

An Analysis Of The School Administrator Training Process In Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Today, the success and effectiveness of educational organizations depend to a significant extent on the competencies of school administrators or the institutional attitudes they demonstrate. In this context, the systematic, high-quality, and leadership-oriented training of school administrators is among the top priorities. In Turkey, school administrator training processes vary depending on various regulations based on legislation. At the same time, school administrators bear significant responsibilities regarding motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and other factors to enhance school success. This study examines the current state of the school administrator training process in Turkey, the characteristics sought in school administrators, and the challenges faced, in full detail. The literature review conducted as part of the research yielded highly significant findings and conclusions related to the subject.

Keywords: School Administrator, School Administration in Turkey, School Administrator Training Process

INTRODUCTION

Today, education and educational institutions are recognized as playing a significant role. In this context, it is evident that the functions of administrators within educational institutions have become increasingly important.

The roles, responsibilities, and expectations of school administrators in the 21st century have become increasingly complex. Due to the rapid pace of change today, administrators must understand society and the school much better to ensure schools can successfully transition into the coming years. Therefore, for schools to succeed, school administrators are expected to demonstrate leadership and continuously adapt to the times by evolving themselves (Karip and Köksal, 1999).

Expectations of today's school principals or administrators are increasing in terms of a vision focused on student learning and success, a policy centered on teacher-student collaboration, ethical conduct, and the involvement of the community in fostering positive relationships (Bayler and Gündüz, 2011, pp. 182–197).

Beyond the increasing expectations placed on school administrators, it is observed that administrators are typically positioned within a bureaucratic structure. Consequently, it is noted that schools often appear to accept the status quo and are reluctant to collaborate with teachers (Karip and Köksal, 1999).

It is recognized that, given the current era where accountability is dominant, school administrators must re-examine numerous factors such as the school's goals, priorities, financial status, personnel, education, learning resources, curriculum, and assessment

processes. Consequently, the training process for administrators—who play a crucial role in the school—has gained significantly greater importance. Consequently, this study focuses on examining the process of training school administrators in Turkey.

Problem:

In Turkey, the training processes for school administrators are among the primary factors influencing school success, the quality and structure of institutional management, and numerous other parameters. Within the Turkish education system, school administrators bear numerous responsibilities toward all stakeholders. Their ability to fulfill these responsibilities is directly related to their level of competence. In today's world, which is undergoing a rapid process of change and transformation, the need to train school administrators in a manner appropriate to this process has taken on a dimension that will affect many issues, foremost among them the quality of education. An examination of studies in this field reveals that the training of school administrators is of critical importance. For the reasons outlined above, there is a need for this study.

Objective:

The purpose of this research is to examine the process of training school administrators in Turkey. The study also aims to analyze the processes involved in the selection of school administrators within the scope of current practices and legislation. Additionally, the study aims to examine the competencies and desired characteristics of school administrators.

Method:

This study was designed as a conceptual model. The training of school administrators is one of the most critical issues in the Turkish education system. One of the most important factors enabling educational institutions to operate in accordance with their objectives is having qualified school administrators. In this context, the training of school administrators—who serve as leaders in our education system—holds significant importance for the Turkish education system. Based on this premise, this article serves as an introduction to the concept of training school administrators in Turkey. In this context, the article discusses the process of training school administrators in Turkey and attempts to explain the relevant concepts.

The Historical Development of the School Administrator Training Process

The historical process of legal regulations regarding the training, appointment, and selection of administrators in Turkey began in 1953. With the establishment of the Institute of Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East (TODAIE) in 1953, it became evident that public administration—and education administration, viewed as a subfield—was being addressed as a distinct discipline in Turkey. In 1962, the Central Government Organization Research Project (MEHTAP) report was prepared. As part of the report, it was proposed that education departments and faculties be established at universities to train the educational administrators required by the relevant ministry. A testing system in which all teachers meeting the required criteria could participate on an equal footing was first introduced through the 1998 MEB regulation. Consequently, within the scope of regulations concerning appointment, evaluation, promotion, and transfer, the first regulation in Turkish educational history that

provided for the pre-service training of educational administrators in the field of administration was introduced (Özmen and Kömürlü, 2010, pp. 25–32).

Specialization programs in educational administration have been offered since the 1979–1980 academic year. Although approximately 30 regulations and circulars were issued between 2003 and 2013 regarding the appointment of administrators in educational institutions, the problem has not been clearly resolved. Today, the appointments of principals or school administrators are made in accordance with the relevant regulation published in the Official Gazette No. 27724 dated October 9, 2010. This regulation contains no provision or provision regarding the pre-service or in-service placement of principals or school administrators (Altın and Vatanartıran, 2014, pp. 19–20).

