

## Problems Encountered by School Principals: Unchanging Facts of Changing Turkey

Mehmet Kaan Demir

*Department of Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University,  
Canakkale, Turkey*

*Mobile: +90 505 398 8607, E-mail: mkdemir2000@yahoo.com*

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**ABSTRACT** There are 177 universities in Turkey, training teachers at approximately 60 faculties, and 800 thousand teachers working at schools of the Ministry of National Education. It is known that there are 18 million students studying at these institutions. Managing an organization of this size may cause several problems. This descriptive paper which was planned prior to the start of the 2014-2015 academic year and carried out before the politically-motivated dismissal of thousands of school principals in 2014, aims to reveal the problems faced by principals in Canakkale. For the purpose of the study, 155 principals working at pre-schools, primary schools, and secondary schools/high schools in Canakkale were selected as the population of the study. The most frequent problems identified in the research were economic problems. Few of the participants marked undesirable behaviors of students as a major problem. Participants also listed some relevant issues concerning academic staff and physical conditions of schools.

### INTRODUCTION

Factors such as urbanization, globalization, modernization, technological developments, deviation from traditional social structure, growing population, and increasing need for education all entail the introduction of new skills in the schema of the traditional managerial skills set of school administrators. Managerial principles, such as planning, organizing, budgeting, and the choice of personnel, as expressed by Western thinkers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were re-interpreted, influenced by new approaches pertaining to human relationships, by postmodern paradigms in the second half of the century. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more flexible, human- and community-oriented approaches have been introduced in organizational structures. Arguments for democracy, human rights and international standards have made humans the focal concern of professional life (Aslanar-gun and Bozkurt 2012). Educational institutions are expected to offer a democratic setting in consideration of educational shareholders. School administrators are among the shareholders whose perception, knowledge, skills and attitudes related to democracy are influential in the quality of education offered (Alshurman 2015). This is considered to act like a catalyst for a sustainable change in educational processes. Today these developments are changing job descriptions,

roles and even the responsibilities of school directors. It has been well understood that neither the directors' enforcing regulatory rules nor maintaining the *status quo*, can turn them into the directors of the information age. However, they should be aware of the necessity that they should assume new responsibilities as required by such factors as globalization, information technologies, scientific and organizational learning, change management and total quality management. Principals are liable to defining the school's mission and vision and setting the nurturing conditions to fulfil its mission and achieve its vision. This means that directors today are responsible to organize their schools in accordance with these goals to improve the existing conditions (Helvacı 2007).

A school is an institution associated with the community's concept of education and is the most functional component and production-oriented, concrete organization of an education system (Acikalin 1998). Educational administration deals with education at macro level, and school administration at micro level (Erdogan 2000). School administration refers to the application of educational administration to a limited area, the scope of which is determined by the purpose and structure of the education system. In this designated area, a school principal's duty is to keep the school operational and help it develop according to the pre-determined goals by

using human and material resources in the most efficient way (Bursalioglu 1982). School principals are required to exercise their authority entitled by the law to help the school achieve its goals in line with educational policies and contemporary educational approaches. A principal's assigned duties are, namely, "to determine school-related policies, to meet the need for school activities, to establish interpersonal and intergroup relationships at school, to plan teaching and educational activities, to communicate with intra- and extra-school actors, to monitor and evaluate the work at school" (Kaya 1993). Today, "school principals are expected to cope with crises at schools, to manage and settle conflicts, to be visionary, to motivate employees, to make valid and dependable decisions about unplanned topics and to act like capable problem-solvers" (Celikten 2001).

Taymaz (2003) lists the duties of principals as follows; teaching-education (planning the academic year, academic calendar, teachers' workloads, educational clubs, cultural activities, education technologies, equipments and materials, school-community relationship), student affairs (admission and registration, absenteeism, discipline, guidance), personnel affairs (appointment, discipline, payment, in-service training, leaves), general services (classroom, laboratory, library, hall and other spaces at school, equipment, heating, hygiene, illumination, repair work), financial affairs, etc. School principals are primarily responsible for the execution of the above mentioned duties. Moreover, Sisman (2002) simply lists principals' duties as bureaucratic affairs and cultural affairs. The bureaucratic duties include relationships with senior administrative bodies, information flow and sharing, coordination of school activities, management of financial sources, establishment of new school rules concerning the use of building and facilities, management of services and supportive systems for students, and processes concerning school staff. On the other side, cultural duties cover establishing a nurturing setting for an effective teaching, raising a high expectation for success, setting institutional goals, intra-organizational communication, instructional leadership, ensuring familial and social support.

