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School Effectiveness and School Administrators' Meeting Management Competencies

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Meetings are unquestionably important and necessary for all organizations. Because effective and efficient management of meetings results in the effectiveness of the organization. An effective school climate stimulates stakeholders to focus more on their school related roles. To accomplish this mission school administrators should be knowledgeable in employing all dimensions of meeting management. Therefore the relationship between meeting management and school effectiveness is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed and investigated. In this study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between school effectiveness and meeting management competencies of administrators in schools. This study was conducted based on relational screening model. The population of the study is teachers who were working in high schools located in eastern part of Turkey during 2017-2018 academic year. There were 1352 teachers in the universe of the research and 202 teachers participated in the study which for analysis. For participant selection, simple random sampling method was used. In order to collect data, Meeting Management Adequacy Assessment Scale (MMAAS) and Effective School Scale (ESS) were used together. According to the first finding, the participants reported that both effectiveness of their schools and effectiveness of meeting management were at sufficient level. Also, the participant teachers stated that their school administrators had the highest level of qualification in preparation process and the lowest level of qualification in task leadership in meetings. Another important finding of this study was the high level of correlation between school administrators' meeting management competencies and school effectiveness.

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Introduction

In order to exchange information, people come together in small or large groups at regular or irregular intervals. In these interaction processes, which is called as a meeting, the effective use of interpersonal

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communication is closely related to societies and organizations since meetings are organized for people to come together to make decisions and achieve certain goals that affect human life. Meetings are held for many purposes including receiving/providing information, negotiating problems and generating solutions, making decisions, educating, coordinating, and learning different perspectives (Doğan, 2013). Meetings as an indispensable part of business life (Murray & Lai, 2018) are an important source of compliance and impact in management (Forsyth, 1997).

There exist various definitions of the meeting in the literature. According to Kartal (2009), meetings are planned and scheduled activities with three or more participants for a specific purpose at a certain time and place. In addition, while Aytürk (1990) defines meetings as organizations in which managers can apply participatory management principles and involve their subordinates in decision-making, Doğan (2013) defined meetings as arrangements that provide communication between individuals, allow creative ideas to be produced, and are useful for employee training. In addition, Bingöl and Karabatak (2019) considered the meeting as an environment in which more than two people come together to make decisions about a problem, an event or a case. Meetings, the most reliable way to make effective decisions (Green and Lazarus, 1991), are the most critical aspect of management (Tropman, 2003).

Despite these positive approaches regarding the importance and requirements of the meetings, whose number increases every year by five percent (Şencan, 2008: 3), studies revealed that the meetings ended without getting any results or any solutions to the problems (Mısırlı, 2013: 1; Aytürk, 1990; Perlow, Hadley & Eun, 2017). Moreover, many managers spend most of their working hours in meetings which is an important problem in terms of job efficiency (Başpınar & Keskin, 2011). Besides, while employees spend more than half of their work hours (Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2006) and managers spend almost 90% of their time in meetings (Mackenzie, 1995: 121, cited Şencan, 2008:2), one-third of the time spent in meetings is generally inefficient (Green & Lazarus, 1991: 14). The most important reason for the inefficiency of the meetings are solving issues that might be solved by telephone or by e-mail, spending more time than necessary on an issue/case, and not conducting meetings in accordance with the purpose that does not provide benefit to the participants (Çalışkan, 2017: 1). According to the Harvard Business Review report (Jay, 1976), in some organizations many important responsibilities are carried out by a single person in a very satisfactory manner since problems and many more issues might be solved by a letter, a note, a phone call or a simple conversation between two people. Sometimes five minutes spent individually with six people is more effective and efficient than a half-hour meeting with them. In fact, the elimination of these negativities and effectiveness of the meetings depends on the managers since failure in meeting management also means failure in management (Aytürk, 1990). In order to avoid ineffectiveness in meetings, managers need to understand the importance of preparation plan and meeting management principles (Mısırlı, 2013, p.1).

