An Analysis of Changing Roles of School Administrators in Forming a New School Culture in Learning Organizations

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Abstract: The primary role of the administrator is to develop a new powerful school culture. School culture can be realized by accepting the new common values and philosophical system by teachers and administrators. The purpose of this paper is to analyze and discuss the changing role of the administrators theoretically and practically. The findings of the research showed that the administrators weren’t successful enough in developing a new organizational culture in the light of the teachers’ opinions. This finding emphasizes the necessity of administrator education in accordance with the new scientific and technological improvements in this century.

Key words: Learning organization · organizational culture · change · school administrator

INTRODUCTION

This study is organized into two sections as follows: Section 1 provides some theoretical background information on organizational culture in terms of its past, definitions and on the varying roles of the school administrators. Section 2 presents the research on organizational culture carried out.

Theoretical basis of organizational culture

What is culture?: Anthropologists have been analyzing societal cultures for over than last century. However, studies on organizational culture are relatively new. Interest in organizational culture began at the end of 1970s and at the beginning of 1980s. This interest was firstly observed in Japan [1].

Smireich [2] explains various aspects of the term culture and discusses their significance for organizational analysis. He borrowed the concept of culture from anthropology and the concept of organization from the theory of organization and account for these concepts in organizational symbolism and organization using organization analysis, contrastive method. In organization and management analysis and contrastive method, culture is regarded as a critical variable and as a part of organization. In this framework, researchers deal with the interaction between culture and other variables in the field of the management of organizations. In combined culture, organizational cognition and organizational symbolism, culture is a necessary metaphor for organizations and researchers in this framework use culture as an epistemological contribution to the analysis of organization as a social fact.

According to contrastive management perspective, culture is seen as an independent variable brought to organization. Many such studies consider culture and nations as equivalent factors or variables and attempt to focus on cultural similarities and differences in terms organizational efficiency [3-7].

In combined culture perspective, culture is considered as an internal variable of organization. Therefore, culture is cerated by organization itself. Such studies have shown the ways culture can manage and their modifications based on management values of organization [8, 9].

Cognitive perspective regards culture as a system of codes that is learned to perceive and behave. Culture is in people’s mental states and people share the culture varying degrees.

Semibolic perspective defines culture as not in people’s mental states but as an entity shared through their communication. Therefore, culture is considered as symbolical pattern that requires interpretation and reading [1].

Structural perspective, on the other hand, considers culture as an unconscious expression of people’s mental states. Thus, culture is a product of hidden and universal aspects of people’s mental states and because of that fact

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all culture share some common points that are the interesting topics for researchers [10-12].

Organizational culture: During the 1980s many studies on organizational culture were performed. Most of these studies had a normative emphasize and attempted to focus on how to create organizational efficiency, but some of them concentrated on conflict among different groups in a single organization, values in an organization and organizational meanings [11].

What is organizational culture? Organizational culture refers to a set of values and beliefs in an organization. It is expressed non-verbally and has deep roots. On the other hand, it is a permanent variable [13]. Following two more definitions of organizational culture are somewhat similar and also different. Organizational culture is a basic assumption pattern that teach new members how to perceive, think about and feel the problems [14]. Haefele, Gers and Carter [15] state that the importance of organizational culture should not be underestimated since it affects nearly all aspects of organizations.

Xenikov and Furnham [16] define the factors related to organizational culture. Of these factors, the first one is being open to change or innovation. This factor include such concepts as human-centered orientation, achievement, self-realization, etc.

Organizational culture has three types:

- Task oriented organizational culture includes being the best, innovation, considering details, focusing on the quality, focusing on profit and shared philosophy.
- Bureaucratic organizational culture includes the concepts of accepting, avoidance, lack of personal freedom. Authors define such an organizational culture as a process of formal and centralized decision making.
- Competitive organizational culture refers to power, competition and perfectionism [17].

Changing roles of the school administrators: This study also deals with the roles of the school administrators in forming an organizational culture. Certainly the structure and functions of school organizations have been changing as a result of changes in society. This requires school administrators to adopt new roles. One of such roles is the leadership of school administrators.

In learning organizations, the role of administrators is different from that of traditional organizations in which the roles of administrators are to make decisions and to perform control mechanisms [18]. In its contemporary sense, leaders are responsible for themselves and also for their staff to learn [19].

In learning organizations, leaders control the activities. However, their definition of activity is on the interpretation of recycling of labor. Knowledge asset of organization contributes to, develops and tests the leaders. Leaders, on the other hand, test the ability and analyze the capacity of organization. They also support the attempts to self-learn and reward improvements in ability. In sum, leaders control the expansion and developments in intellectual asset of organization. Leaders have become the protector of life-learning learning and organizational equity [20-22].

In order for a leader to create a learning group, s/he should be ready to initiate a dialogue between vision and actual situation, be curious to learn and be creative. Leaders provide an open environment to try new ideas and are sensitive about learning process, changing attitudes and job process [23].