A professional school principal is the educational leader and manager of a school, and is therefore responsible for the work performance of all the people in the school (that is both staff

and learners). People are the human resources of schools. They use material resources (such as finances, information equipment, and facilities) to produce a "product", namely, the educated learner. One of the principal's jobs (the so-called principalship) is to help the school deliver a high level of performance through the utilization of all of its human and material resources. This is done through effective, and ultimately excellence in, leadership. Simply a principal's job is to get things done by working with and through other people. Studies of effective and excellent principals reveal that the primary reason for principals' failure is the inability to deal with people. If people at school perform well, the school performs well; if people do not perform well, nor does the school. In this sense, the leadership of school principals is of utmost importance and is probably the most important element of the principal's role and/or task. School principals are essential to the success of schools of any type and size (Botha 2004).

The position of principal, the teaching professional in charge of a school, encompasses a broad scope of administrative, personnel and disciplinary responsibilities. Traditionally, a school principal is regarded as a person who strives to provide and manage financial resources that is, to achieve the pre-determined goals of the school. Moreover, a principal is expected to protect and preserve the existing condition of the school. However, as contemporary arguments suggest, leadership, rather than the managerial capabilities, of principals is being emphasized, and he/she is considered as a leader who is supposed to initiate the transformation process at school which is to change the rigid structure, procedures, and habits if need be (Sisman and Tasdemir 2008).

According to Cinkir (2010), schools, like any other social institution, are positively or negatively influenced by social, cultural, political, scientific and technological developments. Adapting schools to such changes and developments is among a principal's duties. In this sense, they are expected to hold the essential decision-making and problem-solving competence. According to Helvaci (2005), over-reliance on principals as change experts in reconstructing education systems makes school principals' workflow more complicated and difficult. Aliciguzel (1998) points out that a "good" principal should make the best effort to re-arrange the

school program in a way to meet the demands of students and to keep up with the developments in their social and professional lives. The researcher lists the causes of slow development of the school as follows: academic personnel's laziness and over-reliance on traditions and habits; distrust in the efficacy of in-service training; centralism; bureaucracy, politicians' direct intervention into education; insufficient physical opportunities; and indifference to academic personnel.

The managerial problems of principals are closely related to their duties and responsibilities. The problems encountered at schools may arise from students, teachers, school setting, management skills and the school's physical conditions. As Demirtas et al. (2007) cite, some studies show that principals encounter such student-related problems as theft, vandalism, offensive weapons (Güven and Donmez 2002; Oğulmus 1995; Ozer 2006; Turkmen 2004), aggressive behavior, bullying (Cinkir and Kepenekci 2003; Golmaryami et al. 2015; Kapci 2004; Ozer 2006), discipline problems, failure (Semerci and Celik 2002), cheating and absenteeism and so on, so forth. Furthermore, some problems may also arise from teachers themselves. Among these problems are teachers' personal problems, lack of communication between teachers and managers and between teachers themselves (Semerci and Celik 2002), problems concerning teachers' professional developments, etc. In addition, political pressure on school administration (Erol 1995), racial, sexual, linguistic discrimination, violence (Ozer 2006), lack of communication between school and families, and an excess of discipline-related issues can also be categorized under the topic of school setting problems. Moreover, in various countries, oppressive and punitive practices to sort out disciplinary problems have adverse effects on educational development of the students (Pegüero et al. 2015). In Turkey, schools are known to face many problems due to their physical conditions. For example, an insufficient number of primary and secondary schools results in overpopulated schools and classes (Oğulmus and Özdemir 1995) which could also cause problems resulting from insufficient number of buildings, classrooms, and equipment (Celikten 2001; Semerci and Celik 2002; Kisioglu et al. 2005).

