Review / Derleme

Mentoring in the professional development of school principals: Panorama of Türkiye

Okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişimlerinde mentorluk: Türkiye panoraması

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ABSTRACT

The professional development of school principals is one factor that plays a role in their success. As a matter of fact, scholars have focused on the professional development sources of school principals in recent years. Previous research has addressed the effects of pre-service or in-service training on school principals' careers. However, the Ministry of National Education and scholars has neglected the holistic view of mentoring practice's effects on the professionalization of Turkish principals. The main purpose of the current study is to examine the mentoring approach in the professional development of novice principals. This study, which is a review, has analyzed the panorama in the world and Türkiye. The results show that mentoring is used in many countries; however, it is not officially implemented in Türkiye, and mentoring provides meaningful contributions to novice principals. Moreover, similar contributions are valid to mentor principals, teachers, students, and educational authorities. Based on the results, implementation suggestions were made to the authorities, and study recommendations were made for the researchers.

ÖZ

Okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişimi onların başarıları üzerinde rol oynayan etmenlerden biridir. Nitekim araştırmacılar son yıllarda okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişim kaynaklarına odaklanmış durumdadır. Önceki araştırmalar hizmet öncesi ya da hizmet içi eğitimlerin okul müdürlerinin kariyerleri üzerindeki etkilerini ele almaktadır. Ancak mentorluk uygulamasının Türk okul müdürlerinin profesyonelleşmesine etkilerinin bütüncül görünümü Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı ve araştırmacılar tarafından görece ihmal edilmiştir. Mevcut çalışmanın temel amacı yeni müdürlerinin mesleki gelişiminde mentorluk yaklaşımını irdelemektir. Bir derleme çalışması olan bu araştırmada dünyadaki ve Türkiye'deki panorama analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar mentorluktan pek çok ülkede yararlanıldığını; fakat Türkiye'de resmi olarak uygulanılamadığını ve mentorluğun yeni okul müdürlerine anlamlı katkılar sunduğunu göstermektedir.

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Üstelik benzer katkılar mentor müdürler, öğretmenler, öğrenciler ve eğitim otoriteleri için de geçerlidir. Sonuçlara dayalı olarak yetkililere uygulama, araştırmacılara ise çalışma önerileri yapılmıştır.

INTRODUCTION

Schools are among the most critical organizations considering their institutional network and social impact. The effects of different elements are investigated to increase the efficiency of these places, where millions of students from various age groups continue their education. School principals are one of the elements that have been italicized in this sense in recent years (Beycioğlu et al., 2019; Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2020; Özdemir, 2018a). Research shows that school principals are the source of positive outputs, such as the effectiveness of schools (Leithwood et al., 2020; Watted & Barak, 2020) and student achievement (Service et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2020). In some studies (Zepeda, 2014), it is even seen that the school principal is held responsible for the school's success.

The effects of principals on schools have brought their attention to the highest point of all time. The fact that a substantial portion of contemporary educational research has focused on school principals and their effects confirms this (Çetin, 2019; Deniz & Erdener, 2020; Zepeda et al., 2012). It is known that many researchers in different countries examine the pre-service and in-service development of school principals. The results show that the professional development of school principals has reflections on teacher and student performance (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016; Lynch, 2013). For example, in a study, Steinberg, and Yang (2022) found that the professionalization of school principals significantly predicted teacher efficiency and student outcomes. Similarly, Shaked and Schechter (2018) state that student outcomes are not independent of the school principal enactment. Taken as a whole, all this proves that school principals are crucial to their schools and that their attitudes affect stakeholders. This scenario increases expectations from school principals (Daresh, 2004; Markow et al., 2013; Riley, 2020). As a result of this increasing expectation, the professional perspective that prioritizes the competence and skills of school principals is strengthened (Gimber & Kefor, 2018). However, researchers (Chapman, 2005, p. 2; Daresh & Playko, 1990; Hayes, 2020) point out that being a qualified school principal is difficult.

Today, school principals are defined as educators who ensure students' social, emotional, and academic development, support teachers, and permanently improve organizational conditions (Özdemir, 2018b). School principals are now expected to be energetic, dedicated individuals with new skills (McEwan, 2003). When the responsibilities of policy development (Aypay, 2015) and being an entrepreneur (Ho et al., 2022) are added to all these, the position of school principals is better understood. For this reason, the importance of practices to support the professional development of school principals becomes even more.

