

How Does Mentoring Affect Self-Efficacy?: An Investigation on Turkish Principals

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Abstract

Mentoring is one of the professional development tools supporting school principals. Thanks to mentoring, principals can overcome the problems they confront and meet the expectations of different stakeholders. Thus, principals can perform more effectively in schools. Mentoring has become a formal process for principals in various countries for a long time. Moreover, several researchers from different countries focus on the various impacts of mentoring on principals. One of these is the self-efficacy of principals. Mentoring has the potential to enhance the principals' self-efficacy. However, it is difficult to note that mentoring and its influence on principals' self-efficacy have been analyzed thoroughly. In this context, this phenomenological study aims to overcome the current inadequacy. The study data was collected based on criterion and snowball sampling from eight principals working in Kahramanmaraş province. MAXQDA 2020 was utilized for data analysis. The results revealed that mentoring plays a critical role in the self-efficacy beliefs of principals. In other words, it develops principals' managerial, instructional, and ethical competencies. This finding significantly contributes to the literature on principals' professional development, professional learning, and self-efficacy. Several suggestions have been offered for policymakers and researchers about the formalization of mentoring and the details of its implementation.

Keywords: Mentoring, principal, self-efficacy, Türkiye.

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Introduction

Schools are among the most important institutions that play a role in developing countries. What is expected in these institutions is not only the students' attaining academic success but also teachers' giving quality service. However, many factors such as organizational ones (Özdemir, 2018) and educational policies (Aypay, 2015) affect these expectations. Although previous studies have focused on the relationship between these impacts on teachers, recent studies relatively prioritize school principals (Hallinger et al., 2020; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Spillane & Sun, 2022). The research that takes principals as an antecedent or mediator factor has revealed that principals could make meaningful contributions to the quality of education (Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Messer, 2019). On the other hand, studies highlighting leadership have shown that the functions of principals are mingled with their administrative skills (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). According to Katz (1974), principals carry out their duties benefiting from their theoretical knowledge, technical skills, and competence in human relations. This draws on the principals and research based on them to the aspect of professional development. In fact, the gradual increase in the literature discussing the specialty and professional development of principals confirms this argument (Bakioğlu et al., 2010; Chu & Cravens, 2012; Gümüş & Ada, 2017; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015).

Various researchers make analyses and proposals for the professional development of principals (Balyer & Gündüz, 2011; Chu & Cravens, 2012; Lipke, 2019; Ng & Szeto, 2016; Özdemir & Kavak, 2019). All these reveal the significance of principals' professional specialization since it positively affects the school and learning experiences (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016). The value of principals' professional development could be well understood, especially when the problems they face are analyzed thoroughly (Arar, 2018; Meyer & Patuawa, 2022; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Tahir et al., 2015). Thus, coaching or certificate programs, simulations, and graduate studies are offered to support newly appointed principals in various countries. At this point, mentoring is another method utilized in the professional development of principals (Bakioğlu et al., 2010; Geismar et al., 2000; Hayes, 2020; Lipke, 2019).

In the simplest terms, *mentoring* could be defined as a professional development relationship between an experienced principal and a novice one (Schechter, 2014). It helps novice principals manage their schools successfully (Jamison et al., 2020) and contribute to instructional endeavors (Hayes, 2019). Thus, decision-making (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017), professional skills (Gümüş, 2019; Hayes, 2019; Jamison et al., 2020), leadership (Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Hayes, 2020), and feeling of trust in school (Smith, 2007) could be strengthened thanks to mentoring. Moreover, Aravena (2018) and Tahir et al. (2015) assert that mentoring also contributes to the development of mentors. When the results of professional learning and development processes such as the development of quality relationships (Lipke, 2019), managerial support (Parylo et al., 2012), and job satisfaction (Özalp et al., 2016) are added to all these, benefits of mentoring for new principals become clearer. It is seen that mentoring supports principals' self-efficacy toward teacher and student success, especially by contributing to the instructional leadership skills of principals (Daresh, 2004; Hayes, 2019; Hayes, 2020; Helber, 2015). This makes self-efficacy a significant dependent variable in terms of mentoring.