For Keenan (2012: 6), problems "rarely present themselves as a gift-wrapped package, labelled 'Problem'. They have a habit of either creeping

up on you when you least expect it, or arriving like a thunderbolt on a hot summer's evening. They come in all shapes and sizes and never have neat boundaries. Nor is it the most important or relevant aspects which first comes to your attention. Worse still, they can appear to be one thing while turning out to be something totally different, or something you have met before – but in a new disguise". According to Whitaker (1996: 60), school principals encounter frustrations caused by "sheer role overload, [and are] unable to accomplish the many tasks and responsibilities assigned to the role of principal. Other frustrations experienced by principals include site-based management and shared decision making, declining resources, increased paperwork, and greater expectations from the public and central administration for higher student standards".

The Turkish education system has gone through several changes since 2005. Drastic changes in teaching programs, increasing number of schools (be they pre-schools or universities), growing number of students and teachers, modernization of technological equipment at schools, increase in the length of compulsory education to 12 years, commonly known as 4+4+4 system, implementation of the regulations pertaining to casual clothing. All these can be counted as recent changes. Besides such changes, problems encountered by school principals should also be discussed. This is why the primary concern of the present research is to reveal what kind of problems principals in Canakkale encounter. For the purpose of the study, the researcher attempts to reveal the problems principals face at schools in the light of their opinions.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Model

The present study has been designed as descriptive research. In other words, the problems of the participating principals have been described with a scale.

### Population and Sampling

The population consists of the principals of pre-schools and elementary, middle and high schools in Canakkale. As provided by the Provincial Directorate of National Education, it cov-

ers 221 principals of 15 pre-schools and 74 primary, 60 secondary schools and 72 high schools. Out of this population, 155 principals were randomly selected for the purpose of the study.

**Table 1: "Locations" and "Types" of the schools of the principals**

| Variable        |                   | <i>f</i> | %     |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| <i>Location</i> | City Center       | 43       | 27.7  |
|                 | Town Center       | 64       | 41.3  |
|                 | Borough-Village   | 48       | 31.0  |
|                 | Total             | 155      | 100.0 |
| <i>Type</i>     | Pre-school        | 13       | 8.4   |
|                 | Elementary school | 60       | 38.7  |
|                 | Middle school     | 42       | 27.1  |
|                 | High school       | 40       | 25.8  |
|                 | Total             | 155      | 100.0 |

Table 1 reveals that 27.7 percent, 41.3 percent, and 31 percent of the schools are located in city centres, town centres, and boroughs-villages, respectively. As for the school types, 38.7 percent, 27.1 percent, 25.8 percent, and 8.4 percent are categorized as elementary, middle and high school, and pre-school, respectively.

#### Data Collection Tool

A scale developed by the researcher was used to collect data. After studies and scales in the literature on the investigation of the problems of school principals were reviewed, the researcher drafted a scale with 24 administration-related problems (with 6 sub-domains, namely tools, physical conditions, school-community relationship, staff, economic conditions and relationship with The Ministry of National Education). The draft was subjected to the scrutiny of three experts who have studies into the subject at stake. Some of the statements of the scale were revised in consideration of the feedback from these experts.

The evaluation was conducted on the basis of frequencies and percentages obtained with the scale used to reveal the problems of the principals. 155 principals were asked to mark 3 problems from among the problems on the scale. As a result, 455 markings were obtained, which were analyzed in terms of such frequency markers as "more than 100", "90-100", "80-90", "60-80", "50-60", and "0-50" (out of 155 participants).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are given in tables in consideration of the frequencies obtained as a result of the choices made by 155 school principals.

**Table 2: Problems faced by more than 100 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>   | <i>f</i> | % (of the 155 principals) |
|-----------------|---|----------|---------------------------|
| 5               | Economic condition of the school (registration fee, donations, (monthly) dues, limited budgets, etc.) | 109      | 70.3                      |

According to Table 2, it seems that financial management is one of the most important responsibilities facing school principals. Likewise, in the present study financial problems stick out as the major problem as expressed by the principals. 70.3 percent (109) of the principals considered financial problems as the most crucial issue. It was found out that 100 of 109 principals marked insufficient budget as their primary problem, while the remaining 9 chose the other sub-domains. Although the budget allocated to schools by the Ministry of National Education has increased over the last decade in comparison with the allocation of other ministries, financial issues as the principal concern of the schools most probably result from the size of the education system and lack of financial aids.