It is stated that the understanding that will keep school principals fit in terms of organizational and individual effectiveness is their professionalization (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017). Different approaches are utilized to develop and support school principals in this context. These include certificate programs and pre-service/in-service training (Roberts, 2009; Shaked & Schechter, 2018). For example, in the United States, a developed country, school principals are trained through undergraduate or graduate education and leadership courses. In the United Kingdom, merit programs are used (Balyer & Gündüz, 2011). On the other hand, it is seen that professional development programs in New Zealand, one of the developing countries (Smith, 2007), and special activities carried out by authorities in South Africa (Chikoko et al., 2014) are the methods used in the professional development of school principals. Coaching, seminars, and distance education are used in different countries (Zepeda et al., 2012). Mentoring is one of the most remarkable of these processes (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017; Hayes, 2020).

Mentoring is a professionalization tool emphasized by authorities and researchers, and it is known that it is implemented to novice teachers in the field of education (Naillioğlu & Sezgin, 2021; Özcan & Balyer, 2012; Riley, 2020). Nevertheless, it is seen that mentoring is also implemented for school principals (Gettys et al., 2010; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Hayes, 2019; Smith, 2007). However, school principals' mentoring scope and service rules differ (Bynoe, 2015; Daresh & Playko, 1990; Ereş, 2009). It is known that mentoring contributes to the instructional leadership skills of school principals and supports their self-efficacy regarding teacher performance and student success (Daresh, 2004; Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Hayes, 2019, 2020; Helber, 2015; Shaked & Schechter, 2018). Research indicates mentoring is significant for novice principals (Boerama, 2011; Ereş, 2009; Mitgang & Gill, 2012; Sciarappa & Mason, 2014; Smith, 2007; Williams et al., 2004). This need is tried to be met in many countries; however, despite its fundamental contributions, there are also countries where mentoring is not practiced for school principals; Türkiye is one of them.

When the literature from Türkiye is examined, it is seen that there is no mentoring practice or program for novices to the best of our knowledge.

According to 2022 data, there are about 90,000 principals in different educational institutions in Türkiye ([Ministry of National Education] MoNE, 2022a, p. 31). More time and resources are spent on the professional development of school principals in Türkiye, where these people are employed with various career elements such as exams. In this sense, numerous programs are being implemented for school principals (Kaya, 2020). In addition, MoNE conducts studies at the local and national level for the professional development of school principals (MoNE, 2022b) and signs protocols with universities (Council of Higher Education [CoHE], 2020). As a result of these ventures, seminars, panels, projects, and certificate programs are organized. These activities, frequently at the in-service level, contribute to the current principals' knowledge regarding legislation, technical competencies (e.g., software), and leadership skills (Hayes, 2019). In other words, an approach is used in Türkiye to professionalize school principals in which novice principals and the mentoring process are not prioritized. Besides, policies that do not prioritize exams in selecting school principals and mentoring in their development continue to be effective. Moreover, the regulations cannot meet the demands of novice or candidate principals. This adds to the criticism of the education authorities every day in Türkiye. Research emphasizes that most school principals need professional development just before or during the first days of their careers (Searby, 2010; Smith, 2007; Villani, 2006). Otherwise, it is stated that problems may be encountered in many subjects, from the professional development of teachers to school discipline (Riley, 2020). When these issues are not resolved, school principals may retire. (Gimber & Kefor, 2018; Sezgin et al., 2014; Smith, 2007). Thus, it is stated that mentoring can help novice principals, teachers, students, and educational authorities (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Schechter, 2014). This framework will review and discuss the contributions of mentoring to novice principals in the current study. In other words, the current study aims to evaluate the mentoring practice in the professional development of school principals and clarify the contribution of this practice to novice Turkish principals. In this way, it is requested to contribute to policymakers, those interested in developing schools (e.g., researchers, trainers), and school principals.

Mentoring

The mentor is an experienced and guiding person who contributes to the development of the candidate/new employee, and mentoring is the conceptualization of the professional support these experienced people offer these individuals. In terms of school principals, *mentoring* is a professional development practice based on varying degrees of personal relationships between the mentee (protégé, candidate/novice principal who is supported) and the mentor (supporter, experienced school principal) (Daresh & Playko, 1990; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Schechter, 2014). In other words, mentoring is experienced school principals who offer their support, networks, collaborations, consultancy, and facilitation to benefit novice principals.

Mentoring aims to meet individual and organizational expectations regarding the development and empowerment of novice principals. This aim includes the doctrine of school principals on leadership skills, technical competencies, interpersonal relations, legislative knowledge, and emotional-psychological well-being. The expected results are that school principals benefit from experienced principals' gains and develop their leadership skills (Lipke, 2019).