Leaders in learning organizations perform three significant functions: a) leader as a designer: S/he tries to design the whole organization and tries to consolidate the basic values, vision and mission of organization. b) Leader as a teacher: S/he makes possible for the staff to develop a systematic comprehension. c) Leader as a supporter: S/he helps staff to form relationships between people, organizations and actions. Having understood the systematical relationships, the staff feels responsible for their learning, leading to better decision-making process [21].

Studies have shown that there are differences between successful and unsuccessful schools in terms of their organizational cultures. Formation of organizational culture is mostly affected from the leadership style of school administrators. In turn organizational culture determines the achievement, the processes of decision making, planning, communication, coordination and control of an organization. Therefore, organizational culture that is closely related with productivity, leadership, socialization, atmosphere, conflict and job satisfaction has become a focus in organizational structure and organizational conduct [24]. Studies on organization culture of Turkish schools also emphasize the significance of organizational culture. For instance, Balci [25] states that one of the most significant aspects of effective schools is their organizational culture.
Similarly Erçetin [26] argues that both social and organizational culture influence the choice and frequency of teachers’ use of their power.

Management and change of school culture: Organizations are institutions that produce culture. Each organization have to form, maintain and if necessary, alter its own culture. Organizational culture is not a set of written rules that are impossible to understand and made up of symbols. Instead, organizational culture has the feature of being planned, coordinated, controlled and modifiable. In other words, organizational culture can be managed.

Formation and preservation of school culture: School principle is responsible for the administration of school. A school administrator who is aware of the significance of the power and managerial processes of school culture may exhibit more successful act of culture management [27].

After school administrator identifies the strategic school culture, it must be accepted by the school personnel. In order to achieve it, cultural values of school must be consistent not only with the values of local environment but also with those of universal, national and larger society [24].

Symbolical management has a significant role in the management of school culture. Symbolical management can be defined as the formation of symbolical conduct around organizational values, norms and beliefs. It helps the administrators in their attempt to form a strong organizational culture [28].

Attention must be paid to the following points in forming the school culture [29]:

- Pupils’ achievement and the performance of school are two priority, therefore, development of students should be emphasized.
- All elements that form a school should have equal involvement.
- Immediate solutions should be avoided since long-term improvements are the targets.
- Knowledge and data are better than intuitions and guess. Therefore, the current state of the school should be investigated and solutions should be developed.
- Solutions should be mutually agreed upon.
- Instead of forming totally new organization, improvements developments in the current organization should be aimed.
- Quality school culture is not a finance-intensive process but a person-intensive process. In-service training activities should be student-centered and used to improve the achievement of the school.
- Promises expressed in the meetings should be realized. Only in this way a strong school culture can be established.

Changing in school culture: Changes in school culture appear in three phases. In the first phase, the insufficiency of traditional values and thinking should be adopted. In the second phase, teachers who adopted new values should be modified to accommodate these new values. In the final phase, change should be conventional and distributed [28].

The role of school administrator is very important in changing the school culture. The following points should be kept in mind in order to achieve the change of school culture [24].

- Reorganization: facilitating the organizational consolidation, forming new parts and tasks, assigning responsibility for new activities.
- Development of organization: Identifying the need for change and to develop managerial tasks to increase organizational efficiency.
- Communication: Providing an open communication channel to achieve a successful program.
- Training: Providing new attitudes on interpersonal relationships, increasing quality and productivity, acquiring new knowledge and skills.
- Management of performance: Identifying the achievement levels of teachers in realizing the aims of the school, improving the performance, determining the strong and weak aspects of schools in terms of guidance and training.
- Management of rewarding: Development of principles in regard to rewarding to improve achievement.

A strong school culture is one of the major indicators of educational institutions that have human emphasis. School administrators who are aware of the significance of school culture can manage the organizational acts. Therefore, this study tries to investigate the roles played by the school administrators in changing the school culture.
METHOD

The aims, sample, data collection techniques, data analysis and discussion of findings of the study are given below.

The aims of the study: The aims of the study are to analyze the changing roles of school administrators in term of approaching to the learning schools based on the views of teachers, administrators and inspectors and to provide some suggestions.

Research questions
This study attempts to respond the following research questions:

- What are the views of teachers, administrators and inspectors on the activities of school administrators to realize the changes in organizations?
- Are the views of different parties interrelated?
- What are the difficulties and limitations on this issue?

Method of the study: This study is a descriptive and survey-based research.

Sample of the study: The sample of the study includes teachers (n=50), school administrators (n=50) and inspectors (n=14) working in Bolu and Duzce. The sample was developed randomly.

Data collection: In order to collect the data, a survey questionnaire developed by the author was employed. The data collection tool includes three sections. The first section deals with the demographical information about the subjects. 20-item second section asks the subjects to express their views on necessary approaches (reorganization, development of organization, communication, training, management of performance and management of rewards) to be followed to realize cultural change. Section three includes open-ended questions on difficulties or limitation in cultural change in schools.