Due to the effect of recent social, economic, political and technological changes and developments, educational efforts and school administrations have become less centralized. The interest of parents, NGOs, and local bodies in schools, and their desire to participate in educational efforts as decision-makers, has been gradually increasing. Financial responsibility assumed by people and groups who avail of education services in many countries has drastically changed the nature of the relationship between school and social environment. It is suggested that it is unlikely to manage today's schools as done before owing to all these changes and developments (Gumuseli 2001). School principals are largely responsible for overseeing their schools' finances and budgets in Turkey. These budgets typically include money allocated for educational materials such as books and computers, extracurricular activities such as sports and theater, as well as security and safety. Mestry (2004) highlights an important challenge in school governing bodies, namely, lack of the necessary knowledge and skills for financial management

and, consequently, the inability to work out practical solutions to practical problems. According to Botha (2010), many public schools world-wide have limited resources; it is extremely difficult for any school to maximize its effectiveness, specifically with regard to scarce resources, in order to achieve its goals. In the process of pursuing multiple goals, every school experiences different pressures from the environment, and therefore each school develops different priorities and criteria.

The literature review shows that much research has revealed similar results. According to Cinkir (2010), the school budget is the primary concern of school principals. As Cukadar (2003) puts it, relatively the most frequently faced problem of primary school principals is an insufficient school budget. Mese (2009) revealed that 63.3 percent of the participant principals suffer from insufficient financing to produce a proper school budget, 63.4 percent from senior administrative bodies' failure to provide sufficient financing, and 70 percent from accusations concerning the donations given during registrations. Bikan (2008) discovered that the main problem encountered by principals is the collection of donations. Moreover, Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012), Sarice (2006), Mirici et al. (2003), and Ozcelik (2001) too have listed financial problems among the principals' problems.

**Table 3: Problems faced by 90-100 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>  | <i>f</i> | <i>% (of the 155 principals)</i> |
|-----------------|--|----------|----------------------------------|
| 4               | Staff-related problems (Insufficient number of academic staff and janitors, undertrained/underqualified teachers and their failure to self-develop, distrust in teachers, lack of communication, etc.) | 91       | 58.7                             |

As Table 3 indicates, “staff-related problems” are the second most common problem. 58.7 percent (91) of the 155 principals state that they have “staff-related problems”. 61 principals complain about the inadequate number of janitors, 17 about being short of academic staff, 7 about teachers’ failure to self-develop, and 6 about distrust in teachers and lack of communication between teachers and principals. In Turkey, where population of school-age children (around 18

million) is larger than many other countries, such problems go hand in hand with financial problems. Although 400 thousand teachers have been appointed for the past decade, the number of appointed auxiliary staff has remained inadequate.

Educational leaders are professionally, ethically, and legally responsible to teachers. Together with teachers, they need to create an environment suitable for professional improvement, and a nourishing setting as required by their ethical responsibility, and they are expected to respect teachers’ rights (as a part of their legal responsibility) (Starratt 2004). In Turkey, as in many other countries, principals hold the highest position at an individual elementary, middle or high school. Thurlow (2003) shows that [they] are expected to assume greater responsibility, under difficult circumstances, for the management of all those who work in their schools. According to Drucker (1994), “management is about human beings. Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their strengths effective and their weaknesses irrelevant” (2011: 221). Sarros (1988) conducted a study on a large sampling to investigate the reasons for principal burnout. Sarros revealed that the primary problems were “unhealthy” interpersonal relationships in the organization, excessive workload, and insufficient time.

The literature review yielded similar results obtained by a great number of studies. In a study on the problems related to the labor force at schools, Sarice (2006) found that teacher-related problems were fewer than the ones posed by janitors and administrative staff. Mese (2009) discovered that 53.3 percent of the principals faced problems caused by an insufficient number of office workers, while 50.0 percent suffered from problems related to cleaning and security services and the like, and 16.7 percent from those caused by an insufficient number of teachers. In the study by Cinkir (2010), general and administrative problems were considered to be of secondary importance, while problems pertaining to staff services were put in fourth place. On the other hand, Cukadar (2003) found that principals face moderately serious problems concerning staff services. According to Bikan (2008), the most frequent third problem encountered by principals was the problems caused by the teachers’ absence due to health problems and related leaves. Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012) express

that the absence of auxiliary staff and insufficient number of teachers are among the principals' major problems.