The MEHTAP report prepared in 1962 recommended that educational administration be recognized as a specialized profession and that relevant departments be established at universities to train administrators. The first faculty established in this regard was the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Ankara University. Consequently, the department opened during the academic year between 1965 and 1966 holds the distinction of being the only four-year faculty of its kind. Subsequently, faculties of education were also established at universities such as Gazi University, Hacettepe University, Istanbul University, and Abant İzzet Baysal University. These faculties met the educational system's need for administrators, specialists, and supervisors. However, following a 1997 decision by the Higher Education Council (YÖK), the relevant departments of these faculties were closed, and this program is now offered exclusively at the master's and doctoral levels. Today, the various requirements sought in individuals to be appointed to school administrative positions are as follows (Altın and Vatanartıran, 2014, pp. 20–21);

- Completion of higher education
- Having completed the probationary period in teaching or civil service
- Having served for a minimum of 3 years as a teacher within the scope of administrative duties
- Having a positive average performance rating over the past three years
- Not having been removed from duty as a result of any criminal or administrative investigation during the relevant period of service

For those to be appointed as school administrators at educational institutions other than those where mandatory service is required, in addition to the above conditions, having completed the mandatory service requirement in accordance with relevant legislation, or being exempt from such a requirement, or having been granted the right to become a school administrator due to a disability such as health-related reasons (Altın and Vatanartıran, 2014, pp. 21–22).

Expected Characteristics and Competencies of School Administrators

With the rapid scientific and technological advancements of today, significant changes have occurred in the structure of organizations and in the roles and responsibilities of employees. It is evident that educational organizations, which serve as the focal point of social change, have been significantly affected by this rapid transformation. Consequently, an educational

administrator's ability to adapt to the rapid change process and effectively fulfill the roles expected of them in their managerial capacity is essential (Çelik, 1996, p. 47).

As expectations regarding education have increased, certain pressures have also emerged on educational institutions. Consequently, the expectations placed on school administrators have become more diverse, and the necessity for school administrators to adapt to change or innovation has emerged. The elements expected of a school administrator in Turkey are as follows (Aytaç, 2002, pp. 59–64);

- To be a change agent
- To be a facilitator
- To be an ethical leader
- To be an educational and instructional leader
- To be participatory
- It is expected that they be an empowering leader.

In addition to the characteristics listed above, the primary duty of a school administrator is not merely to enforce existing regulations and maintain the status quo of traditional structures, but rather to ensure the maximum utilization of human and material resources. At the same time, they are expected to possess certain valuable skills and expertise in management (Kaya, 1993).

Today, it is a matter of great importance for school administrators to demonstrate behaviors that enhance staff morale, performance, job satisfaction, and motivation (Recepoğlu and Kılınç, 2014, pp. 1820–1821).

Research conducted on this topic today has highlighted the need for school administrators to effectively manage the school's resources and foster the development of individuals within the school. Consequently, they are expected to clearly articulate the school's objectives and take the lead in implementing and adapting the curriculum. Additionally, effectively managing the school's quality management systems, including the loan system and its implementation, and establishing ethical principles within the school by involving other members in decision-making processes are also cited as expectations for school administrators (Maestry and Grobler, 2004, pp. 2–19).

The issue of training educational administrators has become a subject of debate among many individuals and researchers within the academic framework. Consequently, while some argue that directly preparing individuals for administrative roles is impossible for universities, it is stated that the nature of administration and that of universities are distinct. For this reason, it is argued that leadership is a field linked to actions adaptable to concrete situations, and that incorporating these actions into university programs is not feasible. According to the opposing view, however, educational leadership is perceived as a professional occupation and requires a formal pre-service preparation phase (Sezgin, 2007).

Administrators play a crucial role in ensuring the organization's goals are achieved. From this perspective, the school administrator plays a key role in creating an effective school. Consequently, the school's impact and success may be significantly related to the competence and quality of the relevant school administrator. For this reason, school administrators rank among the primary factors influencing the improvement of educational quality (Karip, 2004).

In a foreign study on becoming an effective school administrator, it was argued that administrators must have a thorough understanding of institutional practices within the school and act professionally in the process of renewing the institutional structure (Campos et al., 2005, pp. 309–319).

School administrators are considered one of the most important factors playing a significant role in school success. Therefore, it is impossible for a school to achieve success in an institution where the presence of an inadequate school administrator is felt (Gurr and Drysdale, 2007, pp. 39–57).

