



Instructional Leadership Behaviors According to Perceptions of School Principals in Turkey

Research Article

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To cite this article: Turkoglu, M. E. & Cansoy, R. (2018). Instructional Leadership Behaviors According to Perceptions of School Principals in Turkey, *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(5),36-53.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 01.08.2018

Available online:

03.11.2018

ABSTRACT

In this study, the opinions of 15 school principals working in different provinces of Turkey on instructional leadership behaviors were investigated. The study was carried out in the 2017-2018 academic year. This study was structured with qualitative research methods. Phenomenological research design was employed in the study to deeply understand school principals' experiences. 15 school principals working in state primary and secondary schools in Karabük, Ankara, Kastamonu and Istanbul provinces participated in the study. The semi-structured interview form used in the study was developed based on the model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985). According to the research results, it is understood that school principals use the principles of the Ministry of National Education as a base to determine common goals, and they convey these principles to teachers. They are observed to monitor student learning. However, it was observed that they did not take the initiative regarding curriculum development or management and left these decisions to teachers. It was observed that school principals made significant efforts to develop the most positive learning climate and were highly effective in this field. In the study, it was also determined that daily routines, creating resources for school, and over-centralized structure were important obstacles to the instructional leadership of school principals.

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Keywords:

School leadership, instructional leadership, school management, PIMRS

Introduction

Instructional leadership and therefore school principals' roles in encouraging to learn are important (Day et al., 2009; Gu & Johansson, 2013; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mulford, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) and effective in student success (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Şişman, 2004). The studies conducted in recent years also reveal the effects and importance of instructional leadership in comparison with different types of leadership (e.g., Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger, Dongyu & Wang, 2016). As it is understood from these

studies, instructional leadership can be considered as an important factor in student learning and in making schools more qualified.

Instructional leadership is the outcome of an understanding that considers a school principal as an education specialist. The most common definitions that come to the forefront in the studies on instructional leadership focus on the functions of instructional leadership related to the teaching and learning activities of school principals (Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Printy 2003; Murphy, 1988; Neumerski, 2013). According to this approach, the primary duties of school principals include the implementation of teaching-related practices of teachers within certain standards, monitoring of students' achievements, supervision of education, and coordination of school curriculum (Barth, 1986; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Instructional leaders undertake the duties of maintaining the expectations for high student success, supervising and organizing the school, and coordinating the curriculum within common goals (Barth, 1986). On the other hand, they also need to give feedback to teachers continuously and to have a command of different content knowledge (Lochmiller, 2016). When studies are examined in a broader framework, student success is considered as the most important outcome of qualified instructional leadership (Andrews, Basom & Basom, 1991; Alig-mielcarek, 2003; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Quinn, 2002). In conclusion, school principals are expected to cease to be a follower and practitioner of bureaucratic affairs (Balıkçı, 2018), to be effective communicators (Le Fevre & Robinson, 2015), to enrich the teaching spaces of the school as effective instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2011), to provide guidance to teachers in all respects and to continuously increase student success (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Instructional leadership is considered as an ideal characteristic which is expected to be found in school principals all over the world (Hallinger, Wang, Chen & Liare, 2015). Instructional leadership that attracted the attention in America in the 1950s emerged for practical applications (Lipham, 1981). In the following years, studies on instructional leadership spread rapidly, and it was argued that the underlying reason for this situation was the fact that the effect of instructional leadership in increasing learning activities was understood (Bell, Bolam & Cubillo, 2003; Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Scheerens, 2012; Southworth, 2002). It is observed that different studies have been carried out in this regard in the international and national literature.

With respect to the national literature, in their study in which Cansoy and Polatcan (2018) reviewed 35 articles on instructional leadership between the years 2000 and 2017 in Turkey, they determined that the survey design, one of the quantitative research methods, was intensively used in the studies carried out in the field of instructional leadership. In the common findings of the studies, it was observed that school principals as instructional leaders exhibited more the behavior of sharing the school's goals and vision according to teacher perceptions. On the other hand, it was concluded that, according to teachers, school principals did not adequately support teachers' professional development. Furthermore, some of the studies focused on determining school principals' instructional leadership behaviors within the framework of teachers' opinions (e.g., Aksoy & Işık, 2008; Helvacı & Aydoğan, 2011; Aktepe & Buluç, 2014; Ergen, 2013; İnandı & Özkan, 2006; Ünal & Çelik, 2013). In some of these studies, while it was determined that school principals exhibited instructional leadership behaviors at high levels (Oğuz, 2011; Şişman, 2004; Tanrıöğren 2000; Ünal & Çelik, 2013) in some of them, it was determined that school principals exhibited instructional leadership behaviors at low levels and faced many obstacles (Çelikten, 2004; Erol, 1995; Gümüşeli, 1996; İnandı & Özkan, 2006; Korkmaz, 2005).

