring the change of school principals who do not have any effect of the school anymore and whose success levels are gradually decreasing on the agenda. Decisions that may adversely affect the school may result in a decrease in education staff’s trust to school. However; an effective leadership may be an effective component of the system (Porter et.al. 2010). Managers with leadership behaviors may establish visions; gather all the employees around a common goal, open new ways for education by creating a positive culture at school (ct. nandi, Özkan 2006, Law and Glow- er, 2000). The interest in leadership also gains importance in cultural terms as well as an educational policy in macro level. School leadership should be dealt with in interaction with administration (Heck and Hallinger, 2005).

Scientific studies regarding instructional leadership have been performed since 1980s. The concept of effective schools comes into front through these studies. In a study by Edmons (1979) instructional leadership is defined as the school principal’s role (Hallinger, 2005). A professional management is needed as a role model at school. The school administrator should be talented and knowledgeable and have a positive attitude (Ediger, 2009).

**Instructional Leadership**

As it is in leadership definitions, researchers define instructional leadership with different perspectives in instructional leadership definitions. In general terms, instructional leadership expresses the power and behaviors that school principals, teachers and auditors use to influence the individuals and situations with regards to school (i man, 2002). Instructional leadership has changed the school administrator’s conventional understanding of role and management. The basic starting point of instructional leadership is to develop instruction. In this leadership approach, it is aimed at designing the school environment completely in line with instruction and as a productive setting (Çelik, 1999).

The effective leadership concept often used with instructional leadership appears
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in two aspects. The first one is the task behaviors by which the leader brings the school to a more structural position. These appear as generating the school targets and determining the job descriptions. The second is the relationship behaviors by means of which relationships with employees are arranged and employees are motivated with regards to instruction. According to Greenfield (1987) and Vinsons (1997), instructional leadership is defined as the process of job satisfaction and an efficient work environment for teachers and setting up and maintaining the desired learning conditions for students. According to Yang (1996), it is possible to divide instructional leadership into two as broad and narrow aspects. In narrow terms, instructional leadership is defined as a function within management and actions directly related with teacher and learning. According to the broader definition, instructional leadership is stated as the process of performing all leadership activities that may affect learning at school. As seen, behavioral aspects and the definition of instructional leadership are defined differently by various researchers. However, the common points in these definitions are coordinating and motivating the employees and students at school in order to reach the goals and create an effective school. It is examined whether the fields of school principal and the type of school have any impact on instructional leadership competencies of the principal (Inandi and Özkan, 2006).

The Instructional Leadership Roles of School Principal

The instructional leadership roles of the school principal can be as five items:

1. Identifying the vision and mission of the school: School principal defined the school's mission, determines and shares the goals of the school and assesses, develops and implements them.

2. Programming and administering education: He uses the teaching period effectively; motivates students to learn and maintains a good setting for learning, collaboration and cooperation.

3. Staff development: He rewards the success of the staff and ensures professional development of teachers.

4. Monitoring and assessing the teaching process: It controls and assesses the teaching period.

5. Creating and developing a positive school climate: Initiates organizational change and strengthens communication.

Instructional leadership is composed of the behaviors that the principal shows himself or make others show in order to increase student success (De Bevoise, 1984; cited in man, 2002). Researchers have found that one of the main factors increasing student success at effective schools is related with the success in main features of school defined in terms of educational leadership (Cited. Porter et al. Leithwood Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004). Leadership has significance particularly in hard times or when organizational change is experience (cite. Porter et al. Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter, 2006).

In the shared instructional leadership
models teachers are willing to take over responsibility and open for professional development and innovation (cited. Marks, Print. Poole, 1995). Participating in decisions taken at schools encourages the teacher to develop pedagogical competence feeling and act in a student-centered way while increasing her usage of teaching techniques based on research (cited Print, Marks and Printy, 2003). Therefore; the role of the administrator (as a teacher, too) should be being the instructor with the knowledge and skills of a teacher. The instructional leadership of administrators can be summarized under the following headings:

a) Understanding the learning needs of the individuals,
b) Organizing social and interactive environments,
c) Encouraging learning expertise and appropriate tasks,
d) Motivating individuals to improve themselves and impose sanctions,

Stein and Nelson (cited. Print. 2003) suggested that the main purpose of developing leadership competencies is to organize learning environments and contribute in strengthening teaching and learning process.

The studies about instructional leadership are firstly considered as among the roles of the school principal (Hallinger, 2010). Yet, instructional leadership has started to be perceived as a competency within the process.

In this study, instructional leadership aspect of “Competencies of the Primary School Principal” developed by Hallinger (1982) and adopted by Şahin (2000) by using the Delphi Technique is used and the items with regards to the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals are covered. It is aimed at determining to what extent the field of the principal and the school type are affective on identifying the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals.