Self-efficacy is an individual belief that one can do a job or task successfully (Bandura, 1977). As for principals, self-efficacy refers to their managerial roles and instructional and ethical leadership abilities (Özer, 2013). Empirical studies show that these abilities significantly affect principals' commitment (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Skaalvik, 2020) and burnout (Skaalvik, 2020) levels. In addition, it is seen that as the self-efficacy of principals increases, so does the collective competence of teachers (Hallinger et al., 2018). It is predicted that problems in a principal's self-efficacy may limit the effectiveness of schools (Versland & Erickson, 2017). The literature on the self-efficacy of principals draws attention to the professional development of principals, which suggests that it would be appropriate to examine mentoring specific to principals (Jugmohan & Muzvidziwa, 2017; Versland, 2016). Studies stating that principals' self-efficacy can be strengthened by mentoring (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007) also support this idea.

The literature shows findings displaying the significant effects of mentoring on principals' self-efficacy. For instance, Fox (2018) depicts that mentoring positively affects principals' self-efficacy regarding their management skills. Similarly, Helber (2015) states that the self-efficacy of principals who receive mentor support is higher than their colleagues, which can contribute to various elements ranging from

school districts to leadership programs. When all these are combined with the studies showing the advantages of mentoring (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017; Eusanio, 2022; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Tahir et al., 2015), it is thought that the relationships among the variables should be handled in a different context. In this sense, the current study examines the reflections of novice Turkish principals' mentoring experiences on their self-efficacy.

Mentoring and Türkiye Context

According to the statistics of 2020, there are about 100.000 educational administrators in Türkiye (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2022a). The professional development of these individuals, most of whom are school principals, is based on in-service training focusing on legislation (MoNE, 2022b). However, the benefits of this training are in question (Gümüş & Ada, 2017). In fact, mentoring is not a formal practice coordinated by MoNE in Türkiye. Nevertheless, it is clear that, like their colleagues in different countries (Arar, 2018; Hayes, 2019; Ng & Szeto, 2016), Turkish principals need support especially in the beginning of their career (Bozkurt & Özkan, 2021; Ereş, 2009; Hobson & Sharp, 2005; Searby, 2010), and thus get help from their experienced colleagues (Gündüz & Balyer, 2011; Turhan & Karabatak, 2015). Villani (2006) indicates this is a type of mentoring. In this sense, it is expected that this current study will make important contributions to the policies and analysis of the professional development of Turkish principals and the literature on the relationship between mentoring and self-efficacy.

Mentoring

Various researchers have made different definitions of mentoring. For instance, Schechter (2014) defines mentoring as a process by which an experienced person transfers their knowledge, skills, and abilities to a less experienced one. Likewise, Hansford and Ehrich (2006) define mentoring as a spontaneous and coordinated approach based on an individual and confidential relationship between mentor and mentee including professional development and personal support. Thus, Schechter (2014) and Hansford and Ehrich (2006) perceive mentoring as an integral course of the professionalization processes. In this respect, mentoring is also a professionalization tool for new school principals (Augustine-Shaw & Hachiya, 2017; Geismar et al., 2000). Mentoring can provide new principals with important opportunities in improving student achievement, supporting teachers, and empowering them professionally (Hobson & Sharp, 2005). Lipke (2019) regards mentoring as an important mechanism supporting inexperienced principals in times of change in the principalship. On the other hand, Aravena (2018) emphasizes that mentoring is one of the crucial tools that new principals can use to solve the problems they may encounter. In other words, principals and, thus, schools could eliminate the difficulties through mentoring.

Mentoring is also seen as a mechanism that reduces isolation, stimulates critical reflection on leadership behaviors, encourages a different view of school culture, and improves the links among schools (Service et al., 2018). It is argued that mentoring supports the transition of individuals into management and offers various benefits by facilitating the induction of new employees into organizations (Jugmohan & Muzvidziwa, 2017). One of the most important benefits of mentoring is self-awareness, as mentors and mentees can reflect on their abilities and potential throughout the process (Aravena, 2018). Therefore, they become more motivated to be successful and fulfill their profession's requirements (Tahir et al., 2015). Thus, individuals' self-efficacy and self-esteem levels can increase. Indeed, Bolam et al. (1995) consider mentoring as a supportive factor for obtaining new information, learning good and bad leadership practices, networking with colleagues, and continuing professional development. In this respect, it can be stated that mentoring is a learning-teaching process based on the win-win principle and is significantly related to principals' professional self-efficacy.