On the other hand, it is observed that there are many studies examining instructional leadership according to the model determined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in the international literature (e.g., Alsaleh, 2018; Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason & Adam, 2017; Lee & Hallinger, 2012). Furthermore, it is stated by some researchers that instructional leadership in centralized systems has been discussed in very few studies

(Bush, 2014). In this respect, this study may contribute to understanding how instructional leadership works in centralized systems. In the international literature, it is stated that instructional leadership behaviors cannot be exhibited adequately in centralized education systems and that some obstacles are faced. For example, the international study of Lee and Hallinger (2012) showed that contextual factors affected school principals' instructional leadership, management, and the amount of time allocated for management. Alsaleh (2018) stated that school principals have to deal with many obstacles arising from the centralized structure of the Ministry of National Education. Nevertheless, it is observed that the studies carried out in the national literature mostly have focused on examining the model proposed by Şişman (2011) (Cansoy & Polatcan, 2018). Therefore, revealing the model put forward by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) within the context of Turkey is considered to fill a gap in this area.

The three-dimensional model which was put forward by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) was used in this study. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), these dimensions are (i) defining the school mission, (ii) managing the instructional program, and (iii) promoting a positive school learning climate, respectively. *Defining the school mission* is an important dimension of the school principal's instructional leadership role. It includes defining and describing the mission of the school. Instructional leaders must have a vision. The mission of a school can be defined in such a way that this vision will create a sense of common purpose in the staff and students by performing various activities in the school and classroom. The principal's role as instructional manager includes framing of school-wide goals and conveying these goals to the entire school community permanently. *Managing the instructional program*, requires working together with teachers especially in the areas related to the curriculum and instruction. This management activity means that the functions of the works done by the school principal are realized. These functions are supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring the student progress. Finally, *promoting a positive school learning climate*, refers to the norms and attitudes of staff and students who affect learning in the school. This dimension, though indirectly, consists of important activities. The school principal expresses the expectations from students and teachers by explaining the policies and practices announced by the school. The school principal should affect student and teacher attitudes by creating a reward structure that strengthens academic achievement and production efforts. Therefore, what the school expects from students should be explained clearly, open standards should be established, the careful use of school time should be ensured, and high-quality staff development programs should be implemented. In this context, school principals are expected to exhibit competencies in different dimensions in both behavior and practice.

Context

The Turkish National Education, in which the study was carried out, has a centralized structure. In centralized systems, regulations in the education system are made by the Ministry of National Education, and all education units in the country are obliged to comply with it. The applications are performed under the supervision of the state (Alsaleh, 2018; Balcı, 2000; Erol, 1995; Korkmaz, 2005; Özdemir, 2009; Şişman, 2012; Yılmaz & Altinkurt, 2011). The centralization of education in Turkey dates back to the establishment year of the Republic. Along with the entry into force of the Law on Unification of Education dated March 3, 1924, the Turkish education system was built as a centralized system (Arı, 2014; Demirtaş, 2008). The policies regarding the appointment of school principals in Turkey are frequently changed (Yıldırım & Alp, 2017). For example, according to the new decision taken in 2018, the first appointment to school management is based on written exam and oral exam results (Resmi Gazete, 2018). Furthermore, the importance given to the competence appointment to school principalship in the regulations regarding the training and appointment of school principals has gradually decreased towards recent years. Although postgraduate education, participation in certificate programs and in-service training are occasionally the preference criteria for management, these

preferences have not been long-running. As it is understood, it can be said that there is no defined framework for school principals to have certain competencies.

This study is important in terms of further examining the behaviors of school principals as instructional leaders in Turkey, which has a centralized education system, and revealing the compliance with the model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Based on the fact that the studies in this field are mainly quantitative studies, to carry out a qualitative study will shed light on new studies. Furthermore, to reveal in what direction instructional leadership practices in centralized systems have evolved may provide some useful findings. On the other hand, it is observed that the evaluations of school principals were carried out mostly through teacher perceptions in the studies. Thus, it is thought that the answers given by school principals in this study to the questions asked based on the model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) will also make a significant contribution to the literature in terms of the fact that the model has been used very rarely in Turkey. Furthermore, when the model is examined within the context of the education systems of different countries, it makes the study more meaningful and provides an opportunity to make a comparison with different countries. For these main reasons, in this study carried out with school principals, it was aimed to examine school principals' behaviors related to instructional leadership. The results obtained are thought to be guiding for policymakers. In this regard, what school principals should do for recognizing the school mission, promoting the instructional program, and developing a positive school learning climate was discussed.