**Purpose**

This study puts forth the effect of school type and field of school principals on the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals. For this purpose, the following sub-problems were determined:

1. How are the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals based on teacher views?
2. Is there any difference ship between the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals and the type of school they work at?
3. Is there any relationship between the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals and their field?

**Method**

Through this study, it was found out whether the instructional leadership competencies of the school principals vary depending on the school type and their field. Hence, the method of the study is descriptive survey method as it puts forth the current situation.

**The population and sample group**

The population of the study is composed of all primary and middle school in Turkey and the teachers and administra-
tors working at these schools. Since the number of schools is too many, samples are taken. Sample group is composed of each school from randomly selected 15 cities and the teachers and administrators at these schools. The survey is given to 675 staff at 15 schools in total and 460 of these returned.

Gathering and Analysis of Data

A 21-item questionnaire was developed in order to find out the effects of school type and fields on instructional leadership. The questionnaire consists two parts as personal information, instructional leadership and school types and fields. 5 questions were asked in the first part while 21 questions were asked in the other. The second part of the survey questions were prepared by using the study of ahin (2000), "Competencies of the Primary School Principal". The instructional leadership competencies that school principals need to have, which were determined as a result of this study were transformed into the survey questions.

Data obtained as a result of this study were put into tables through statistical analysis. Frequencies, percentages, chi-squares and mean scores are shown in tables.

Findings and Interpretation

For the analysis of data obtained in this study SPSS 16 software was used and statistical results are acquired.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPERTIES</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>44,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>54,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>30,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>19,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>23,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 years and over</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>12,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Vocational School</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>12,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Vocational School</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce Vocational School</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>44,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographical Properties

According to findings obtained in line with the research data, 44.8% of the participants of the survey were men while 54.3% were women.

In terms of experience, 30.2% of the teachers had an experience between 1 and 5 years, 23.3% had an experience level between 11 and 15 years.

In terms of school type, 44.8% of the teachers were the majority and they were working at a primary school. The second was the Girl Vocational School with 17.1% of teachers in the survey. 12.9% of the participants were working in Commerce Vocational School and the percentages of other remaining types of schools were the same (12.1%).

2. Findings regarding instructional leadership competencies

Table 2: The frequency and percentage distributions of the questions regarding instructional leadership competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The school principal brings the new approaches in education and shares them.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school principal knows the new legal regulations in Turkish education system and ensures their implementation at school.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The school principal supports teachers’ development.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The school principal understands developmental psychology, student psychology and adult psychology.</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school principal makes use of the theories, principles and models in education psychology.</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The school principal consults experts in the field when necessary.</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The school principal plans the instructional activities of school.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The school principal initiates the activities that improve teaching.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The school principal supports the research, development and implementation of new instructional programs.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The school principal is aware of the differences between the school and the other organizations.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The school principal helps the utilization of current education technologies in class effectively.</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The school principal assists teachers in implementing the curriculum.</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The school principal ensures vision development regarding school.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The school principal helps teachers use teaching methods and techniques effectively.</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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| 15. The school principal ensures establishing and maintaining discipline at school. | 87 19 52 11 323 70 |
| 16. The field of the school principal is suitable for the instructional activities depending on the school type. | 88 19 69 15 328 66 |
| 17. The school principal serves as a source in teaching and learning (assessing lessons, designing the program, usage of materials) due to his field. | 105 23 89 20 265 57 |
| 18. While determining the school goals, the principal collaborates with teachers, students and parents. | 101 22 71 15 289 63 |
| 19. The school principal contributes in preparing a school program that takes into account the desires of the students, teacher and environment. | 100 22 84 18 240 60 |
| 20. The school principal makes activities that develop school-parent relationships. | 68 15 67 14 331 71 |
| 21. The school principal contributes in school’s interaction with its environment. | 69 15 73 16 317 69 |

1. 68 % of the teachers think that school principals follow up the new approaches and bring them into school.
2. 79 % of the teachers think that school principals know and implement the legal regulations.
3. 64 % of the teachers think that school principals support teachers’ development.
4. 55 % of the teachers think that school principals are competent in developmental psychology, student psychology and adult psychology.
5. 65 % of the teachers think that school principals support teachers in researching, developing and implementing new teaching programs.
6. 69 % of the teachers think that school principals initiate activities that improve teaching.
7. 62 % of the teachers think that school principals are aware of the fact that schools are more different than other organizations.
8. 74 % of the teachers think that school principals make use of the concepts, principles and models of educational psychology.
9. 65 % of the teachers think that school principals consult experts.
10. 63 % of the teachers think that school principals assist in using the current education technologies in the classroom effectively.
11. 68 % of the teachers think that school principals plan teaching activities of school.
12. 68 % of the teachers think that school principals help teachers implement curriculum at school.
13. 55 % of the teachers think that the field of the school principal is suitable for the instructional activities depending on the school type.
14. 70 % of the teachers think that the school principal ensures vision development regarding school.
15. 66 % of the teachers think that the school principals ensure establishing and maintaining discipline at school.
16. 57 % of the teachers think that the school principals serve as a source in teach-
ing and learning (assessing lessons, designing the program, usage of materials) due to their field.