Principal Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, developed by Bandura, is defined as the belief in one's ability to change and control the events that affect their life (Eusanio, 2022). Self-efficacy beliefs determine whether behavior can be initiated, how long it can be sustained in the face of obstacles, and how much effort will be put in (Bandura, 1977). In this sense, self-efficacy, an essential element of social-cognitive theory, can potentially change the strength and level of individuals' actions. The effects of self-efficacy on leadership (Anselmus et al., 2022; Hallinger et al., 2020; Helber, 2015) make it a vital factor that can shape one's commitment, performance, and approach to events. Leaders/persons with low self-efficacy

are seen as stress-prone people, who give up when faced with challenges, personalize failure, and spend too much time learning a skill (Bennett, 2015). On the other hand, people with high self-efficacy do not underestimate their abilities, struggle, see failure as an opportunity, and continue striving (Owen, 2015). In this respect, it is possible to assert that individuals' self-efficacy perceptions significantly affect their cognitive, affective, daily, personal, and professional lives. Principals who lead schools are not exempt from this evaluation as individuals.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) summarize the self-efficacy of the principals as planning, organizing, structuring, carrying out tasks, and evaluating the skills of managing school relations with people in the environment. These can also be considered the responsibilities of principals with a multidimensional and deep structure (Anselmus et al., 2022). Principals can sometimes be overwhelmed by the complexity of their responsibilities (Arar, 2018) and thus may lose confidence in themselves and show poor performance. Therefore, principals need to be well-prepared for the profession. Their self-efficacy needs should be professionally supported during their services, as self-efficacy is a principal's judgment about their ability to trigger change (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Researchers have linked principal self-efficacy with school innovation (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012) and learning quality (Dhuey & Smith, 2014). Therefore, principals' strong self-efficacy perceptions align with students' best interests (Kelleher, 2016). As a result, principals who increase their self-efficacy can lead the school effectively and maintain their positions (Mohanty, 2021).

Empirical studies on principals' self-efficacy are rising and reveal remarkable results (Federici & Skaalvik, 2011; Laouni, 2022; Özer, 2013; Versland & Erickson, 2017). For instance, Osterman and Sullivan (1996) consider principals with high self-efficacy to be determined, more willing, and flexible in achieving their goals, while principals with low self-efficacy blame others for failure. Lyons and Murphy (1994) emphasize that principals with high self-efficacy do not see it as a failure and remain calm when faced with problems. The authors state that principals with high self-efficacy tend to use their intrinsic power such as expertise, knowledge, and technical power to fulfill their roles. These abilities are shown among the basic characteristics of principals (Jamison et al., 2020). At this point, increasing principals' knowledge and skills is important to strengthen their self-efficacy perceptions. It is believed that it would be especially beneficial for new managers to work under the mentorship of experienced ones (Hayes, 2020; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017). Because new principals benefit from the experiences of their mentors, they develop professionally and learn how to fulfill the responsibilities of their new duties (Aravena, 2018; Messer, 2019; Mohanty, 2021). Otherwise, educators who have difficulty getting used to their new duties in the first year of their principalships face serious problems such as resignation and difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance (Kelleher, 2016; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2017; Tahir et al., 2015).

School management is not seen as a professional career in Türkiye. Moreover, principals can be appointed even as teachers without leadership training. The personal and managerial competencies that principals are expected to possess are tried to be provided through in-service training. It is also stated that mentoring can significantly contribute to principals receiving support from their more experienced colleagues (Demirtaş & Özer, 2014). It is known that principals in Türkiye also benefit from this mechanism (Koç & Atmaca, 2022; Polat et al., 2018). However, the effects of this process on their self-efficacy have not been thoroughly analyzed. In this regard, the reflections of mentoring, utilized in many countries, on the self-efficacy of Turkish principals will be examined in the current study. Türkiye has significant potential for educational research with millions of students and thousands of principals. It is believed that the results can add a lot to the professional development of principals in Türkiye, the Middle East, and developing countries. In this regard, the participants were asked to answer the following questions (and sub-questions):

1. What does school management training mean to you?
 - (a) Have you ever had management training before starting this career?
 - (b) What do you think about the scope, adequacy, and contributions of this training?
2. How do you perceive the concept of mentoring? What you were learning from your mentor;
 - (a) How does it affect your managerial competencies?