Methodology

Research design and participants of the study, data collection and analysis, and reliability-validity strategies, are explained in this section.

Research Design

In this study, the qualitative method was used to find detailed and in-depth answers to the research question (Krathwohl, 2009). Phenomenological research design was employed in the study to deeply understand school principals' experiences. Phenomenological research design allows to focus on the events we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding. In addition, phenomenological research design constitutes a suitable research area for studies that are not completely foreign to us but also aim to investigate a phenomena that we cannot fully comprehend (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this context, interviews were held with the participants to share their experiences on instructional leadership in a chat environment.

Participants of the Study

The study was carried out during a 5-month period in the 2017-2018 academic year. 15 school principals working in state primary and secondary schools in Karabük, Ankara, Kastamonu and Istanbul provinces participated in the study. 8 of the school principals participating in the research work in primary school and 7 in secondary school. 12 of the school principals work in Karabük, 1 in Ankara, 1 in Kastamonu and 1 in İstanbul. No criterion was used to determine the number of participants. It is stated that the number of participants in qualitative research may vary by questions, data, and sources (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2015). Participants were selected through convenience sampling from the purposeful sampling types. Convenience sampling gives speed and practicality to research. In this way, the researcher selects situations that are close and easy to access (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this regard, primary and secondary school principals were included in the study because it is stated in the literature that instructional leadership is more important at these school levels (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010). Furthermore, school principals with at least 5 years of experience were determined to examine their experiences more deeply. 75% of the participants were male while 25% of them were female. Their ages range from 33 to 58 years. The average

age is 47.2. The seniority of school principals is between 5 and 28 years, and the average seniority is 14 years. Their professional seniority is between 12 years and 37 years.

Data Collection Tools

The data of the study were collected using a semi-structured interview form. Academicians who are expert in their field were employed to create this interview form. A pre-interview was held with two school principals, and the interview form was reviewed according to the data obtained from it and whether the questions served the specified purposes. Then, the structured interview form was finalized. After the interview form was finalized, the application was started, notes were taken before, during and after the interview, and the analyses were performed after these notes were confirmed by the participants. The sample questions are as follows: "What do you think about the goals of your school? How do you convey the goals of the school to the school community?", "How do you adapt the changes to the curriculum? What are you doing?", "How do you support your teachers during implementing the curriculum?". For the interviews, firstly the relevant people were found, and appointments were made. Probe questions were also included in the interviews. Thus, an attempt to get more explanation and information was made (Merriam, 2015). Interviews lasted for between 30 minutes and 75 minutes on average. The voice recordings of those who allowed for voice recording were obtained. All school principals allowed for voice recording. The real names of the participants were not included in the study, and the codes in the form of SP1, SP2 were used for school principals.

Data Analysis

The contents were analyzed to find answers to the research questions. Themes and sub-themes were created based on the data. Descriptive analysis was used as a method. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011), the aim of descriptive analysis is to organize and interpret findings. According to Patton (2002), content analysis is an effort to reduce and interpret the qualitative data to determine basically consistent aspects of large data. The data are scanned to be tested by probable categories and are classified by categories (Merriam, 2015). The most important thing is to select data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The logic of data analysis consists of discovering, discovering and verifying, testing and validating processes (Merriam, 2015). The data are analyzed by continuous comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the analyses, coding was first performed, and then the sub-themes and themes were created. According to Neuman (2006), in open coding, the data are summarized in analytical categories and codes.

In this context, the researchers categorized the answers of the school principals in their analyses and revealed the patterns and relationships between the categories. Thus, the data were collected in three main themes by creating sub-themed based on the conceptualization of the instructional leadership model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985).