17. 63% of the teachers think that the principal collaborates with teachers, students and parents while determining the school goals.

18. 60% of the teachers think that the school principal contributes in preparing a school program that takes into account the desires of the students, teacher and environment.

19. 68% of the teachers think that the school principal makes activities that develop school-parent relationships.

20. 69% of the teachers think that the school principal contributes in school's interaction with its environment.

Results and Suggestions

1. School principals need to follow up new approaches and bring them to school. However, considering these approaches will never be enough for school organizations, school principals need to be informed about the new teaching methods and techniques continuously.

2. School principals know the legal regulations and ensure that they are implemented at school.

3. School principals quite support teachers' development. Accordingly, school principals are dealing with the teachers.

4. The level of competency of the school principals with regards to developmental psychology, student psychology and adult psychology is low. Teachers avoided commenting on this question. In order to eliminate the discussions based on the fact that school principals do not stay on the educational issues and focus more on managerial ones, it should be maintained that school principals deal with instructional activities, participate in lessons while paying attention to follow the procedures and they are encouraged to improve themselves in education and teaching issues.

5. School principals' level of making use of the concepts, principles and models of education psychology is low. When the answers of the two questions were examined, school principals seemed insufficient in reflecting their interest in psychology. Therefore, it is necessary that school principals have the training particularly on educational psychology.

6. School principals do not benefit from experts at a desired level. It has always been expressed as a problem that experts at schools are not consulted much. However, it hasn't been maintained so far that schools benefit from experts and researchers.

7. School principals mostly plan the instructional activities at school. There isn't an issue regarding the lack of competency of school principals in planning the instructional activities at school.

8. School principals aren't able to initiate the activities developing teaching. In order for the new activities to be initiated by the school principal, their innovative characteristics should be emphasized more and model practices should be supported while innovative ones are encouraged.

9. School principals support research, development and implementation of the new instructional programs.

10. School principals are aware of the difference of school from other organiza-
Schools are organizations that can mostly be affected by the societal and technological developments. In this respect, leadership competencies of the school principal should be assessed in priority.

11. School principals are assisting in utilizing the current education technologies in the classroom. However, in case school principals are not familiar with using technology as they are not familiar with the instructional activities, they should have in-service trainings more often.

12. School principals help teachers implement the instructional programs at school. Teachers’ needs and gaps on these issues should be shared at seminars.

13. School principals ensure vision development for school. Sharing this vision with school-parents and school–environment will make the instructional leadership competencies of the principal stronger.

14. School principals are able to establish and sustain discipline at school to a great extent. They are effective in achieving this more than they are in other tasks.

15. The fields of school principals are not appropriate enough for the instructional activities according to the school types. Principals’ fields and specialty areas should be taken into consideration when they are educated and appointed. According to this situation, teachers state that the field of school administrator is important for instructional activities.

16. School principals fail to act as a source in terms of education and instruction (assessing the lessons, generating the programs, utilizing the materials) due to their fields. Accordingly, there are problems in school principals' education and appointments. The Ministry should start a new study on school administration and take into consideration the competencies in the instructional leadership measures on the issue of principal competencies.

17. School principals work in collaboration with teachers, students and parents at a great extent while determining the school goals. School principals’ cooperation in determining school goals is sufficient.

18. School principals contribute in the preparation of a school program that considers the desires of students, teachers and the environment. Mostly the laws and regulations are counted on in preparing the school program. Necessary studies should be made in order to ensure that schools prepare more flexible programs.

19. School principals make activities that improve school-family relationships. School-family communication is among the factors affecting students’ success. Therefore, school family relationships should be enriched with some activities apart from their official aspect.

20. School principals contribute in school’s interaction with its environment. However, in order to increase the level of this contribution, it should be maintained that school principals are willing and talented in communication with the environment in selecting and educating school principals.

The instructional leadership activity that is best demonstrated by the school principals is establishing and conducting discipline at schools. Despite this, school principals cannot be a source for teachers...
due to their fields. Teachers’ views on these issues do not vary depending on gender, experience and field.

In line with these results, school principals should create a more democratic setting. While they are appointed, it should be considered that they need to be appointed to the type of school to which their field is appropriate. Legal regulations with regards to this issue should be made.

Research data have found out that school principals are competent enough in administrative issues such as maintaining discipline at schools and knowing the legal regulations; but not competent in issues like education psychology and new instruction methods. However, school principals should be good instructional leaders as well as being good administrators. In other words; their incompetency on the issue of instructional leadership should be resolved.

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