School administrators must effectively demonstrate leadership qualities, influence staff to boost their motivation or morale, and generate solutions that positively impact aspects such as staff performance and job satisfaction (Receoğlu and Kılınc, 2014, pp. 1821–1823).

Current Practices in the Selection of School Administrators

The “Regulation on the Appointment and Transfer of MEB Educational Institution Administrators,” published in the Official Gazette No. 25343 on January 11, 2004, remains in effect today. Article 7 of the relevant regulation states that the final candidate must possess the qualifications to be appointed as a teacher at the institution in question due to their field of expertise. Consequently, it is noteworthy that the candidate for school administrator must be selected from among the teachers currently serving at the school level. Any candidate who has graduated from a university’s “Educational Administration and Supervision” department or program within the past 30 years cannot be appointed as an elementary or secondary school administrator if they lack prior classroom teaching experience. Additionally, not having received a disciplinary penalty more severe than a salary deduction is among the required conditions. Consequently, the disciplinary penalties a teacher has received in the past carry significant weight. A teacher who has committed a similar offense during their professional career should not have their career advancement opportunities terminated solely due to a single mistake. For this reason, the relevant provision eliminates the rehabilitative aspect of the penalty and punishes the individual repeatedly (Cemaloğlu, 2005, p. 257).

The requirement that the average of the performance ratings for the past three years must not fall below the “good” level demonstrates that performance ratings are treated as a reliable measure. In a similar practice, evaluation committees established for the appointment of administrators identify three candidate administrators and submit them to the authorized superior. Consequently, the appointing authority may exercise its discretion to decide which of the relevant individuals should be appointed. One of the top two candidates is appointed, and subjective discretion is exercised. Consequently, this practice is viewed as one that is subject to criticism due to its susceptibility to political concerns, abuse, and bureaucratic obstacles. According to a study on this subject, in 1994, approximately 54.4% of those awarded monthly bonuses were teachers, while 49.6% were administrators. Consequently, it was observed that the distribution of bonuses among administrators resembled the distribution of alms. Through this method, administrators easily paved the way for promotion to higher positions (Aksari, 1995, pp. 13–15).

On January 31, 1994, the Official Gazette No. 2400 reported that out of the 489 teachers awarded monthly bonuses for the year 1993, 50 of them were from Imam-Hatip High Schools. While this situation has sparked various controversies, a study on the subject claims that 81.5% of teachers assert that partisan favoritism and nepotism are practiced in managerial appointments (Saydam, 1994).

In a study conducted by Kaya, it was stated that for 62.3% of administrators, political preference plays a significant role in appointments. This indicates that appointed administrators function merely as status leaders and fail to exhibit group leader behavior. Therefore, it is clearly evident that political considerations play a significant role in appointments and that a politicized approach is evident in the appointment process (Kaya, 1993, p. 221).

Under Article 18 of the regulation concerning school administrators, it is stated that the principals of all high schools above the “Anadolu High School” level, science high schools, boarding elementary schools, and educational institutions directly affiliated with the Ministry of Education shall be appointed by the Ministry. Additionally, it is noted that administrators other than the heads of these institutions, as well as administrators at all levels of other educational institutions, are appointed by the provincial governors’ offices. Consequently, these provisions are criticized as a new manifestation of the culture of distrust in the public sector reflected in the laws. The distribution of scores in the administrator selection exam under Article 13 of the regulation is as follows (Cemaloğlu, 2005, p. 258);

- Turkish language proficiency and composition 20%
- General culture 15%
- National Education Legislation, basic information regarding educational administrators and the Turkish education system 20%
- Topics related to students in educational institutions 15%
- National security, Atatürk’s principles, and Turkish Revolutionary History 15%

It is evident that the weighted topics in the selection exam for preschool candidates listed above are not directly related to administration. For this reason, many argue that questions regarding the form and content of administration should be included. Consequently, the fact that questions related to educational administration account for only 20% of the exam is considered insufficient and has been criticized (Balçı, 2004, p. 26).