- (b) How does it influence your instructional leadership?
- (c) How does it contribute to your ethical leadership?
3. How would you evaluate getting support from a mentor before or as soon as you start school principalship?

Method

This qualitative study was designed with a phenomenological approach due to its very nature to reveal and analyze participants' views in detail (Özdemir, 2010, p. 334). Indeed, Patton (2015) argues that phenomenology is a proper design to discover and understand participants' experiences.

Work Group

The participants of this study were depicted through criterion and snowball sampling. Although mentoring is not practiced as a formal process within the frame of MoNE practices, the support that novice educators get from more experienced ones could be regarded as mentoring (Villani, 2006). Thus, the participants of this study consisted of experienced principals who voluntarily offer help to others and novice principals who get in touch with experienced ones closely, which composes the criterion sampling (Patton, 2015, p. 425). Subsequently, these principals were asked to assist researchers in identifying other potential novice principals who get mentoring, which constitutes the snowball sampling of the participants. As the interviews continued, the number of participants was adequate since the same principal names emerged (p. 122), and the participants' views repeated (Patton, 2015, p. 474). Thus and so, eight principals working in Kahramanmaraş province were interviewed, and Table 1 illustrates the details of these principals.

Table 1.

Descriptives about Participants

No.	Gender	Age	School	Education	Seniority	Code Name
1	Male	33	Middle School	Bachelor's	3	Principal-M1
2	Male	34	Primary School	Master	2	Principal-M2
3	Male	48	High School	Bachelor's	2	Principal-M3
4	Male	46	Primary School	Master	19	Principal-M4
5	Male	57	Middle School	Bachelor's	35	Principal-M5
6	Male	31	Middle School	Master	2	Principal-M6
7	Female	33	Primary School	PhD	8	Principal-F1
8	Female	40	High School	Master	3	Principal-F2

Note. * = Years.

Table 1 shows the basic demographic information about the participants. All the participants were coded as Principal-M1/F1 to ensure anonymity.

Tool and Data Collection

The study's data were collected through a semi-structured interview form generated by the researchers. This form was checked by three experts experienced in qualitative research and took its last version in line with their suggestions. Then, this tool was tested with a pilot scheme with two participants. Subsequently, the form was reviewed in terms of its clarity and functionality and found eligible to be used in data collection. The researchers recorded the interviews and took notes upon the participants' approval. However, the participants were informed that they could leave the interview whenever they wanted. The data collection was completed between December 2022 and January 2023.

Data Analysis

Data analysis started with transcribing the interview records and arranging the notes taken during the interviews. The inferences based on these notes were illustrated with "<<< >>>" symbols in the text. The researchers utilized the analysis approach developed by Miles and Huberman (1994/2019) and made use of MAXQDA 2020. For this purpose, the data were analyzed through descriptive coding, and the

codes were arranged to form themes. This approach was preferred as it is proper to interpret the phenomenological details (Tesch, 1990). In order to ensure clarity, we also used a code matrix, which illustrates which code is used, by whom, and how often (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Then, the analyzed data set was transformed into a scheme to attain a holistic picture. Lastly, the data in this scheme were interpreted thoroughly.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

We obtained ethics committee approval from the Ondokuz Mayıs University Ethics Committee of Social and Humanistic Sciences. We also got the approval of MoNE for the implementation of the study. Furthermore, the study's data collection was based on voluntary participation. After that, we made appointments with the participants and they were informed about the process. We assured the participants that they could end the interviews at any time. All the recordings and notes were kept safe and ready to be used upon proper request. We followed these steps not only to ensure reliability and validity but also to prevent possible partialities (Merriam, 2018). We did not interpret the findings without the permission of all participants. Therefore, after the interviews were completed, we informed the participants about our notes and a general summary of the recordings. At this point, our major goal was to assess the consistency between what the participants said and our analyses. Moreover, we used MAXQDA 2020 qualitative research software to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research during all these stages. In this way, we tried to eliminate possible biases that may occur in the construction of themes and analysis. Another factor that contributes to reliability and validity is coherence among codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994/2019). For this purpose, we developed new themes and combined some of them where necessary. During this process, we consulted the experts from whom we benefitted when we prepared the data collection tool.