It is preferred that mentors are individuals who are reliable, able to produce alternative solutions, show tolerance, and have high commitment to the person they support. In addition, they are expected to be respected, motivating, and influential (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Scott, 2010) and to impact novice principals with their communication skills and intelligence. Moreover, mentors should know the realities outside the school as well as inside the school. In this context, mentoring has numerous contributions. These can most simply be listed as contributions to (i)novice principals, (ii)mentor principals, (iii)teachers and students, and (iv)educational authorities.

Contributions

Mentoring has long been part of professional improvement for the development of school principals (Bush, 1995; Villani, 2006). Research shows that school principals who are provided with mentors before and during the service provide more qualified services (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Thessin et al., 2018). Similarly, mentoring offers significant advantages for novice principals in terms of professional support and sharing ideas (Sezgin et al., 2014), coping with difficulties (Gimber & Kefor, 2018), learning successful leadership practices (Bolam et al., 1995; Chikoko et al., 2014; Daresh, 2004), and putting prospective benefits into practice through relationships (Geismar et al., 2000). The mentoring practice facilitates novice principals to adapt to their duties (Gümüş, 2019). Significant problems such as turnover can also be prevented by mentoring (Bynoe, 2015; Goldring & Taie, 2014).

One of the most specific benefits of mentoring is making novice principals feel safe. For example, research shows that school principals do not feel safe when they start their new job (Smith, 2007) and struggle with stress (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017; Sciarappa & Mason, 2014). However, researchers indicate that school principals benefit emotionally and psychologically from the professional support they receive (Gümüş, 2019; Hayes, 2020; Service et al., 2017). In this sense, it is understood that mentoring is a crucial antecedent that affects school principals. Thanks to their mentors, novice principals can realize the daily cycle

of school life and program it at the beginning of their careers. Mintzberg (2009) states that leaders' planning their routines is integral to their role.

School principals contact many people or institutions, from teachers to students, parents to education authorities. The skills of school principals in this area make their work easier and reflect positively on the school's operation. In this respect, novice principals can eliminate communication obstacles based on the experiences of their mentors, thus preventing negativities.

The opportunities that mentors create for their protégé are not a coincidence. Their experiences are based on real experiences in school administration. In this sense, mentoring allows novice principals to acquire practical ways, easy methods, and unique technical skills from mentor principals (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017). It can be said that these are practices that are not written in books and are based on the knowledge of experienced mentors. Examples include specific information on how to make a good impression on a nonprofit's director, calm an angry parent, or under what circumstances a project might be more effective.

Significant improvements are seen in the performances of those who share their experiences with individuals younger than themselves (Clutterbuck, 1999). If mentors are accepted as experienced teachers, sharing their knowledge with their students (protégés) can contribute to their well-being. Thus, it can be easier for new leaders to hold on to their duties (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018, p. 32).

Mentoring is a social mechanism based on personal relationships. Although it has a hierarchical appearance, this mechanism's quality depends on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Hayes, 2020). A collaborative, open, and qualified partnership will benefit both parties (Hayes, 2019; Scott, 2010). Mentoring reflects the mutual process between the parties. The one-way relationship between the mentor school principal and the novice principal is incompatible with the mutualistic mentoring structure (Jones & Larwin, 2015); because the mentoring process requires both parties to be active (Bakioğlu et al., 2010; Schechter, 2014). Research shows that mentor school principals also try to perform better in the mentoring practices contributed by the parties (Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Tahir et al., 2015), and their satisfaction increases (Schechter & Firuz, 2015).

Considering that the motivations of the employees are reflected in their service recipients (Büyükgöze & Özdemir, 2017), it can be assumed that the school principals who benefit from the mentoring practices will have an impact on the motivations of the teachers and students. In this regard, novice principals who work with a mentor have the potential to affect teachers' and student performance through their leadership abilities (Shaked & Schechter, 2018; Riley, 2020). Similarly, improving the performance of novice

principals through mentoring affects a vital variable such as leadership (Gettys et al., 2010; Hayes, 2019; Williams et al., 2004). Considering the contribution of this variable to the school (Büyükgöze & Özdemir, 2017; Deniz & Erdener, 2020; Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016), Mentoring has a significant impact on the educational environment (Daresh, 2004); because school principals, who adopt the principle of leading instead of managing and giving autonomy instead of controlling, are among the issues agreed by researchers to support the careers of their teachers and students (Gümüş, 2019; Smith, 2007; Thessin et al., 2018).