**Table 4: Problems faced by 80-90 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>  | <i>f</i> | <i>% (of the 155 principals)</i> |
|-----------------|--|----------|----------------------------------|
| 2               | Physical conditions (heating, insufficient number of classrooms, poorly arranged school gardens, inadequate number of sections and social areas, etc.) | 82       | 52.9                             |

According to Table 4, the third most common problems are related to physical conditions. 52.9 percent (82 principals) of the 155 principals stated that they had problems pertaining to physical conditions. 53 of 82 were found to suffer from lack or insufficiency of labs, workshops, gym and recreational facilities, 15 from heating, 8 from insufficient number of classes, and 6 from school garden problems. One of the causes of these problems is the failure to satisfactorily improve physical conditions despite the construction of more than 200 thousand classrooms over the past decade.

It was laid bare by the literature review that some other studies found similar results. According to Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012), school administrations face problems concerning cleaning, heating and the like. Mirici et al. (2003) revealed that principals were troubled by difficulties caused by insufficient physical conditions. Papers by Ozcelik (2001) and Sarice (2006) put forth that primary school principals encounter similar problems.

**Table 5: Problems faced by 60-80 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>   | <i>f</i> | <i>% (of the 155 principals)</i> |
|-----------------|---|----------|----------------------------------|
| 6               | Ministry-related problems (Bureaucratic problems caused by central government, frequently modified programs, regulations, etc., supervision/inspection of schools, appointments-promotions-rewards) | 79       | 50.9                             |

As Table 5 indicates, the fourth most common problem area is related to the Ministry of Education. 50.9 percent (79) of the 155 principals expressed that they face problems caused by the Ministry. 33 of 79 principals said that they are troubled by bureaucratic problems caused by central government, while 19 principals by problems concerning appointments-promotions-rewards, 17 by frequently modified programs, regulations, etc., and 10 by supervision/inspection of schools. Overdependence of school principals on central government in Turkey, even to make very simple decisions, is one of the major encumbrances. In Turkey, which has some 70 thousand schools, principals should be more autonomous and flexible decision-makers to eliminate such problems.

Numerous studies in the literature have yielded similar results. Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012) found that the failure to overcome bureaucratic hindrances, even smaller ones, is among the factors troubling principals. Mirici et al. (2003) suggest that principals suffer from managerial problems partially caused by supervisors/inspectors. In the study conducted by Sarice (2006), it is stated that principals confront outsourcing-related problems, sometimes with higher authorities, parents, or inspectors. Mese (2009) showed that 43.3 percent of the participating principals are faced with political pressure, political manipulation in managerial appointments, and encumbering tasks assigned by higher authorities. 56.7 percent of the principals, a significant percentage, complained that higher authorities overlook their thoughts. According to Bikan's (2008) research, the second most common problem is the failure of disciplinary regulations to resolve students' problems. Griffin (1993) states that although principals are expected to spare most of their work time for teaching leadership, they spend more time on bureaucratic errands.

Another study showed that decision-makers' failure to take the qualifications of (well-trained) principals into account as an appointment criterion is regarded as one of the causes of problems by principals (Cinkir 2010). Principals should not be acquired by luck or connection, it needs specially trained professionals who can do the job right the first time round, and not suitors and pretenders that feel threatened at every corner in the school (Mathibe 2007).

