



## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' OPINIONS REGARDING ADMINISTERING THE SCHOOL

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### **Abstract:**

The school administrator is the person who is in charge or administration of the school. Revealing school administrators' opinions regarding administering the school is significant since it makes it possible for us to understand how they administer the school. The purpose of this study was to reveal the opinions of school administrators working in Tokat province regarding administering the school. A qualitative design was used. Within this scope, 21 school administrators were directed seven open-ended questions, and the responses were analyzed. Most participants expressed that the administrators should make effort to create an organizational culture, and they had a vital role in this culture. It was observed that the participants weren't satisfied with the authority they had, and found it insufficient. They pinpointed the strict hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the educational system as the reason of insufficient authority. The interviewees didn't take much initiative while using their authority. Instead, they used little initiative under the circumstances in which they believed that it wouldn't harm them with a protective drive. Almost all of the interviewees expressed that they were under a tight control by the state and using authority would bounce back to them as a punishment. Although the participants stated that they used shared decision-making through meetings, it was inferred during the interviews that these meetings were conducted for the sake of formality and the decisions were made by only the administrators. The majority of participants implied that spending time with the personnel, creating social environment, and valuing their ideas and opinions were sufficient to ensure their job satisfaction. All of the participants indicated that they pursued their professional development through in-service training, seminars, and books about administration.

**Keywords:** school, school administrator, school management

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## 1. Introduction

Quality administration of school is quite important for education process since administration is a significant process that has an effect on instruction, job satisfaction, school culture, and organizational structure. Creating and using the administration process in a more quality way will have a positive effect on this situation. Therefore, any effort made by school administrators to create a quality administration will not only increase the quality of education and instruction, but determine the school culture, job satisfaction of the personnel, and organization structure as well.

The school can be described as the physical constructs where the students at a specific age group are equipped with the behaviors desired by educational professionals within the framework of a curriculum. Like any organization, the schools require the personnel at a certain quantity and quality to reach the goals expected from them (Yolcu and Bayram, 2015). However, as a public administration area, education is administered in a centralized manner. The central administration decides both quality and quantity. Central administration is defined as an administration understanding in which the power or force of decision-making is centralized (Tural, 2002). In central administration, the authority required to provide services is used by the administration in state center, and all of the decisions are made on behalf of state legal personality. Education, especially the schools, was affected to a large extent by the centralization and bureaucratization of public administration in Turkey. Today, the school organization is a structure in which all inputs and rules are transmitted to it from the center. In Turkey's educational system, schools dependency to the center and insufficiency of authorities prevent schools from developing their own corporate identity and improving (Aytaç, 2017).

One of important and indispensable institutions of modern societies, the organizations are essential not only for social life but also for the human life. The survival and maintenance of organizations by reaching their goals have become difficult especially in the face of rapid economic, social, and technological changes and developments. Organization administrators have the biggest duty and responsibility during this period. That increases the importance of administrators (Argon and Zafer, 2009). It has become an obligation rather than a responsibility for schools to change and develop in order to reach their goals and adapt into the current conditions (Balcı, 2001). Being the organizations which raise the future society and individual, schools should be the institutions which adapt the developments most rapidly (Cerit, 2008). Only fulfilling the defined roles might mean for school administrators failing to keep pace with this rapid transformation in a sense (Akin, 2014). School administrators are required to consider the ethical rules as well as the law while keeping pace with the rapid transformation. They are expected to act according to occupational ethics in addition to current law and policies while fulfilling their duties (Taymaz, 2007). Organizational ethics can be described as the body of principles which is adopted by the organization to public. Administrative ethics influence the administration style based on ethical principles (Teyfur, Beytekin and Yalçınkaya, 2013).

It is important for school administrators to develop plans for effective use of necessary physical and human resources required for schools to reach their goals (Arslan and Küçüker, 2016). A good planning enables schools to function well. Well-functioning of schools is directly associated with their effective administration (Cerit, 2008). Administrators' competency areas were determined so that the schools could be administered effectively. These competency areas were: the use, protection, and maintenance of schools' building, facilities, and inventory; overcoming the problems related to authority and responsibility; management of school personnel; leadership behaviors; creation of a positive environment at school; providing auxiliary services; school-environment relations; and ensuring discipline and participation (Bursalıoğlu, 1981). In literature, the administrator competency areas were classified under three categories, which were technical, humanistic, and decision-making (Başar, 2000).