Meetings are unquestionably important and necessary for all organizations. Effective and efficient management of meetings used in every stage of the management processes results in the effectiveness of the organization (Bingöl & Karabatak, 2019); therefore, meetings need to be planned carefully. For productive meetings, generally accepted features are as follows (Arıcı, 2016):

- It is the most effective communication tool between the source and the receiver.
- It ensures that people who share a problem find solutions together.
- Participatory management in an organization enables everyone to participate in decisions.
- It encourages employees to contribute to the goals of the organization, enables teamwork, and provides an environment in which employees take responsibility.
- It ensures the formation of organizational identity.
- It ensures that organizational culture is adopted by employees.
- It is an indispensable element in organizational learning.

Horngrén and colleagues (2000: 229) defined the concept of effectiveness as a performance dimension that determines the degree to which organizations achieve their goals as a result of their activities. On the other hand, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978: 11) evaluated organizational effectiveness as an *external standard* of how well the organization meets the demands of various groups. Despite the different approaches in the literature, organizational effectiveness is generally defined as the level of attainment of the place the organization aims to reach (Ergeneli, 1995: 188). According to Tanrıöğen (1988), an action is considered as effective when it

achieves a desired purpose or vice versa. In order to measure effectiveness, the degree of achievement of the objective as a result of the actions must be taken into account.

Schools are also the leading organizations that shape the future of societies. Students' academic and mental development in order to be prepared for community life depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of decisions taken by the administrators and teachers in the schools they enroll. School management is one of the most important factors among the many factors that affect school effectiveness. According to Helvacı and Aydoğın (2011: 43), schools which failed to achieve its aims at the planned level is flawed in being effective. The relationship between meeting management and school effectiveness is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed and investigated. In this study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between school effectiveness and meeting management competencies of administrators in schools that directly and indirectly affect all segments of society. For this purpose, the following questions were sought:

1. What are the teachers' perception levels about the effectiveness of the schools they work?
2. What are the teachers' perception levels of school administrators regarding meeting management competencies?
3. Is there any relationship among teachers' perceptions of school administrators about meeting management competencies, number of meetings, number of teachers working, number of students, and effectiveness of schools?
4. Is there any relationship between school effectiveness and meeting management competence sub-dimensions according to teachers' perceptions?

Method

Research Model

This study was conducted based on relational screening model in order to examine school administrators' meeting management competencies and school effectiveness according to teacher perceptions. Use of relational screening model is suggested in order to identify whether more than two variables change altogether and, if so, the degree of change (Karasar, 2013: 81).

Participants

The population of this study is teachers who were working in high schools located in Elazığ during 2017-2018 academic year. For participant selection, simple random sampling method was used. In the simple random sampling method, each unit constituting the universe has an equal chance of taking place in the sample (Arikan, 2004). There were 1352 teachers in the universe of the research. Among them, only 228 teachers participated in the study. After data screening and extraction process, 26 cases were excluded from the study due to missing values, which left 202 cases for analysis. The sample size is considered as sufficient with an errors of 5.34% at 90% confidence level.

Among the participants, 33.7% of them were female (n = 68) and 66.3% were male (n = 134). The ages of the teachers ranged between 24 and 55 with the average age of 42.54. In terms of their educational degree, 69.7% had bachelor's degree (n = 161), the rest had master's degree. Teachers participated meetings one to six times with 3.14 meetings in average. Although teachers reported that they participated one to six meetings during a school year, the majority of them (n=76) attended four meetings.

Instruments

In order to collect data Meeting Management Adequacy Assessment Scale (MMAAS) and Effective School Scale (ESS) were used. MMAAS is a five-point Likert scale developed by Şencan (2008). The scale consisted of 32 items with five sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions are task leadership (related to the competencies for the goals to be achieved in a meeting), attendance management (related to the competencies for ensuring and managing participation within a meeting), process leadership (related to the competencies of how meetings should be carried out), preparation (related to the competencies for meeting preparation), and managing group dynamics (related to the competencies for controlling the group). The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .97. In this study, this coefficient was found to be .98.