Reliability and Validity Strategies

In qualitative research, certain measures and strategies are consulted in the light of certain concepts to ensure validity and reliability. In general, validity is about the accuracy of research results. It is important to report the collected data in detail and to explain how the researcher reaches the results. On the other hand, certain strategies need to be used to provide reliability in qualitative research. The strategies employed are not intended to test and determine the reliability of the study as it is in quantitative research. These measures are related to the fact that the qualitative researcher has made the strategies used at various stages of the research become more prominent and, in this way, allows other researchers to use these strategies in a similar way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

In this study four of the strategies stated by Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2015) were used in the validity and reliability stage of the study. These strategies are *data diversity*, *extensive field study*, *external control*, and *direct quotation*. The following steps have been taken in order to realize these 4 strategies. (i) *Data Diversity*: Interviews were held for the study, and observation notes were also used (ii) *Extensive Field Study*: The field related to the research has been scanned and the studies in the field have been seen and a basis for the interview form has been established taking model of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) into consideration (iii) *External Control*: During the whole research, 2 field experts and 2 participants evaluated the research data. The data which are unrelated to the research and the interpretations based on these data have been excluded from the research. (vi) *Direct Quotation*: In the direct quotation, the opinions of the study participants were quoted directly. In the study, the symbols SP1, SP2... were used for school principals while giving direct quotations. When the findings were analyzed, it was benefited from the quotations obtained with the voice recorder which were transcribed; thus, attempting to provide an integrity between the comments made on the research and the quotations.

Findings

In this section, findings of the research are given according to the main themes and sub-themes based on the conceptualization of the instructional leadership model proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). The main themes are *defining the school mission*, *managing the instructional program* and *promoting a positive school learning climate*. The sub-themes are in the form of 1a, 1b. For example, (1a) was described as the sub-theme *framing school goals*. Main themes and sub-themes within the frame of this model are ***Defining the School Mission***: (1a) framing school goals, (1b) communicating school goals; ***Managing the Instructional Program***: (2a) supervising and evaluating instruction, (2b) coordinating curriculum, (2c) monitoring student progress; ***Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate***: (3a) protecting the instruction time, (3b) maintaining high visibility, (3c) providing incentives for teachers (3d) promoting professional development, (3e) providing incentives for learning. On the other hand, expressions without any sub-themes are named as (0) not included into any category.

Perceptions of School Principles

Defining the School Mission: (1a) Framing school goals: The majority of school principals make efforts to frame the school goals. These goals are generally expressed in the frame set by the Ministry of National Education. In this context, the goal of raising good citizens is insistently emphasized. When this question is asked to school principals, they directly refer to the frame set by the ministry. In this regard, it is understood that there is a high commitment to formally-determined goals. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the defining the school mission are as follows:

Our aim is to raise individuals with national values who are beneficial to the country and nation in accordance with the main goals of National Education; we aim to raise individuals who serve their environment, family and themselves (SP2).

There is no need to go into too much detail here because the Basic Law of National Education and primary education law have main goals, our teachers continue their studies in line with these goals. They know the goals in them and conduct their studies accordingly (SP3).

(1b) Communicating school goals: Most of the school principals open school's goals up for discussion in addition to this frame set by the ministry. These discussions are usually made at the meetings that are held during certain periods of the year. At these meetings, the academic goals of the school, education, teaching, student and academic achievement are discussed. At these meetings, it is aimed to determine and implement some common goals. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the defining the communicating school goals are as follows:

I generally discuss the goals of the school together with the teachers' board I organize at the beginning of the year, and I consult the state of achieving them with teachers at the beginning and end of the second semester. With respect to determining goals, some of our goals are jointly determined during board meetings. I give priority to taking joint decisions in determining goals (SP4).

We have a teachers' board. There are three board meetings that we have to hold at the beginning, middle and end of the year. We, as school principals, explain how we will provide training for our students in that year to our teachers in line with the curriculum during the Teachers' Board we hold at the beginning of the year. Then, we explain the social activities to be performed and the necessary studies, and we perform the distribution of tasks (SP4)

School principals act in accordance with the frame set by the ministry in determining, defining and sharing the goals of the school. Furthermore, the academic goals of the school for education, instruction and quality in learning are generally mentioned at the meetings. In this respect, when the findings are examined as a whole, it can be stated that school principals generally exhibit the behaviors of determining and conveying the school's mission.

Managing the Instructional Program: (2a) *Supervising and evaluating instruction:* Most of the school principals monitor teachers and instruction through formal classroom observations. A small proportion of them prefer informal observations. Some school principals give feedback to teachers according to these observations. These feedbacks can be given individually or collectively through meetings. The issues that need to be corrected and the deficiencies that need to be overcome in terms of education and training are mentioned in the feedbacks. More emphasis is placed on formal monitoring and evaluations. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the managing instructional time are as follows:

When we attend the class, we get feedback on whether the new curriculum has been implemented. We check whether the writings are appropriate and the preparation of the annual plans according to the new curriculum while examining the class books. If there is a problem, we ask it to be corrected (SP11).