School administrators' competencies were listed as: having a vision that understands the necessary steps required to be taken to reach goals; making a significant difference in students' and personnel's lives; knowing how to assess the personnel; being aware of the fact that change is continuous and the school leader should have a flexible vision; being aware of strong and weak aspects of his/her tendencies; knowing how to facilitate and manage big and small group meetings; being self-confident about his/her job; knowing how to assess job responsibility regarding various roles; knowing how to motivate individuals related to the school for participation; and balancing between the moral values of the school's region and occupational ethical values (Dönmez, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to reveal the opinions of school administrators working in Tokat province regarding administering the school.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1 Research Model**

This research was designed and conducted by using qualitative design. Qualitative research can be described as a research where data collection techniques such as observation, interview, and document analysis are used, and a process which reveals perceptions and events realistically and holistically in a natural environment is followed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). One of the frequently used interview designs in qualitative studies, "maximum variation" was used in this study. To achieve this, the participants were selected among those working at different school, and the interviews were ended when the responses become similar.

### **2.2 Participants**

The participants involved 21 school administrators working in Tokat province during 2015-2016 academic year. Tokat province was chosen since it brought some advantages for the research such as velocity, easiness in data collection, and lower costs. All of the school administrators in this study were male.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tool

Each school administrator was directed seven open-ended questions to determine their opinions regarding their efforts to create a quality administration. A survey form involving these questions was created. This form was asked to be filled by participants and sent back through e-mail. As it is in interviews, the participants are asked to respond the questions. However, these responses were given in written instead of verbal (Creswell, 2015).

Four experts (two from Curriculum and Instruction department and two from Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning, and Economics department) were asked to evaluate the interview form in terms of content validity. The items were finalized based on their opinions. Additionally, a pilot interview was conducted with an academic before the form was distributed. No problem regarding the comprehensibility of the items was detected during this interview. The participants were asked to fill in the forms at the most appropriate time and place after the necessary explanation were made.

### 2.4 Data Collection

In order to reveal school administrators' opinions regarding their efforts to create a quality administration, the data were collected using a qualitative interview form. The participants involved in the study on a voluntary basis, and they were assured that their personal information would remain confidential. It took a participant to fill in the form about 25 minutes.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis technique was used to analyze the records of interviews with 21 school administrators. Direct quotations were used during reporting the findings, which aimed at increasing the reliability. The participants were coded as Y1, Y2,....

## 3. Findings

The themes emerged during the analysis and the codes used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews with school administrators are presented below:

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Order	Theme	Codes
1	Exercising Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The dimensions of exercising authority and exercising authority in general</li><li>• Taking initiative while exercising authority</li><li>• Reasons of not exercising authority</li></ul>
2	Decision-Making	
3	Creating Organizational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administrators' efforts to create organizational culture</li><li>• Administrators' efforts to ensure job satisfaction for all personnel and a sense of belonging to the organization</li></ul>

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4	Which ways are used by administrators for professional development?	
5	Administration and Ensuring Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administrators' efforts to ensure motivation</li></ul>

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### 3.1 Exercising Authority

#### 3.1.1 The Dimensions of Exercising Authority and Exercising Authority in General

All of the participants expressed their opinions regarding the dimensions of exercising authority and exercising authority in general. Some of these opinions are presented below:

Y1: *"The control and management of materials and equipment in all places of the school, distribution of work among the school personnel, all data that could contribute to education and instruction of students, teacher relations, school authority and order..."*

Y2: *"Course schedule of all classes, ensuring school order and cleaning, conducting social and cultural activities..."*

Y3: *"Providing teachers with a warm and sincere school where they can work willingly, protecting teachers from external threats and attacks, administering and handling school, purchasing goods and services, working with the preferred paid teacher."*