Findings

We prepared a code matrix to answer the research questions. This matrix revealed that there are 130 codes. The theme that includes the most codes is mentoring on self-efficacy (48), and the one that consists of the least is mentoring perceptions (25). The school management training theme includes 30 codes, although the future practices theme comprises 27 codes, as shown in Figure 1.

	Principal-F1	Principal-F2	Principal-M1	Principal-M2	Principal-M3	Principal-M4	Principal-M5	Principal-M6	
▼ School Management Trainings									0
▢ Based on Individual Efforts				■		■			12
▢ Originated from Official Obligations				■	■		■	■	8
▢ Deprivation	■			■		■	■		10
▼ Mentoring Perceptions									0
▢ Professional Friendship	■	■	■			■		■	12
▢ Wise Assistance	■	■	■			■	■	■	13
▼ Mentoring on Self-Efficacy									0
▢ Managerial		■	■		■	■	■	■	19
▢ Instructional	■		■		■	■	■	■	12
▢ Ethical	■		■	■	■	■	■		17
▼ Future Practices									0
▢ Formalization		■	■		■	■	■	■	15
▢ Suggestions on Curriculum and Implementation	■	■		■	■	■	■		12
Σ	9	26	27	20	10	16	12	10	130

Figure 1. Matrix of Codes

We obtained four themes and ten sub-themes at the end of our analysis as illustrated in Figure 2.

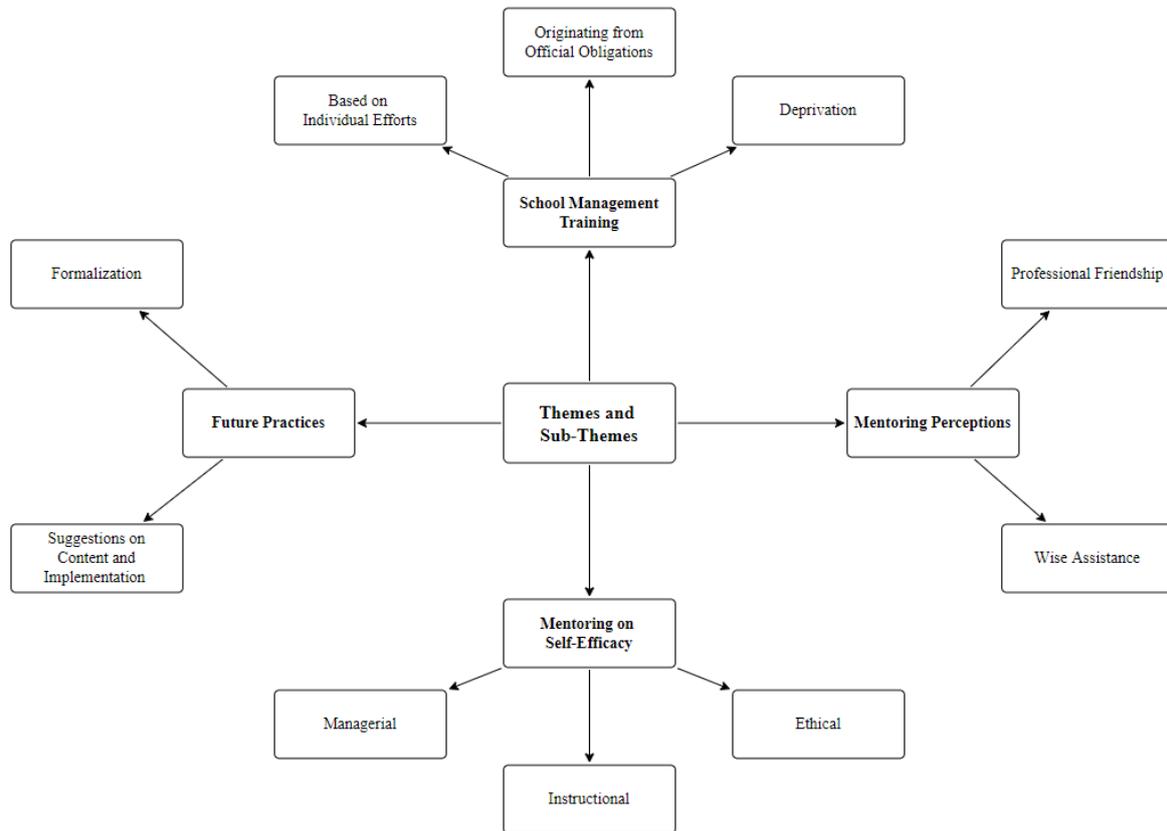


Figure 2. Themes and Sub-themes

Findings on School Management Training

In order to answer the first question of the study, "What does school management training mean to you?", the codes in the theme of school management training were analyzed. Here, it was seen that the participants' views were organized into three sub-themes. These sub-themes are *based on individual efforts*, *originating from official obligations*, and *deprivation*.