We are trying to perform in-class observations adequately. We share what we see with our teachers (SP13).

I check whether the new curriculum is applied during course inspections and whether it is taught by occasionally chatting with the children in the classroom (SP3).

It is understood that school principals try to perform classroom observations, monitor teachers and give constructive feedback to teachers. In this respect, it can be said that school principals largely exhibit the behaviors of supervising and evaluating the instruction.

(2b) *Coordinating curriculum:* The vast majority of school principals follow some routine practices for the functioning of the curriculum. These practices are the coordination of curricular objectives within the levels and the solution of problems encountered during the implementation of the program. Teachers are given more responsibilities in this regard. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the coordinating curriculum are as follows:

Teachers may sometimes have trouble with the method regarding the implementation of the program, and we are trying to help as much as we can (SP12).

Since teachers do this job willingly, they immediately share what they see as missing or cannot implement in their class. We produce solutions together when we get stuck. The groups are very active in this regard (SP5).

When new programs are introduced, the Ministry of National Education and the Provincial Directorate of National Education prepare seminars on this subject. The writings stating that there will be seminars for these branches in these schools are delivered to us, and we also send them to the relevant teachers (SP11).

While coordinating curriculum, it is observed that school principals focus more on the implementation of plans in the school in harmony. Furthermore, it is understood that teachers are trying to solve some methodological problems encountered during the implementation of programs together.

(2c) *Monitoring student progress*: The vast majority of school principals evaluate students' development by monitoring them with assessment tools such as written exams and tests. Furthermore, some school principals have interviews with teachers regarding the reasons for failure. The teachers who are considered unsuccessful in these interviews are referred to lesson support courses in the school. The school counseling service meets with families when needed. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the monitoring student progress are as follows:

We monitor them through exams by looking at whether students use the knowledge they have learned (SP2).

Well, we attach great importance to exam analyses together with the teachers for the success of students. In other words, the teacher performs question analyses after the exam. We are trying to find out the reasons for the success of that student, in other words, we are trying to see which student does not reach the desired goal or which student makes a surprise and reaches the goal, by looking at the analyses (SP3).

We evaluate our students with our teachers, and we are trying to give support in the area in which they need support (SP8).

It is understood that school principals monitor students' academic progress and monitor students in different stages of the instruction process. It is understood that measures are taken to support the student through the data related to the student. In this respect, it is observed that school principals act responsibly with respect to monitoring student development and that the behaviors related to this dimension are exhibited.

Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate: (3a) *Protecting the instructional time*: The vast majority of school principals exhibit behaviors to improve the physical environment of the classroom, to minimize behavioral problems and to meet the needs with respect to maintaining the instruction time. They think that a peaceful atmosphere to be provided for teaching a lesson in the classroom and school will ensure the highest level of instruction time. Furthermore, a limited number of school principals sometimes conduct interviews with teachers to use the duration of lesson efficiently in the classroom. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the promoting a positive school learning climate are as follows:

I am thinking of how teachers can be more effective and how they feel relaxed during lessons (SP9).

For instance, the electricity went off when you were here. I went there and repaired the system. Maybe if we call a mechanic, he would come only in a few hours and the duration of that lesson would be wasted (SP3).

It is understood that school principals have high sensitivity with respect to maintaining the time allocated for instruction in the classroom and school, and teaching lessons efficiently. In this regard, it can be stated that school principals make serious efforts for the efficient use of the duration in the classroom.

(3b) *Maintaining high visibility*: School principals usually indicate that teachers can easily reach them. School principals help teachers with the development of education and training during these interviews. Furthermore, school principals state that they can speak clearly of all their problems. A participant's opinion that came to the forefront regarding the maintaining high visibility is as follows:

Organizations such as schools will succeed if a good team work is carried out. From time to time we meet outside our work with our teacher friends and have lunch. We attach particular importance to everyone participating in these invitations (SP7).

(3c) Providing incentives for teachers: It was observed that the vast majority of school principals insufficiently exhibited the behaviors, such as praising teachers individually, honoring and rewarding them in society or announcing their success. On the other hand, it is observed that they use informal ways to motivate teachers. In this context, the activities of giving presents on birthdays, improving the physical conditions of teachers in the school, home visits, and being remembered on special days come to the forefront. Almost all school principals stated that the quality implementation of instruction in the school depends on creating a peaceful environment that will increase teachers' performance. In general, it is observed that it is attempted to motivate teachers by creating a strong school culture in schools. In this context, school principals state that they are trying to solve teachers' problems, make their working environments suitable for instruction, improve working conditions and support teachers for their easiness. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding providing incentives for teachers are as follows:

As a school principle, the improvement of working conditions for my teacher friends in the school is also among my duties. I think it is very important that they take a rest in a better teacher room and drink tea and coffee during breaks, in terms of getting more efficiency during lessons (SP13).