Y5: *"Setting and distributing the budget, distribution of work among personnel, planning education and instruction, planning maintenance and repairs, Secondary School Regulation Article 78..."*

Y7: *"We carry the authorities provisioned in article 657 of public servants law and Ministry of National Education regulations. However, it requires responsibility rather than authority."*

Y8: *"I am the spending authority. We are authorized to conduct, regulate, and inspect all aspects of school in accordance with laws, regulations, codes, and orders."*

Y10: *"What authority, we are working under the chain of command hierarchically. We are the slaves of our superiors. The state never trusts any of its employees and administrators."*

Y12: *"Implementing the laws, regulations, and codes about operation of school. Carrying out education and instruction process. Preparing educational setting."*

Y15: *"We ensure the control and management of materials and equipment in all places of the school."*

Y18: *"Planning and conducting educational and instructional tasks of school, leading teachers, demanding punishment for personnel who neglect their duty, etc...."*

Y21: *"I have the authority required to ensure the well-functioning of the school based on provisions of regulations and codes. We are much like handlers rather than school administrators."*

As can be understood from the opinions above, the interviewees expressed that they had the authority to the extent that was provisioned by regulations and codes. All of the participants indicated that they weren't satisfied with the authority they had and found it insufficient. Some of them stated that the authority they had weren't actually the authority, their superior just used them, and they handled the situation.

### **3.1.2 Taking initiative while exercising authority**

The participants explained their opinions regarding taking initiative while exercising their authority as below:

Y2: *"I use initiative on sudden situations. For other works, I consult with the others..."*

Y4: *"For economic works, we create our own budget since the state doesn't provide it; therefore, we take initiative while spending that budget ..."*

Y7: *"I can take initiative on issues that won't violate the unity and territorial integrity of the state according to laws and regulations..."*

Y8: *"We take initiatives on distributing the courses, opening exercise or course at school, and planning meetings ..."*

Y9: *"We aren't able to take initiative."*

Y10: *"Only the state leaders or heroes take initiatives. Taking initiative means facing the opposition of the school culture."*

Y11: *"The regulations revoke our right to take initiative. Taking initiative means investigation. That's why there is no initiative."*

Y13: *"Taking initiative depends on your superior's confidence in you. I don't take initiative on financial issues, but I use it on student-related works."*

Y18: *"I take initiative to protect the teacher and myself and overcome the equipment and facility deficiencies of school."*

Y20: *"I request you not to evaluate this item since we could become guilty if we write*

*down the initiatives taken by school administrators despite everything."*

Participants didn't take much initiative while exercising their authority. Instead, they used little initiative under the circumstances in which they believed that it wouldn't harm them with a protective drive.

### **3.1.3 Reasons of not exercising authority**

All of the participants expressed their opinions regarding the reasons of not exercising their authority. Some of these opinions are presented below:

*Y7: "We carry the authorities provisioned in article 657 of public servants law and Ministry of National Education regulations. However, it requires responsibility rather than authority."*

*Y10: "What authority, we are working under the chain of command hierarchically. We are the slaves of our superiors. The state never trusts any of its employees and administrators."*

*Y21: "I have the authority required to ensure the well-functioning of the school based on provisions of regulations and codes. We are much like handlers rather than school administrators."*

Almost all of the participants stated that they were under a strict supervision by the state through laws and regulations, and using authority would return to them as punishments.

### **3.2 Decision-Making**

All of the participants expressed their opinions regarding decision-making. Some of these opinions are presented below:

*Y1: "Administration is an art. Every administrator cannot be successful just like every artist isn't successful. I think the reason behind this situation is the desire to act as a one man. An institution can stand on three legs. These are principal, teacher, and parents. The more solid these legs are, the more successful the school becomes."*

*Y2: "Our decisions are joint without doubt. Even the students' decisions are effective on the activities in school."*

*Y3: "It can depend on the situation. Issues related to teachers are consulted to teachers. However, the decisions about the representation of school somewhere are taken by ourselves."*