Authorities dealing with education spend much of their resources on maintaining and improving current performance. For this, various projects and activities are implemented where school principals are at the center. The efficiency of these initiatives takes its share from the competence of the school principal. Since a school principal who is specialized and has taken the necessary lessons from his colleagues' experiences makes essential contributions to the activities he mediates in, increasing their self-efficacy through mentoring may be appropriate. It is thought that this will provide the authorities with the time, budget, and staff to support education policies, schools, and student achievement. However, in addition to all these contributions, mentoring is also affected by some challenges (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). The most popular of these are (i)limited resources, (ii)inadequacy/indifference of the parties, and (iii)perception of mentoring.

Challenges

Mentoring is, first and foremost, a resource job. Time is one of the most limited resources. It is known that mentoring programs continue for several years (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Mitgang, 2007). When the efforts of mentor principals and funding are added to this process, the value of resources in mentoring becomes clearer.

Considering that many additional schools lack support staff or teachers (Can, 2022), it comes to mind that experienced principals may be reluctant to mentor. The lack of employees is one factor that complicates organizations' functioning (Özdemir, 2014). This factor is likely to affect mentoring negatively. On the other hand, the limited number of experienced school principals or their reluctance to take charge as mentors is a limitation in mentoring. Furthermore, some countries have no governmental authority or legal basis to regulate mentoring (Villani, 2006). This absence can reduce the quality of mentoring.

Even if it is assumed that many school principals are experienced individuals, it is unknown whether they are qualified for mentoring (Sezgin et al., 2014). Implementation is a job of expertise (Williams et al., 2004) and a specific profession (Özcan & Balyer, 2012). Thus, where the capacity for professional development is limited, mentoring can become an addiction (Daresh, 2004, p. 499).

To truly benefit from mentoring, the parties must be

compatible; because the incompatibility of the mentor principal and the novice principal can render mentoring dysfunctional (Geismar et al., 2000; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017). Further, the parties' belief that they can contribute to each further increases the contribution of mentoring.

The success of mentoring is related to the way it is perceived. Achieving the desired efficiency from processes that postpone mentoring, mentoring, or mentee is difficult. Research shows vigorous mentoring includes collaboration, inclusiveness, reciprocity, and modeling (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991). This suggests that the parties should care about the relevant qualifications.

Türkiye Context

The basic arrangements for educational institutions were made with the Law of Tevhid-i Tedrisat prepared in 1924, and schools were brought under the control of the state. With a legal regulation, the principle of being a teacher in the profession was adopted (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye [GNAoT], 1926), and school management (and the professionalization of the school principals) was seen as a sub-field of the teaching profession.

Since the 50s, the management of educational institutions has been influenced by the planned economy approach in Türkiye, as in many countries (Özdemir, 2018b, pp. 280-282). At this point, different institutions (such as Public Administration Institute for Türkiye and The Middle East, Ankara University Education Faculty, and Hacettepe University Education Faculty) have been established to meet the need for qualified educators (pp. 283-284). The scientific aspect of school management has been strengthened with the education/school management, planning, and supervision courses in these institutions and Gazi Education Institute. However, in the relevant period, school principals continued to be selected from among teachers, understanding that teaching is the main element of the profession (MoNE, 1973). Merit and voluntarism have been the main factors in being appointed to the school principal in this process (Özdemir, 2017). In 1998, the regulation on the selection and appointment of school principals was enacted. Candidates who are successful in the exams are included in in-service programs (Recepoğlu & Kılınç, 2014). However, mentoring, one of the popular professional development practices of the period (Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Villani, 2006), was not included in these programs, and the training was mostly about legislation.

From the 2000s to today, it is known that the professional development of incumbent and novice principals is provided by numerous pieces of training (Kaya, 2020) and seminar-based development programs (MoNE, 2022c) organized by MoNE. Postgraduate education for the training of school principals is carried out as master and doctorate programs. Mentoring in the professional development of school principals, which is occasionally addressed by the researchers in these programs (Bakioğlu et al., 2010; Balyer

& Gündüz, 2011; Sezgin et al., 2014), is not used by MoNE as a professional development tool in the selection, assignment, and professional development of school principals.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study investigated mentoring in Turkish school principals' professional development. Investigations show that mentoring contributes to novice principals on critical issues such as leadership (Helber, 2015; Shaked & Schechter, 2018), emotional and psychological stability (Service et al., 2017), and feedback (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Riley, 2020). Despite these specific contributions, it is seen that mentoring is not a practice used by school principals at MoNE. However, the experience of school principals in Türkiye from institutions of different sizes, based on long years and other geographies, has a special meaning for MoNE. Benefiting from these experiences can increase the performance of school principals (Hayes, 2020; Hobson & Sharp, 2005) who face many challenges (Çetin, 2019; Çınkır 2010; Turan et al., 2012; Koşar et al., 2013); thus paving the way for potential benefits for schools, teachers, and students.