Based on individual efforts sub-theme signals that specialization in administration depends on individual efforts. In other words, to become a good principal, the participants need to solve some of their problems on their own and acquire the skills they need to gain in school management through their efforts. Principal-F2 states that there are different training opportunities on various platforms, and benefiting from them depends on the principal's efforts with the following sentence: "So, it is up to you to improve yourself at that point." At this point, the participants who are primary teachers consider themselves luckier than other principals. Those who had previously worked as classroom teachers at a school with unified classrooms stated that this position taught them a lot (e.g., correspondence, supervision, and school-environment relations). Principal-M4 and F1 reported that their master's degrees contributed significantly to their career. Principal-M1, on the other hand, stated that the readings he did provided him with essential benefits. However, it is seen that the participants do not find the training specific to school management/administration organized. Moreover, Principal-F2 harshly criticizes the general dissatisfaction that the appointment of school management is based on exam scores without any formation. Principal-M2 takes these criticisms one step further and argues that those who receive administrative training are positively differentiated from those who do not, even if appointed through an exam result.

Originating from the official obligations sub-theme reflects the view of MoNE's central or provincial/district level activities in the eyes of principals. The first content that stands out in this sub-theme is the low contribution of the training offered to principals by MoNE. This finding is also reflected in the "*based on individual efforts*" sub-theme. Thus, it can be concluded that the participant principals

find the school management and leadership activities planned and prepared by their organizations inadequate or boring. Principal-M1 considers these training initiatives that remain only on paper and have inadequate or problematic functions. While participants appreciated camp-type programs, they were more critical of salon-type or compulsory activities. Principal-F2 stated that the expertise of the individuals organizing the activities directly affected their enjoyment of the training. Principal-M2 declares that the training organized for managers is not always of poor quality:

They always say we could not catch up, but they appointed principals through an exam in the nineties. Candidates who passed those exams were given in-service training. After the in-service training, they gave another exam and eliminated the inadequate candidates again. Many of the principals I know who passed that exam is very high quality. I mean, I like that practice, for example. I think they gave training for about a month. (...) For example, these principals are noticed more than others.

This participant does not regard the training organized by MoNE as a definitive solution. He also argued that the vice-principal position should be a prerequisite for becoming a principal instead of such activities where participation is compulsory.

The sub-theme of *deprivation* contains the most tragic findings of the *school management training* theme. This is because principals unanimously report that they did not receive perpetual and practical management training in the early years of their careers. Moreover, all participants indicated that they highly needed professional support during this period. Especially the principals who started their positions in rural areas are confident and clear. Principal-M2 expresses the lack of support for principals by drawing attention to the depth of the gap between educational theories and practices in Türkiye. According to him, what he learned during his undergraduate education was not enough to overcome the difficulties he encountered while practicing his profession. Principal-F1 supported Principal-M2 in explaining this deprivation of principals with the metaphor of feeling like a fish out of water. Principal-M4, who holds a master's degree, takes this finding further by stating that she did not receive any specific training on this issue during her undergraduate education. These findings display the relationship between the sub-theme of *deprivation* and the sub-theme *based on individual efforts*. Principal-M1, on the other hand, states that a lack of school management education leads to the loss of human resource potential. In other words, not specializing in school management results in the resignation of principals.