**Table 6: Problems faced by 50-60 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>  | <i>f</i> | <i>% (of the 155 principals)</i> |
|-----------------|--|----------|----------------------------------|
| 3               | School's relationship with parents and community (Its location, failure to translate the support/opportunities of the neighborhood/community into the school, collaboration with parents, parents' indifference to school's needs, PTA-related problems) | 57       | 36.8                             |

According to Table 6, the fifth most frequently encountered problems are the ones caused by the poor relationship between the school and the neighborhood/community. 36.8 percent (57) of 155 school principals expressed that they had problems with the community and/or parents. The present research showed that 28 of them are faced with problems caused by the poor relationship between the school and the parents; 14 with problems pertaining to PTA, 9 with insufficient support and indifference of community, and 6 with location-related problems. Generally speaking, schools which can only sustain their operations thanks to the financial support of the central government need both monetary and social support from the community. PTAs which were founded with a view to ensuring the integration between school and families, facilitating the communication and collaboration between parents and schools, satisfying fundamental needs of poor students and providing monetary support for the school in 2005 fell short of achieving these goals.

Principals are often the public face of a school and must be visible to students, parents and other stakeholders. In this role, the principal might give presentations to the student body, appear at community events, and meet with parents and other family members at meetings. Interaction is a big component of working as a school principal. They communicate with staff, students and parents alike. Hausman et al. (2000) conducted a study of effective principals, and concluded that they should listen to the criticism of the community, be aware of its knowledge and skills, and search for and focus on what is best for students.

Related literature revealed that much research has obtained similar results. It can be inferred

from the study by Demirtas et al. (2007) that as the number of teachers and students increases, so do the problems. More problems are observed at high schools, but fewer at pre-schools. It seems that new schools (of 7-9 years) face more problems. Socio-economic conditions of schools can be considered as a notable source of problems. As the community's socio-economic situation is improved, problems tend to decrease, or vice versa. For Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012), indifferent parents, lack of communication and ineffective PTA can be listed among the problems of principals.

**Table 7: Problems faced by 0-50 participants**

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Item</i>  | <i>f</i> | <i>% (of the 155 principals)</i> |
|-----------------|--|----------|----------------------------------|
| 1               | Lack of equipments/materials (Computer Lab and Related Equipments, Course materials, and so on.) | 47       | 30.3                             |

As Table 7 indicates, the sixth most frequent problem is related to "the lack of equipments/materials". 36.8 percent (47 participants) of 155 participants expressed that they suffered from lack of equipment/materials. 15 principals said that they have problems related to computer labs, 12 to science lab, 11 to an insufficient amount of equipment and 9 to materials. The Ministry of National Education, well aware of this problem and the importance of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Turkey, launched a project called FATİH (Movement of Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology) in 2010. It is a project to offer equal opportunities in education and teaching, to improve technological equipment at schools, and to promote the use of IT tools so as to appeal more to the sense organs in the learning and teaching process. For this purpose, The Ministry of National Education launched a project, belatedly though, and equipped hundreds of thousands of classrooms and students at pre-schools and primary and secondary schools with laptops, tablets, smart boards, projectors, and internet. The problems can be expected to decrease upon the completion of the project.

As instructional leaders, principals maintain a constant presence in the school and in classrooms, listening to and observing what is taking

place, assessing needs, and getting to know teachers and students. Principals set high expectations and standards for the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of all students. They bring together a wide range of stakeholders within the school community, take into account the aspirations [sic], and work to create a vision that reflects the full range and value of a school's mission. Principals encourage the development of the whole child by supporting the physical and mental health of children, as well as their social and emotional well-being, which is reinforced by a sense of safety and self-confidence (Cowan et al. 2013). Lumby (2003) argues that teacher motivation has been affected by the multiple education changes and by the "wretched physical conditions" in many schools. She adds that, "if motivation and morale are low, then teaching and learning suffer". From this viewpoint, it is possible for schools to achieve their vision and to sustain their mission by the provision of the equipments/materials they need.

It is understood from the related literature that similar results have been obtained by a considerable amount of research. Aslanargun and Bozkurt (2012) observed that their participants too suffer from the lack of equipments/materials. According to the study by Sarice (2006), primary school principals face problems concerning the supply of materials and tools. Likewise, Ozelik (2001) conducted a study to identify the types of the principals' problems and found that lack of equipment is among the major problems.