The impact of mentoring practices is influenced by the challenges that limit it. Lack of time and funding are among the first to come to mind. In addition, the principles regarding selecting and assigning school principals as mentors are among these difficulties. When unwillingness was added to this portrait, barriers to mentoring could be better understood (Daresh, 2004). For example, researchers state that the resources MoNE allocates to pre-service and in-service training are insufficient (Elçiçek & Yaşar, 2016). In addition, studies in Türkiye (Ağaoğlu et al., 2012), where the professional competencies of current school principals are criticized, suggest that there may be some problems with the qualifications and number of school principals who may be appointed as mentors. When the perceptions of current and novice principals regarding mentoring are also included in this equation, it is concluded that MoNE may need extensive preparation for mentoring.

Research (Searby, 2010) shows that many principals in Türkiye resort to the help and guidance of more experienced principals. With this structure, which can be regarded as an amateur version of mentoring (Villani, 2006), basic processes such as the operation of the schools (Sezgin et al., 2014) and the implementation of teaching activities are put in place (Hayes, 2019). Thus, school principals can cope with a significant part of the physical, emotional, and psychological pressures they are under the influence of (Service et al., 2017; Young et al., 2005), and novice principals overcome the difficulties arising from their inexperience (Thessin et al., 2018). It is known that school principals who do not receive a counseling or guidance service and are not supported professionally experience different problems, from psychological issues to resignation (Bynoe, 2015;

Demirbilek & Bakioğlu, 2019; Sezgin et al., 2014; Smith, 2007). The theoretical background also confirms this (Balyer & Gündüz, 2011; Bursalıoğlu, 1987/2015, p. 158).

The problem is that while MoNE appoints a mentor teacher for each novice teacher, it does not engage in such a practice for school principals, who can be described as teachers' teacher or leader teacher. Moreover, the literature firmly states that school principals face obstacles and need support when they have just started working (Hayes, 2020; Mitgang, 2007; Sciarappa & Mason, 2014; Smith, 2007; Williams et al., 2004). In this respect, it is thought that a mentoring mechanism that will allow the use of the knowledge and experience of existing school principals should be put on the agenda by MoNE.

It is not unique to Türkiye that school principals take charge without professional training (Bush, 1995). However, at this point, it is necessary to develop the competencies of novice principals. The absence of undergraduate programs that train school principals and the strong traditions that foster school principals to come from among teachers make it inevitable to acquire school principal pedagogy through pre-service or in-service training in Türkiye; because the assumption that MoNE will develop the leadership skills of school principals with conferences and distance/online activities contradicts many scientific principles in the face of countries that have provided mentoring services to them for many years and evaluated the results (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018).

This study has some limitations. For example, although the author mentioned the difficulties of mentoring, bad and unsuccessful mentoring practices were not included in the current research; because, like other professional development activities, some studies state that mentoring is not perfect for professional development (Gettys et al., 2010; Sezgin et al., 2014; Shaked & Schechter, 2018). In addition, one of the important arguments of the study is whether the contributions of experienced school principals to novice principals are exactly a mentoring study. Finally, the fact that the research is written as a compilation and does not produce an empirical finding can be considered a limitation.

Recommendations

At the end of the study, making some recommendations for mentoring and future research would be suitable. For example, determining the criteria regulating the selection of mentor principals will be a proper study that can be done at the first stage. Secondly, mentoring by volunteer and experienced school principals, and matching novice principals with these people, can be effective. They are transferring the experiences gained from the process that the novice teachers spent with their mentor teachers and regulating the economic gains of the mentors are also suggestions to be presented for practice. Conducting a longitudinal study in which the professional experiences, professional develop-

ment, and self-efficacy of novice principals who work with and do not have mentors in future research are discussed may be an excellent work to embody what is claimed in the current study. Moreover, the quantitative nature of this study may be a fit contribution to the literature on mentoring of school principals, where primarily qualitative studies are conducted (Hayes, 2020).

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