For this reason, our priority is to remove the situations that will affect our teachers' performance and help them to give efficient lessons to students by finding solutions to problems together and ensuring that they get into class happily and peacefully. The second one is to provide an appropriate educational environment for our teachers and students. Such as light, sound, classes, ventilation, cleaning, etc... the third one is to create an organizational culture that everyone agrees with (SP8).

First of all, we are sincere towards everyone, in other words, the fact that we are sincere leads to an atmosphere in which they are sincere among themselves. We certainly do not make a distinction. We never do gossip, in other words, we certainly do not talk between two friends and do not allow it (SP7).

We usually have a celebration together with the teachers when there is a circumcision, wedding or childbirth (SP9).

We had dinner parties with the families at homes every 15 days even though we could not include everyone (SP3).

It is understood that school principals use rewarding or thanking less often to motivate teachers. On the other hand, it is observed that school principals try to fill this gap through collective celebrations.

(3d) Promoting professional development: School principals usually help teachers to improve their professional development. They adjust the course schedule of those who will participate in a postgraduate or special education program, and they also support those who participate in in-service training. They state that they particularly help those who want to improve themselves. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the promoting professional development are as follows:

We have teachers participating in seminars organized by the national education (SP1).

If a teacher asks for professional development, I will provide all kinds of opportunities (SP12).

We provide convenience to those who will participate in any kind of training (SP11).

We are also trying to provide the environments, such as training, they demand from us (SP13).

Furthermore, according to the opinions of some school principals, it is stated that no activity is performed for the professional development of teachers and that this is left to the teachers' own initiative. On

the other hand, it is observed that school principals very often indicate the participation in in-service training programs within the context of professional development. Few school principals emphasize that they organize a seminar or conference in the school and discuss different educational sources with teachers and recommend them. It is observed that the attempts for the participation of all staff regarding professional development, giving more detailed guidance to teachers about professional development, information sharing, or providing cooperation in the professional field are at very limited levels. It can be stated that school principals help those who want to improve themselves professionally and that they announce in-service training.

(3e) *Providing incentives for learning*: Some school principals use reward systems for successful students to be recognized in the school and classroom environment. Furthermore, they also conduct interviews with students. The rewards given can be thanking or financial rewards. A participant's opinion that came to the forefront regarding the providing incentives for learning is as follows:

We are carrying out motivation studies. Students can be interviewed individually. We can sometimes talk to their parents. Family visits can be made. We give small presents to the students who go beyond certain nets, and we sometimes organize school trips (SP12).

It can be said that school principals exhibit encouraging behaviors for students to have academic achievement. In this context, students are honored. It can be said that schools are trying to provide student motivation by giving presents according to their own situation.

Obstacles to instructional leadership behaviors (0) In this study, it can be said that school principals have a high level of efforts to implement instructional leadership roles. However, it is also observed that there are some obstacles to the realization of instructional leadership. The answers given by school principals to the question of "What kind of jobs you would not want to do in the school" reveal the stress between school principals' instructional leadership and management role. In these answers, school principals usually stated that they wanted to allocate more time for studies related to education and training. However, most of the school principals stated that they spent a lot of time for official business and operations in schools and that they mostly allocated quite a lot of time to improve the physical conditions, such as the technical problems of the school building or supplying tools and equipment. On the other hand, they stated that they are dealing with some monetary affairs to meet the needs of the school, that monetary affairs cause them to get tired a lot, and that they definitely do not want to deal with money. Furthermore, they stated that they had to perform teacher investigation, continuously participate in celebrations, perform official business within the frame of teachers' occupational safety, and some works officers should do by themselves. Although school principals want to allocate more time for education and teaching, they indicate that they compulsorily allocate time to routine works in the school or the works outside of their areas of responsibility. In this respect, it is understood that school principals are under stress and are unable to focus on the studies aimed at increasing academic achievement in the school. Some of the participants' opinions that came to the forefront regarding the obstacles to instructional leadership behaviors are as follows:

In brief, now that I am a principal, I want to think about how to make education and training better and to do my part for the continuation of the systematically working order. I do not want to take responsibility for anything about which I have no knowledge, except for my branch. I do not mean working, working does not make me feel tired, but the fact that responsibility is given to me on the issues on which I have nothing to do with, without having authority and opportunity makes me feel tired (SP3).