Y4: *"The decisions are made based on the atmosphere. The frame is known. It doesn't go beyond it."*

Y5: *"I gather a meeting with administrators on a weekly or ten days basis and with the teachers monthly, and involve them in the decision-making process. Through the Parents' meeting, I involve their opinions as well."*

Y8: *"I generally take decisions with teachers and employees, but I mostly have the final word since I own the responsibility."*

Y10: *"No one wants to join decision-making or all their decisions are towards their own benefits."*

Y11: *"We make decisions with all of the stakeholders and implement them."*

Y13: *"I give orders based on the joint decisions as much as I can. I always speak about democratic decision-making and integrity of administration. However, I make decisions on security and finance on my own."*

Y17: *".... We make decisions with reference to all stakeholders' opinions."*

Y20: *"We discuss about the decisions, but we have the final word according to laws."*

Almost all of the participants expressed that they made decisions with participation of teachers and parents. Some participants stated that although they discussed with other stakeholders, they made the decisions themselves. Although the administrators stated that they made joint decisions, it was inferred during the interviews that these meetings were conducted for the sake of formality and the decisions were made by only the administrators.

### **3.3 Creating Organizational Culture**

#### **3.3.1 Administrators' Efforts to Create Organizational Culture**

School administrators expressed their opinions regarding creating organizational culture. Some of these opinions are presented below:

Y3: *"School administrator's implementation of sincerity and seriousness is about his/her administrative style. He/she balance well when to become sincere and serious. The quality of the work depends on the communicative skill of the administrator."*

Y4: *"The administrator certainly has an effect on organizational culture. However, a negative person spoils the whole culture, and team spirit doesn't emerge."*



Y5: *"I take precautions so that the school climate could be more livable. I ignore racial, linguistic, religious or other personal differences, and view all employees as equals. I advise employees (including officials and janitors) to believe that their work is important."*

Y6: *"Common responsibility and commitment should be incorporated to create and implement school culture."*

Y8: *"We make our decisions and work together since our school is small and has few personnel. We frequently get together with our personnel and listen to their problems."*

Y10: *"Administrators don't have a big role in creation of the school culture. No matter how active they are, there is a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure at schools."*

Y12: *"School administrator is the most important factor to create unity in school. He/she is the person who brings the employees together and unites them."*

Y14: *"Making employees feel that the administrator values them and doing things to increase the harmony; moreover, realizing the problems beforehand when they are small and take precautions are very important for organizational culture and communication."*

Y15 *"School administrator should do nothing without taking his/her personnel's opinions and sharing the information, which means that if the results are successful, it becomes we achieved, and if the results are unsuccessful, it becomes we made mistake together, and we should correct it together. The person taking responsibility does everything to fulfil that duty."*

Y16: *"...school administrator plays the most important role. Their weakest point is that they aren't able to elude from their classical understanding and the logic of I have the final word. Creating an organizational culture depends on being a good communicator."*

Y21: *"We carry out activities for communication and we act together..."*

As can be understood from the examples above, most participants expressed that the administrators should make effort to create an organizational culture and they were the key persons.

It was observed that the participants preferred the least problematic and easiest ways (dining together, spending time with them, etc.). It was also inferred that these activities were mainly carried out hierarchically and formally as a duty. Therefore, it can be stated that administrators didn't internalized the creation of organizational culture.

### **3.3.2 Administrators' Efforts to Ensure Job Satisfaction for all Personnel and a Sense of Belonging to the Organization**

Participants expressed their opinions regarding their efforts to ensure job satisfaction for all personnel and a sense of belonging to the organization. Some of these opinions are presented below:

Y2: *"I make them feel that they are the pieces of this school. I show them that I am open to new ideas. I encourage and reward the pleasant examples."*

Y3: *"I especially provide them with settings where they work comfortably. I don't interfere with their works much. However, I sometimes warn them, which means supervised freedom."*

Y5: *"It is difficult to have one hundred percent job satisfaction. However, I consider the employees preferences when distributing the works with the notion of let the humanity live, then state will also do. I place employee's personal, social, and financial rights before my own rights."*