The second questionnaire (ESS) was developed by Hoy (2009) and was translated into Turkish by Alanoğlu (2014). The scale is intended to measure the quality, quantity, efficiency, consistency, and flexibility of the outputs of schools. The result of CFA indicated that the fit indices showed good fit to the data ($\chi^2 / df = 4.972$; GFI = .94; AGFI = .87; CFI = .97; NFI = .96; RMSEA = .126 and SRMR = .043). The internal consistency coefficient of the original seven-point Likert scale was calculated as .90. In this study, this coefficient was found to be .95.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The questionnaires were converted into online questionnaires by using Google Form and sent it out through e-mail, text messages and IM to teachers in the universe. For data analysis, average scores and standard deviations were used in the calculations of teachers' perceptions about meeting management and school effectiveness. The score ranges and their representations for both questionnaires are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The score ranges and their representations

Score	MMAAS	ESS
	Representation	Representation
1.00-1.80	Never	I do not agree at all
1.81-2.60	Rarely	I barely agree
2.61-3.40	Sometimes	I agree reasonably
3.41-4.20	Usually	I agree mostly
4.21-5.00	Always	I agree completely

Since the data was normally distributed, Pearson correlation coefficient (r) values were calculated. The correlation coefficient is used to determine the linear degree of relationship between two randomly selected variables and varies between -1 and +1. While a value greater than zero indicates a positive association between two variables, a value less than zero indicates a negative association. A correlation coefficient less than .30 represents a weak or small association; a correlation coefficient between .30 and .70 is considered a moderate correlation; and a correlation coefficient of .70 or larger represents a strong correlation (Büyüköztürk, 2012).

Findings

Before conducting any analysis, the data were examined to determine whether the data was normally distributed. To this end, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the distribution of the data is considered as normal if these values vary between +1.5 and -1.5. Table 2 provides skewness and kurtosis values.

Table 2. Skewness and Kurtosis values for questionnaires

	n	\bar{X}	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis	
ESS	202	3.70	1.040	-1.046	.477	
MMAAS	202	3.71	.964	-1.095	.975	
Sub-scales of MMAAS	task leadership	202	3.44	1.094	-.626	-.387
	attendance management	202	3.80	.967	-1.247	1.423
	process leadership	202	3.66	1.046	-.874	.297
	preparation	202	4.13	1.010	-1.053	1.296
	managing group dynamics	202	3.67	.998	-.986	.588

In Table 2, it is observed that teachers' general perception level about meeting management adequacy was on average ($\bar{X} = 3.71$; "Usually") and their perception level about school effectiveness was above average ($\bar{X} = 3.70$; "I agree mostly"). In addition, managers have the most competence in meeting preparation and the least in task leadership.

Correlations among school administrators' meeting management competencies, school effectiveness, number of meetings, number of students, and number of teachers are shown in Table 3. The results showed a high and positive correlation between MMAAS and ESS ($r = .81$; $p < .01$).

Table 3. Correlations among various variables

		1	2	3	4
Number of meetings	r	-			
Number of teachers	r	-.03	-		
Number of students	r	.04	.10	-	
MMAAS	r	.00	.05	-.11	-
ESS	r	-.10	.02	-.06	.81*

*p > .01

As seen in Table 3, a high and positive correlation between ESS and MMAAS was observed ($r = .81$; $p < .01$). Also, correlations among ESS and sub-dimensions of MMAAS were investigated. The results are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Relationship between school effectiveness and sub-dimensions of meeting management competence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 - ESS	1						
2 - MMAAS	.81**	1					
Sub-scales of MMAAS	3 - task leadership	.76*	.92*	1			
	4 - attendance management	.78*	.97*	.84*	1		
	5 - process leadership	.77*	.97*	.90*	.91*	1	
	6 - preparation	.69*	.85*	.67*	.85*	.78*	1
	7 - managing group dynamics	.79*	.98*	.90*	.92*	.93*	.79*