**Table 8: Other problems**

| Item No. | Item                              | f | % (of the 155 principals) |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Other    | Overpopulated schools             | 5 | 3.2                       |
|          | Overcrowded classes               | 4 | 2.6                       |
|          | Insufficient Pedagogical Training | 4 | 2.6                       |
|          | Undesirable Student Behaviors     | 2 | 1.3                       |

As Table 8 indicates, 15 principals also wrote about some of their problems which were not covered by the 6 basic items of the data collection tool. Overpopulated schools and classes, insufficient pedagogical training of the principals and undesirable student behaviours are among these problems.

Similar problems were found in the related literature. Mirici et al. (2003) revealed that principals suffer from problems originating from insufficient pedagogical training and students inappropriate behaviours. Sarice (2006) suggests that primary school principals lack proper pedagogical training and suffer from associated problems. Moreover, Esen (2009) found that 41 percent of the principals participated in 4 to 7 in-service trainings which means that principals attend professional development seminars less frequently than required.

According to Mese (2009), overpopulated classes pose problems for 63.4 percent of the participant principals. Ozelik (2001) showed that principals had some problems arising from the lack of pedagogical training, and they face fewer problems with teachers than with (inappropriate behaviours of) students. Celik and Torlak (2006) claim that principals today are at more risk than in the 1980s, and violence and discipline-related problems at schools are gradually increasing. Productivity at education institutions is achieved not with machines but humans; therefore involving emotion is crucial to the achievement of productivity. This is unlikely to be achieved with exhausted and offended people (Alic 1996). Considering that the motivation of principals is to be able to achieve previously set goals, their enthusiasm plays a key part in the success of the system because a principal too is a human (Acikalin et al. 2007). The employment of effective, creative, visionary, motivating, knowledgeable, and principled principals is crucial to sorting out the encountered problems and improving the education offered at schools (Cerit 2007).

Additionally, principals [are expected to] deal directly with individual students who might have disciplinary issues and special needs. It is also common for principals to meet with individual families of students to discuss the student's behaviour and expectations. School discipline policies are ultimately the responsibility of the school principal; however, all school staff plays a role in their effective development and implementation.

Since the appointment of Riza Nur as the first Minister of National Education on 4 May 1920, 94 years ago, 76 ministers have been appointed to govern the national education system. In other words, "change as a routine" is typical of a country that works to govern the education system by replacing ministers responsible for na-



tional education almost every 15 months. In Turkey where more than 60 governments have come to power since the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, it seems impossible to suggest that satisfactory results have been achieved to resolve the educational problems. After Turkey went through a planned development period from 1960, goals were set for the qualitative and quantitative development of the education system in each development plan; notable decisions have been made concerning the educational problems at every National Education Council since 1939. However, some could not be implemented for various reasons. Educational reforms launched in the 2000s are especially expected to prove fruitful in the long run. In this sense, it is important to see the results of previous practices before putting a new one into effect because education is a stretched-out process.

A well-operating administrative mechanism in an education system is a pre-requisite for functional and sustainable education (Tavares 2015). In such developed countries as the US, England and Australia, principalship is regarded as a more professional position; educational policies have been created to train principals at undergraduate and graduate programs and with in-service trainings. Unfortunately, it is uncommon in Turkey to consider management as a specialization and principalship as a profession (Basaran 2008). Teaching experience is the only criterion required of candidates who apply for a managerial position at schools. Education management is not regarded as a profession, but as a task teachers can perform after acquiring a certain amount of teaching experience (Balci 2004). It is almost impossible to claim that school administration and principalship can be described within a professional framework because there is no other yardstick than the bureaucratic procedures to identify the specialization of school principalship (Erdogan 2008). The presumption that a good teacher will make a good principal is unrealistic and unscientific (Acar 2004). Celik (1990) found that training of school principals is not the concern of any governmental or education policy. Most of the principals have not received courses or in-service seminars on educational management, and any pre and in-service training they have received was not efficient enough to qualify them as principals. According to Kerdak-Karagoz (2006), the managerial problems at schools mostly arise from the incompetence of principals. Reli-

ance on short in-service training to help prospective principals acquire management competence and on their experimental self-discovery skills is the primary cause of the problems. Evidently, there is not a specific program to train school principals in Turkey.