Y6: *"Distributing duties and responsibilities to everyone, valuing everyone..."*

Y8: *"Employees are a part of the school. I have breakfast and drink tea with them and listen their problems. I tell that I'm here when there is something I can do."*

Y10: *"I respect for what they do. I talk about their positive sides. I tell them their negative sides through generalizations. I try to behave based on my principles. I try to spend time together. I try to create unique environments so that they could spend more time at school."*

Y11: *"I value employees. I make them feel their value through my words and actions. I take their opinions whenever possible."*

Y13: *"by joining every small group conversation I see, creating our social media group, sometimes sharing funny things to make them laugh in addition to work-related issues, organizing dinner parties."*

Y14: *"We carry out activities together. I try to intervene especially the resentments as soon as possible."*

Y15: *"I announce every work from the smallest achievement to the biggest to the whole school and parents. I buy small gifts to the personnel on their special days. I try to include everyone to picnics and family dinners."*

Y17: *"I prefer to be cheerful. I try to deal with their problems. I value their opinions."*

Y18: *"I frequently go to the teachers' room. I praise them. I talk about we are a team."*

Y19: *"Valuing their opinions, adopting their ideas..."*

The majority of participants expressed that spending time with employees, creating social environments, and valuing their opinions and ideas were enough to ensure their job satisfaction. They didn't consider any other efforts except for the aforementioned aspects. It can be stated that the activities and efforts that are made by them to ensure the employees' job satisfaction are either what they learnt from old administrators or the repetitions of behaviors they experienced with their administrators.

### **3.4 Which Ways are used by Administrators for Professional Development?**

Administrators expressed various opinions regarding their ways used for professional development. Some of these opinions are presented below:

Y2: *"In-service trainings, educational books ..."*

Y3: *"In-service training, learning by doing (trial and error), other administrators' experiences, and receiving education in the field of educational administration."*

Y4: *"Studying for master's degree, trying to read books related to the field."*

Y5: *"I participate in in-service trainings. I read articles about my field and administration. I have a master's degree in educational administration. I go to other schools to observe different practices. I visit schools abroad to see different practices via projects."*

Y6: *"In-service training, distance education..."*

Y7: *"Book, seminar, internet, sharing with others in the same field ..."*

Y8: *"I'm studying for master's degree. I read books about administrations. I participate in seminars and go to in-service trainings."*

Y9: *"Through meetings, stakeholders, in-service trainings."*

Y10: *"I have a master's degree in educational administration. I'm studying for a master's degree in philosophy. I read a lot of critics. I follow academic writings. I follow the briefings from the ministry."*

Y11: *"In-service trainings and we share information through administrative sharing and meetings."*

Y15: *"By joining seminars and conferences. By joining in-service trainings."*

Y18: *"Reading any kind of writing about administration science, studying for a master's degree in the field, searching for good practices, evaluate my previous practices."*

Y21: *"We organize plenty of seminars, meetings, and in-service trainings. We participate them."*

All of the participants expressed that they ensured their professional development through in-service trainings, seminars, and books about administration. More than half of the participants stated that they were enrolled to a master's program. It should be noted here that they were enrolled to Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning, and Economics program of Gaziosmanpaşa University, and this program prefers administrators over other participants.

### **3.5 Administration and Ensuring Motivation**

#### **3.5.1 Administrators' efforts to ensure motivation**

The administrators expressed their opinions regarding ensuring motivation using the statements below:

Y2: *"I'm performing a holy duty. I can't be daunted because the responsibility of my institution is on my shoulders."*

Y3: *"The pleasant words and behaviors of teachers are my motivation sources. Rewards and congratulations are the verbal motivation."*

Y4: *"By realizing that any problem is about the institution not me and considering that it is natural to have problems without forgetting my main goal..."*

Y6: *"Resolution, determination, and support of advocates (employees) ..."*

Y7: *"Our students are our future. I have no right to impair the future. Proceeding the duty as always."*

Y8: *"I try to motivate myself. I say every job has its own difficulties. I try to think with an open mind. I try to empathize."*