Well, I would not want to deal with the works related to the physical environment of the school. The physical structure of the school should not depend on me, I should totally deal with the works related to education and training, staff, parents, and students; however, this is not the case with us, you deal with the case of leakage in the roof, you run in case of natural gas failure, you know, you have to deal with asphaltting the garden, you go

in case of electrical fault (SP4).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, instructional leadership behaviors were examined according to the perceptions of school principals. It is understood that school principals are trying to implement instructional leadership behaviors in the model created by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) at different levels. On the other hand, it can be stated that there are some stresses between instructional leadership and administrative behaviors. The findings for each dimension will be discussed in this section.

Defining the School Mission: School principals convey the general frame set by the Ministry of National Education to determine and convey common goals to teachers. Within the framework of these principles, school principals ask teachers to educate students as good and decent citizens. Furthermore, they can take some joint decisions by discussing the goals of the school with teachers. Most of these decisions are related to improving student learning and academic achievement in schools. In this regard, it is observed that school principals convey the goals of the school within the framework specified in the laws. This is compatible with the results of İnandı and Özkan (2006). The fact that teachers and school principals take joint decisions in the school is a desirable situation in terms of organizational integrity (Hoy & Fedman, 1987). However, it is expected from school principals to introduce the central principles by interpreting and developing, not to convey them in exactly the same way (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Erol (1995) draws attention to this negative situation and indicates that communication in centralized systems becomes stable after some time and that school principals only turn into an approving authority.

Managing the Instructional Program: School principals perform observations for the supervision and evaluation of instruction in formal or informal ways. As a result of these observations, they give feedback to teachers with respect to improving the quality of education and training. In this respect, it is understood that school principals monitor and evaluate the instruction in the classroom through the feedback based on observations. However, according to Lochmiller (2016), it is stated that school principals need to give feedback to teachers continuously and to have a command of content knowledge. In the study carried out, it is understood that informal observations are mainly superficial and that this field needs to be developed. In other words, it can be said that the effectiveness of feedback is controversial.

Another thing expected from school principals is to maintain high expectations for high student achievement within common goals to ensure effective teaching, to supervise and organize the school, and to coordinate the curriculum (Barth, 1986). In the study carried out, it is understood that school principals are trying to provide the coordination of the program throughout the school in the studies on organizing the education program and that they support the implementation of the program. Nevertheless, it is observed that they cannot intervene in the curriculum content and development since curricula are prepared centrally. On the other hand, it is understood that they give more initiative to teachers to follow and develop the curriculum. This may be due to the fact that school principals have a command of a certain branch. On the other hand, school principals mainly look at education programs at the macro level. These statements of principals are compatible with the studies carried out in the countries with a centralized education system. Alsaleh (2018) stated that school principals were unable to intervene in the content of the curriculum in centralized systems. This statement supports the research results. In their study, Ruff and Shoho (2005) examined the mental models of school principals and opened two kinds of findings up for discussion. While some school principals exhibited behaviors appropriate to accountability, other principals stated that they take their decisions as a result of internal judgment based on a balance model. From this point of view, it can be stated that centralized systems mainly cause school principals to exhibit superficial behaviors within the context of accountability.

School principals closely monitor the academic status of students. They focus on the reasons for failure and solutions. It is understood that they use the evaluation results of exams to monitor student development. In this context, it can be stated that school principals monitor the academic development of students and take corrective measures when necessary. Studies in the literature support school principals' statements that emphasize the importance of qualified instructional leadership performed for student achievement (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Şişman, 2004). However, it may be suggested to investigate these results in a more detailed manner because what school principals do for the monitoring of students' academic achievements appears as an unclear subject.

Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate: School principals try to use instruction time efficiently in the classroom. They prevent the disturbance of instruction time due to reasons caused by the teacher and the student. In this regard, it is understood that school principals act responsibly with respect to instruction time.

School principals are accessible in the school. Teachers can have a talk with their school principal whenever they want. Principals are in their schools except for very special occasions. The issues related to education and training can be discussed easily. In this regard, it can be stated that school principals allocate the necessary time to teachers. Furthermore, school principals come together in different activities to ensure teachers' morale and motivation. They meet teachers' reasonable requests for education and training.