As a result of the present study conducted in Canakkale, it was figured out that school principals suffer from such issues as financial problems, staff, ministry and community related problems, lack of instruments/materials, overcrowded schools and classrooms, insufficient pedagogical training, and undesirable student behaviours. They consider these problems crucially important. Review of the related literature showed that Ozcelik (2001), Cukadar (2003), Mirici et al. (2003), Sarice (2006), Bikan (2008), Mese (2009), Cinkir (2010), and Aslanargun and Bozkurt have obtained similar results. As cited by Cinkir (2010) from various sources, the identification and resolution of managerial problems have also been discussed by some other studies conducted abroad. Among the studies and problems are "Professional isolation and loneliness" (Bolam 1993; Daresh and Male 2000; Weindling and Earley 1987), "practices and style of the preceding principal" (Dunning 2000; Webster 1989), "managing multiple tasks, time and priorities" (Draper and McMichael 2000); "dealing with school finance" (Bolam 1993; Daresh 1986; Dunning 1996; Male 2001), "coping with (supporting, warning, dismissing) incompetent and ineffective staff" (Bolam et al. 2000), "implementing new practices (new program, development and improvement projects) of the central government" (Bolam et al. 2000; Dunning 1996; Male 2001) and "management of school building and area" (Bolam et al. 2000; Dunning 1996; Male 2001). The success of school administrators, that is school management, and sustainability of a well-operating management are highly influential in the realization of their academic, in particular, social and cultural goals (Spillane 2015).

## CONCLUSION

It was concluded that school principals suffer from such issues as insufficient funding, staff, ministry and community-related problems, lack of instruments/materials, overcrowded schools and classrooms, insufficient pedagogical training, and undesirable student behaviours. Besides, they consider these problems crucially

important. In consideration of the present problems, it was clear that these problems have academic, managerial, systemic, physical and political causes, each of which exerts its own micro and macro-effects on principals. These problems can be considered to limit the manoeuvrability of school principals responsible for improving the education quality and establishing a sustainable and functional infrastructure.

Problems especially emerging from political and systemic causes at macro level affect the basic philosophy of the education system and stop school administrators from taking the initiative in educational matters. The problems related to physical setting fall short of satisfying educational requirements even at the present time, known as the "information age". Administrators without sufficient financial means or the freedom of decision-making cannot contribute to the education system in this sense. Administration problems associated with such organizational conditions as setting, harmony and the sense of belonging are closely related to the administrator's capability and his/her faculty and staff. The difficulties that school administrators face in terms of these matters are caused by their insufficient academic and personal development. The quantity and quality of the academic staff as a stakeholder are other major factors troubling school principals. They have to cope with the fact that academic staff is low in number and have limited specialization which is the result of unsatisfying number of in-service trainings and the lack of a performance-based assessment system. From this viewpoint, it is urgent that educational administrators should produce solution-oriented mechanisms to shed light on the aforesaid problems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In countries which undergo social, economic, political and cultural transformations, it is important to establish an organizational structure, especially in an education system, and to ensure the system functions to achieve the national goals. The following suggestions can be made in consideration of the findings of the present research; the role of the school principals in the traditional school model in Turkey was viewed as that of a manager or administrator; this necessitates the transformation of principals into education leaders.

Among the other suggestions are: to provide the support of local governments and communities (NGOs, businessmen/women, parents, alumni, etc.); to ensure the allocation of resources in accordance with the student population; to motivate principals to receive graduate education in educational management; to make in-service trainings up-to-date and interesting; to involve a local administrator, parent, or a graduate of public administration as a representative in school administration. Moreover, school principals must work closely with teachers to ensure that they use effective teaching methods and follow policies designed to realize school objectives. In this role, the principal might sit in on classes to observe a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

### FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The research can be duplicated on a different sampling and the result can be compared with existing findings. Causes of problems can be investigated, particularly in causal studies. Not only synchronic but also diachronic studies of managerial problems are thought to make positive contributions. Furthermore, the identified problems may appear in a different guise in different educational paradigms; therefore, comparative studies can be conducted.

### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The current study was carried out in education institutions in Canakkale, Turkey. The Turkish National Education System claims to adopt a Constructive educational approach, Education in Turkey is centralized. That is, academic and administrative activities are determined and supervised by central government. The results of the present study should be considered within this framework.

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