Y9: *"We become happy when the problems are solved. The motivation is provided from the colleagues."*

Y11: *"I forget the adversity when I see that something I did creates happiness. Positive things overshadow the negativity."*

Y12: *"The happiness after an achievement makes me motivated."*

Y13: *"By trying to seem cheerful, approaching the personnel with humor, and sometimes staying away from the school for a short time."*

Y14: *"We like our jobs and institution. Our religious thoughts motivate us."*

Y17: *"By carrying out informal meetings and sportive-cultural activities, by spending time with my family and friends."*

Y20: *"My philosophy of life and beliefs are motivation sources. Social culture, administration type, system, and bureaucracy violate my motivation."*

As can be understood from administrators' opinions, the majority of participants expressed that they benefited from social activities, their own thoughts, accomplishments, spending time with family, etc. to ensure their motivation. The viewed themselves as the source of their motivation.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

In this study, it was found that the school administrators weren't satisfied with their authority and found them inadequate. They pinpointed the strict hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the education system as the reason of the inadequacy of their authority. It was observed that school administrators avoided taking initiative while exercising their authority. It can be stated that they took little initiative in situations which they thought no harm would affect them. The reason behind school administrators' tendency not to take initiative seemed to be sourced from the worry that their superior could punish them for taking initiative. It was observed that the state restrained the school administrators by laws and regulations, the administrators felt anxious even while using their legal authority, and their fear of punishment prevented them from using their authority easily. The literature explains the school administrators' competencies as "commitment to provide an open vision for an effective institution and securing it", "directing and coordinating others' works", "transferring of his/her responsibilities, deputation of duties, monitor whether they are implemented", "setting standards and serving as a role model for students and teachers", "using the findings of supervision and research effectively", and "realizing challenging professional goals" (Çetin and Adıgüzel, 2006). Although the school administrators have to use these competencies effectively, it can be stated that their worry of punishment even while using their legal authority prevents them from using these competencies which are the foundations of administration theories.

In this study, it was inferred that the school administrators didn't internalize creating an organizational culture. Creating a school culture depends on how the administrators perceive the concepts of employee and work (Taşkıran and Kiraz, 2016).

Another finding was that although the administrators organized meetings to make decisions, these meetings were conducted for the sake of formality and the decisions were made by only the administrators. However, as Sezer (2016) indicated, "the laws and regulations are the prior factors that have an effect on administrators' decision-making process. Other factors that affect school administrators' decision-making process are the opinions of teachers and assistant principals, and educational goals of the school"; therefore, it is necessary for school administrators to involve the opinions and recommendations of teachers and other administrators in their decision-making process.

It was found in this study that school administrators paid importance to employees' job satisfaction but didn't make remarkable efforts to ensure their job satisfaction. Moreover, it was observed that they fulfill their own job satisfaction through their own small accomplishments. As a result of two studies conducted by Özmen (2002) and Abat (2010), one of the most fundamental competencies and characteristics that school administrators should have were "motivating employees to keep the spirit high in organization" and "motivating school members". Considering the importance of motivation in terms of job satisfaction, it can be expressed that the school administrators should find ways to motivate their employees and should make effort on it.

Another finding of this study was that school administrators didn't make personal efforts for their personal development but participated in professional development activities which were conducted by Ministry of National Education and provincial directorates and were compulsory. In other words, when the participation is compulsory, the school administrators make effort for professional development. It can be stated that professional development is important for administrators to implement an effective administration. The literature indicates that the administrators should have an adequate competency of concepts and theories related to the administration; however, although they know about the theories, they don't reflect them on practice (Karakuş and Töremen, 2006). Another study shows that school administrators weren't competent enough in expertise, development, learning, and carrying out strategy-based instructional process in research, and the school administrators should be able to use appropriate administration processes in different situations and adding a professional aspect to others' works (Çetin and Adıgüzel, 2006). Therefore, it can be stated that the school administrators should demand trainings that they are willing to participate and they can internalize, and they should constantly renew their knowledge and administration skills in order to administer the school properly and effectively.

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