The following items on the change in school culture are asked to be responded using a five-point scale (totally agree, mostly agree, partly agree, less agree, disagree).

1. The need for change is felt for the school.
2. The change level around our school is increasing.
3. We must train more quality students after the education.
4. Related laws and regulations have been changing.
5. Current values in work force have been changing.
6. Productivity and quality have been decreasing.
7. Views and attitudes of school administrators have been changing.
8. New parts and tasks have been developing in the school.
9. Responsibilities are assigned for the new activities.
10. The need for change is always analyzed.
11. Administrators modify their tasks according to emerging needs.
12. Values are effectively sharing.
13. New attitudes are being acquired in response to the needs.
14. Quality and productivity have been increasing.
15. Attachment to the values is established. New knowledge and skills are being acquired.
16. Achievement levels of the personnel have been identified.
17. Weak and strong aspects of the school in regard to guidance, performance improvement and training have been determined.
18. Expectations on rewards that increase achievement have been formulated.
19. Changing the school culture in response to the needs and advances will have a significant role in achieving the aims of the school.
20. What are the difficulties experienced during the change of school culture? How did you solve them? Please list them.

In regard to the content validity of the survey questionnaire, views of field specialists were gathered. The reliability of the tool, on the other hand, is found to be \( \alpha = 0.8402 \).

Data analysis: The data gathered were analyzed through SPSS for Windows. The t-test, ANOVA and Scheffer techniques are followed for statistical analyses of the data.

Analysis of the findings: Demographical findings show that 41.3% of the sample has a teaching experience of more than twenty-one years and 21.7% has a teaching experience of six-ten years (Table 1). In terms of educational background, the majority of the subjects are the graduates of the Faculty of Education (41.4%). 22.3%
of them has a 2+2 graduate education (Table 2), 69.1 % of the sample is male while 30.9 % is female (Table 3).

There is a difference between the views of administrators and those of teachers in terms of the necessary approach to be followed to realize the change in school culture ($p= 0.42$) but it is not statistically significant (Table 4). Administrators and inspectors have similar views on this issue. As seen in Table 5 and in Table 6, all subjects have similar views on the role of school administrators in changing the culture of schools. ($p= 0.605$).

**DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The finding that teachers and school administrators have different views is consistent with that of Şafman’s [30] study. Şahin [31] also points out a difference between teachers and school administrators in terms of their perceptions and expectations.

Teachers in the study stated that fair rewarding is rarely seen. This finding is in parallel to those of Şafman [30], Çelik [24] and Tombul [32]. These studies also argue that there is no common fair rewarding or there is insufficient rewarding in the schools.

Ibicioglu [33] attempted to identify the cultural leadership acts of school administrators working in either private institutions or public ones. Teachers sampled in the study regard cultural leadership of the school administrators as inefficient.

Poyraz [34] dealt with the instructional leadership of the school principals at the basic education level. In this study, it is found that school principals think that they mostly realize instructional leadership but teachers think that school principals rarely perform this leadership.

The findings of this study similar to those of related previous studies show that school administrators cannot realize their roles in changing the school culture. This fact can be interpreted as follows:

Turkey is a developing country and the quality of education should be improved in addition to improvements in other fields. Quality schools should have firstly strong school cultures.
Organizational culture that is formed by management and personnel is one of the defining characteristics of quality schools. However there are serious problems related to organizational culture such as unfair rewarding system, unfair assignment of tasks, lack of necessary environment for professional improvement, lack of democratic and participative decision-making processes, lack of vision for the future of the school, lack of cooperative work [35].

Since Turkish educational system has a centralized and hierarchical approach to management of educational activities, schools are managed in accordance with the laws and regulations formulated by the centralized bodies. School administrators who can well interpret these may employ them to form a mechanism for the improvement of the schools. However such an approach requires to have necessary understanding, knowledge and courage. Instead, schools experience very serious problems such as strict bureaucratic rules, less involvement of parents, uninterested school principals, adopting traditional methods and techniques in delivering of the courses. These general problems experienced by the schools are similar to those that are stated by the subjects while they are expressing the difficulties in the process of changing the school culture. In order for school administrators to handle and solve these problems, they must have vision and knowledge, skills and also, attitudes. However, Turkish school principles mostly deal with formal and everyday tasks.

Suggestions:

- Both school administrators and teachers should be trained regularly on contemporary management concepts and approaches through in-service training activities.
- All the people that have a relationship with the school must be trained in regard to the maintenance and modification of school culture. Necessary financial resources should be allocated.
- Teachers and school administrators should be encouraged to hold master and doctorate studies. Such support should be given by legal and managerial bodies.
- Sample practices should be developed in regard to the establishment, maintenance and modification of school culture.

REFERENCES

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