Findings on Mentoring Perceptions and Mentoring on Self-Efficacy

The second research question is, "How do you perceive the concept of mentoring?". While answering this question, two sub-themes (*professional friendship* and *wise assistance*) under the theme of *mentoring perceptions* and three sub-themes (*managerial*, *instructional*, and *ethical*) under the theme of *mentoring on self-efficacy* emerged. The findings related to these sub-themes are as follows:

Professional friendship is the sub-theme in which participants described mentoring as a professional friendship. The principals who were interviewed within the scope of the research regarded the experienced principals who mentored them as valuable friends and colleagues. On the other hand, all participants regarded the experienced principals who mentored them as the authorities they consulted to solve the problems they could not overcome by themselves. Principal-M3 states that the scope of this friendship includes principals working in the same school types. In other words, according to Principal-M3, a high school principal acquires new skills and tries to be more productive through their friendship with a principal from another high school. Principal-M1 clarifies his close relationship with his mentor as follows: "He <<<means his mentor>>> knows how to deal with parents or teachers. When I have a question, I ask him, and he shares all his experience with me. Moreover, he does this without expecting anything in return. So whatever you can think of...". Principal-M1 and F2 mentioned that they enjoyed sharing what they learned from their mentors with their colleagues working in different schools. According to these participants, supporting other principals <<<mentoring, so to speak>>> is joyful. However, Principal-F2 stated that he established this friendship not with the old-generation principals but with the ones who follow the innovations.

In the sub-theme of *wise assistance*, mentoring is explained by the participants in terms of receiving support from a wise person and benefiting from the vast knowledge of a master. In line with this sub-theme, Principal-M5, the oldest participant of the study, emphasizes the importance of sharing

experiences and considers mentoring as a facilitator for success. Principal-M5 was delighted that her mentor shared successful practices with her. In this sub-theme, the male participants' qualities should have described mentors as having sufficient professional knowledge/equipment (Principal-M1, M2, M4) and a certain maturity (Principal-M1). According to Principal-F1, one of the female participants, this quality has a certain seniority in management. Here, Principal-M6 conceptualizes her mentor and his wisdom with the following statements: "A person whose ideas are taken as a guide, as an adviser... Of course, the final decision <<<again>>> belongs to the person <<<i.e., the principal>>>; but a person who can say that it would be better if you do this <<<is mentor>>>. He is a person who opens up horizons, who applies the saying that wisdom is above reason." Principal-M1 sees mentoring as a professional process that does not make the mentee dependent on the mentor. This finding provides clues about the relationship between mentoring and self-efficacy in line with the purpose of the study. Principal-M1 thinks mentors help mentees become self-sufficient leaders and the participants approve of this. As a matter of fact, with the second question of the study, the reflections of mentoring on principals' self-efficacy were also evaluated. During the analysis, it was found that the effects of mentoring experiences on principals' self-efficacy were clustered in three sub-themes (*managerial*, *instructional*, and *ethical*) under the theme of *mentoring on self-efficacy*.

The *managerial* sub-theme focuses on the effects of the support principals receive from experienced colleagues on their administrative skills. Principal-M5 clarifies this as follows:

The managerial effects of mentoring are manifested in the context of mobilizing potential power in the school. <<<I mean>>> mentoring has taught me how to put an idea into practice and support of turning a spark into a fire. (...) Field mentoring experiences reflect that a sense of justice is never left untouched. I do not act on my judgment when I evaluate teachers <<<and I carefully avoid it>>>. I try to treat everyone equally. Your employees should trust you. In this way, problems in communication within the school are eliminated.

Principal-M5 points to the contribution of mentoring to the people and action components of school management. Principal-M6, who reported that more than one experienced principal mentored him, stated that he could get their support on administrative issues even by phone. According to him, having access to a mentor at any time is vital for managerial competencies. Unlike Principal-M3, Principal-M6 declared that he could get this support from mentors working at different school levels. Principals-M1, M3, and F2 depicted paperwork, applications/procedures to be followed over the internet, and legal procedures as areas of managerial work facilitated by mentor support. Principal-M2 and M4 emphasize that their mentors support their capacity to lead the schools.

The *instructional* sub-theme consisted of codes related to the contributions of mentoring to principals. These codes include the interests of teachers and students. In this sub-theme, courses, field trips, curricula, supervision procedures, planning activities, and guidance services were listed among the benefits of mentoring. For example, Principal-M5 stated that his mentor supported him significantly in supervising teaching activities. This participant was perfectly satisfied with her mentor's support in classroom supervision. Similarly, Principal-M3 states that she increased her capacity to plan instructional activities thanks to her mentor. Principal-M3 adds that this process also involves teachers. Principal-F1 states that she received vital help from her mentor in nurturing her instructional leadership competence. Principal-F2 expresses that the support she received from her mentor extended her capacity beyond teachers and students with the following sentences: "I taught my vice principal everything. After a while, I realized he had started performing better than me. (...) This experience gives you happiness. It is good to teach someone something and be helpful." According to Principal-F2, the assistant principal acquired many skills thanks to her support. Principal-M6, the youngest participant of the study, stated that mentoring provided them with critical support in developing, preparing, and implementing projects. When all these statements are considered as a whole, it can be concluded that mentoring has positively contributed to principals' competencies and school life.