In-service training scores, viewed as an effective variable in appointments, are not considered reliable. In 2004, Article 19 of the relevant Regulation No. 25343 gave rise to certain concerns. This is because the article includes a requirement for candidates to have published works in the field of education and instruction. Consequently, it is noted that since there are no evaluation criteria for the work itself, only the existence of the work is considered significant. Pre-service training programs are organized for those who achieve sufficient scores in the administrative selection exam. According to this protocol, it is observed that these programs are conducted in collaboration between the Ministry of National Education (MEB) and universities. The courses included in in-service training are as follows (Cemaloğlu, 2005, pp. 260–261);

- Educational administration

- Public administration
- Knowledge of Legislation
- School administration
- Effective use of resources
- Human rights and democracy
- Teaching and learning
- Total quality management
- Teamwork
- Evaluation and monitoring
- School-community relations
- Personnel management
- Contemporary management approaches
- Social communication and interaction

Within the frameworks of various models proposed in studies related to school administrators, efforts and recommendations aimed at enhancing their competencies are noteworthy. Among the factors that undermine or reduce the competencies of school administrators, pre-service education programs stand out. This is because it is believed that individuals with sufficient skills and knowledge from pre-service education, as well as administrators who embrace competencies in the field of school administration, will demonstrate significantly higher professional performance. The success, competency, and effectiveness levels of graduates from such programs in school administration are frequently discussed. In an examination conducted in 1998, it was observed that 94.94% of candidates in in-service training were successful in public administration questions, and 83.8% were successful in educational administration questions. When examining areas of failure, a low success rate of 48.88% was observed in total quality management and 52.47% in the effective use of resources. These results indicate that in-service training programs have, to some extent, increased success rates. However, it is believed that they have also led to the emergence of certain doubts and debates regarding competence (Toklucu, 2000, p. 318).

It is argued that certain flawed practices in the process of training school administrators in Turkey stem from the fact that programs are developed without conducting a needs analysis. Consequently, the failure to include courses that address the core needs of school administrators is considered one of the primary flaws in these practices. In various protocols between the Ministry of National Education (MEB) and universities regarding the school administrator training program, the MEB has demonstrated an unprepared attitude toward the matter. As a result of this situation, it is believed that this leads to the development of individuals whose actions are generally limited to bureaucratic tasks. Consequently, the perception that school administrators who effectively manage the school's finances and establish a bureaucratic hierarchy are "better" administrators is considered erroneous. For this reason, it is believed that directing school administrator candidates solely toward training center activities creates certain problems. It is argued that mastering managerial practices in non-educational fields can play

an effective role in applying alternative strategies for problem-solving. Bush's school administrator training program offers the following recommendations (Şimşek, 2004, p. 17);

- Financial matters and budgeting
- Strategic development, performance measurement, and action plans
- Human resources management
- Hiring and professional development
- Cultural and organizational change
- Marketing and public relations.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the processes of training school administrators in Turkey. In this context, significant findings and conclusions related to the subject were obtained. It was observed that numerous regulations have been issued regarding the selection, appointment, and placement of school administrators in Turkey. This situation clearly demonstrates that there is no clear model or framework for the selection and training of school administrators in Turkey. Consequently, the constant addition of new regulations or amendments due to an indecisive approach does not provide a clear solution.

Within the scope of the research, it was observed that the questions asked and the selection methods used in the school administrator selection exam have been criticized by many sectors. Since the questions are unrelated to administration and cover areas such as general culture and composition, they are not considered to be of much benefit in terms of administrative competence.

An examination of the relevant literature within the scope of this study reveals that in school administrator selection exams, candidates who graduated from relevant departments achieve significantly higher success scores or percentages. However, those who did not graduate from relevant departments exhibit the opposite profile, with their success rates found to be quite low. This situation demonstrates just how important it is to have graduated from relevant departments or faculties related to the subject. At the same time, it has become evident that there is a need for school administrator candidates to have access to sufficient knowledge in this field. The phasing out of 120-hour training programs over time is also among the issues criticized by many sectors.

It is observed that the processes for training and appointing school administrators are generally limited to practices based on regulations, such as centralized exams or short-term in-service training. As a result, school administrators are unable to sufficiently develop their school management competencies, such as communication, leadership, crisis management, and strategic planning. Additionally, the frequent changes in administrator training policies and the lack of stability in their implementation negatively impact the professional motivation of school administrators.

The research findings indicate that the processes for training school administrators in Turkey must be addressed with a much more comprehensive and long-term approach. In this context, it is recommended that school administration be treated as a distinct field of expertise

and that graduate-level programs be expanded through collaboration with universities. At the same time, it is expected that in-service training will be restructured to focus on quality rather than quantity, and that mechanisms will be established to ensure the continuity of administrators' professional development.

In this study, when the existing legal regulations and practices related to the training processes of school administrators in Turkey are examined from a literature perspective, it has been revealed that school administration has not yet been established as a professional field in Turkey. Consequently, it has been observed that the role of administration is generally treated as an extension of the teaching profession. Therefore, the absence of a systematic, sustainable, and scientifically grounded model in the administrator training process is clearly evident. Consequently, it is recommended that necessary steps be taken regarding the design and implementation of such a model.

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