* p < .01

While positive and strong correlation was found among MMAAS sub-dimensions, the most important finding is the positive and strong correlation between ESS and MMAAS sub-dimensions. Specifically, there was a significant, moderate, and positive relationship between school effectiveness and preparation ($r = .69$; $p < .01$), task leadership ($r = .76$; $p < .01$), attendance management ($r = .78$; $p < .01$), process leadership ($r = .77$; $p < .01$) and managing group dynamics ($r = .79$; $p < .01$). According to the teachers' perceptions, school effectiveness is mostly related to the ability to manage group dynamics, while at least it is related to the preparation of the meeting.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the relationship between school effectiveness and meeting management competencies of administrators in schools based on teachers' perceptions was investigated. The participants reported that both effectiveness of their schools and effectiveness of meeting management were at sufficient level, which supports the findings of Şencan (2008). In a similar study, Demirtaş and colleagues (2008) found that meetings were at medium level in terms of their effectiveness. Also, in this study, the participant teachers stated that their school administrators had the highest level of qualification in preparation process and the lowest level of qualification in task leadership in meetings. This implies that the school administrators' competence for the goals to be achieved during and after the meeting is lower than the pre-meeting competences. Similar results were found in Şencan (2008) as well.

The results of this study also indicated that there was no significant association among the number of meetings held in schools, the number of teachers, the number of students, and teachers' perception about meeting management and school effectiveness. Specifically, increase or decrease in the number of meetings does not affect teachers' perception of meeting management and school effectiveness. This might imply that rather than the number of meetings, participatory and collaborative activities in a democratic environment may influence the effectiveness of meeting management and school. Similarly, the number of teachers and students in a school did not affect meeting management and school effectiveness. This indicates that variables related to school effectiveness may make a difference in schools when they are all together (Balcı, 2002). Specifically, Gökçe and Karaman (2010: 177) put strong emphasis on active participation of all stakeholders in meetings since it influences the administrators and teachers to act in accordance with a common purpose; and in turn, increases the success of the schools and the commitment of the school members to the organization.

Another important finding of this study was the high level of correlation between school administrators' meeting management competencies and school effectiveness. This suggests that successful meeting

management has a significant impact on school effectiveness. In fact, Helvacı (2011: 45) stated that the school administrator has an important role in creating, managing, and maintaining effective schools and they must gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude in the field of teaching leadership. In addition, an effective school climate stimulates stakeholders to focus more on their school related roles and creates a team spirit that encourage school staff to work as a group. More importantly, school administrators have the responsibility to create such environment in schools and in order to accomplish this mission school administrators should be knowledgeable in employing all dimensions of meeting management.

When the relationship between school administrators' meeting management competencies and school effectiveness is examined in terms of sub-dimensions of meeting management competencies, it is found that the preparation sub-dimension had higher correlation with school effectiveness comparing with other sub-dimensions. In addition, school effectiveness is most related to school administrators' ability to manage group dynamics and is least related to preparation to meetings.

Another striking result of the study is that the average of task leadership competence level among the sub-dimensions of meeting management competence levels is lower than the average of the other sub-dimensions levels. Among the others, the task leadership competence is an important skill for school administrators. Therefore, future research must investigate the low level of task leadership competence of school administrators. Also, possible ways to increase administrators' task leadership competence must be employed.

There are some limitations in the study. First, the sample size in this study was 202 teachers working in high schools located in eastern part of Turkey. Due to the sampling method, the findings may not be generalized to all teachers in Turkey. The second limitation is the schools that participated teachers serve for. In the other studies in the Turkish literature as well as in this study, the selected schools are all located in city centers. Therefore, replication of this study is required by selecting teachers who are working in rural schools. Another limitation is the research method of the study. In this study, the data was collected through questionnaires. For deeper understanding, it is critical to employ both quantitative and qualitative research models together. The last limitation is related to the participants. The data was collected from only teachers. Future research must take into account perceptions of all school staff including teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

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