School principals encourage students to learn by rewarding students with high academic achievement in several ways. These awards are mainly in the form of verbal thanking. Furthermore, financial rewards such as money or gold can also be given. In this context, it can be said that students are rewarded for their success.

It is understood that school principals support the studies on teachers' professional development and help them when necessary. Teachers are sent to in-service training. Moreover, the appropriate time is specially allocated for those who want to improve themselves. There are also school principals who organize direct education programs in their schools. However, their number is limited. When these findings are examined as a whole, it can be said that teachers are supported by many principals for professional development.

In the study, the following results were unexpectedly reached in the interviews. Two questions asked are important in terms of revealing the obstacles to instructional leadership and showing how school principals attach importance to what kinds of administrative activities. The first one of these is "What are your priorities as a school principal," and the second question is "What you would not want to do as a school principal." The answers to these questions provide some clues regarding the obstacles to instructional leadership and its priorities. These clues are as follows: (i) Some obstacles to school principals' instructional leadership behaviors are the excess of official business and operations that need to be done in schools, their attempt to provide financial resources for the functioning of the works in the school, and constant assignment of new duties on existing duties. It is understood that school principals have difficulty in dealing with all of these issues and try to solve such problems except for education and training during most of their time. Therefore, it can be stated that these problems are important obstacles to the efforts of school principals to improve learning in the school. (ii) On the other hand, school principals state that their priority for the quality of instruction in the school is to create a peaceful environment. In this regard, it is observed that they give priority to the activities for improving the physical conditions of the school, meeting the needs of teachers and improving the working conditions. In the study carried out, the efforts made by school principals are compatible with the literature. According to Sebastian and Allensworth (2012), instructional leadership creates the most important effect by providing a positive learning climate in the school. Accordingly, the positive learning climate has a strong effect on classroom management, student behaviors, high academic expectations and student achievement (Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2010).

In centralized systems, regulations in the education system are made by the Ministry of Education, and all education units in the country are obliged to comply with it. The applications are performed under the supervision of the state (Alsaleh, 2018; Balcı, 2000; Erol, 1995; Korkmaz, 2005; Özdemir, 2009; Şişman, 2012; Yılmaz & Altınkurt, 2011). When the results of the study are examined, it is observed that school principals are largely affected by this situation. Indeed, it can be stated that school principals implement the behaviors related to instructional leadership proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) on a limited scale. This is also found in the studies in the literature. School principals give priority to bureaucratic affairs instead of allocating time to instructional leadership and do not perform instructional leadership for teachers when the need arises (e.g., Gümüş & Akçaoğlu, 2013; Yıldırım, 2003). On the other hand, it is observed that school principals need to improve their instructional leadership behaviors to create an effective school. In this context, it may be suggested to carry out studies to spread the common aims of the school to the whole school community. Furthermore, school principals can be encouraged to take further initiatives on the organization and development of educational programs. Moreover, it can be ensured that teachers are organized as professional learning communities so that professional development can also be carried out effectively in schools.

In the interviews, school principals gave the impression that they had an instructional leader profile. However, when the interviews in the study are examined as a whole, it is observed that school principals try to create a positive learning climate in the dimensions of instructional leadership during most of their time. In this context, it is observed that they allocate more time to the activities aimed at preparing a peaceful environment in which teachers and students can work and which will increase the quality of instruction compared to other works in the school. School principals state that the improvement of physical conditions in the school, the completion of course materials, solving teachers' problems, and creating a supportive school culture constitute the basis of this peace. According to May and Spovitz (2011), school principals' instructional leadership are perceived more highly by the teachers they have guided particularly. Indeed, Blase and Blase (1999) state that problems are solved more easily when the teacher is not restricted and the right to speak is given. In this respect, it can be interpreted that more time is allocated to create a positive learning climate in the school compared to other instructional leadership characteristics.

Necessary measures should be taken so that school principals can focus on the studies aimed at improving student learning in schools. School principals should be prevented from providing financial resources, trying to improve the physical conditions of the school or doing works that may lead to role conflict. In this context, administrative level in schools can be restructured. It is also possible to attempt to provide instructional leadership standards for newly appointed principals. Training programs can be organized for those who are not competent in this field.

This study reveals school principals' perceptions of their own regarding the subject. School principals state that they exhibit many behaviors related to instructional leadership. Therefore, a multiple view on school principals' level of performing instructional leadership can be provided by carrying out similar studies together with teachers, students, and parents. Whether school principals exhibit instructional leadership behaviors efficiently can be explained with the opinions of other stakeholders.

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