In the *ethical* sub-theme, it can be said that the participants summarized the support they received from their mentors in terms of communication, climate, attitudes, and decision-making. For example, Principal-M1 expresses his mentor's contributions to him on decision-making and attitudes with the following statements "In the past, I would have led with my chin, I would have done what I knew, but

decision making is very complicated <<<the participant points out the difficulty of the decision making here>>>. One of the best things I have learned is this... Then, when something bad happens <<<in case of failure of individual decisions>>>, the blame falls on your head. <<<When teachers are asked for their opinions on a school matter>>>, they are also pleased. Especially when their opinions are recognized, they feel valued." It would not be wrong to note that these statements also indicate the school climate. Principal-M3, similar to Principal-M1, states that the moral gains mentoring offers eliminate the unwarranted criticism of principals. Principal-M4 summarizes the potential of the gains mentoring offers principals as follows:

If I had met with an experienced principal in the beginning, I could have been in a very different position now <<<here, he refers to a mentorship and regrets that he did not have a mentor at the beginning of his career>>>. I could have reached my 19 years of experience in maybe 9-10 years. <<<Pointing out the benefits of mentoring>>> organizational justice equals to employee. If you want to gain trust in a school, you should not equate employees who work with body and soul to those who do not. Treating every teacher with consistent and equal practices without a labor union, race, or opinion discrimination is necessary.

Moreover, Principal-M4, differing slightly from the other participants, stated that her mentor provided her with critical personal characteristics such as staying calm and being a good listener. Principal-M1 and F1, on the other hand, put forward relatively contradictory views about the contributions of mentoring to ethical leadership competencies. According to them, mentoring is a concept with benefits but not a perfect one. At this point, these participants point out that mentoring is not the only and absolute solution for principals' self-efficacy.

Findings on Future Practices

The last question of the study was about the participants' views on being matched with a mentor before or as soon as they start to work. Here, principals not only expressed their opinions on mentoring formation and process but also made some suggestions. The findings were clustered into two sub-themes under the *theme of future practice*. These sub-themes are *formalization* and *suggestions on content and implementation*.

The sub-theme of *formalization* includes all principals' views on the formalization of mentoring and making it programmed. Principal-M4 strongly wants the mentor-mentee relationship to be professionalized. He sees this as a necessity and thinks that the school's success can be indirectly supported through mentoring. Principal-M5 argues that it is too late for this process in Türkiye, stating that mentoring for principals should have been implemented years ago. Principal-M6, whose administrative experience is relatively limited, expresses his opinion on this issue as follows: "<<<meaning the pairing of principals with a mentor>>>, maybe. They pair a newly appointed teacher with a <<<counselor>>> either in the first year or in the internship period. This <<<practice>>> can also happen in the principalship. New appointees can be paired with an experienced, well-performing principal <<<newly appointed principal>>>." Moreover, Principal-M6 supports this view arguing that mentoring could also contribute to students and teachers. Principal-M1 makes similar statements to Principal-M6. Principal-F2, on the other hand, asserts that formalizing the mentoring can prevent principals from resigning, prevent them from receiving administrative penalties, and contribute to professionalization in school management. Principal-F2 also stated that mentoring could be a resource for principals' professional learning.

When the codes of *suggestions on content and implementation* sub-theme are analyzed carefully, it is observed that participants want the mentoring process to have rich content such as psychology, crisis management, communication skills, critical thinking, and strategy development. At this point, principal-M2 refers to behavioral sciences while Principal-F2 finds the case study method a vital part of the mentoring process. Principal-F2 argues that mentors should be chosen among people who have proven themselves. Here, the details of a mentor's competencies and the application principles and content of mentoring are deciphered. Principal-F2 characterizes principals who have distinguished themselves in their profession of mentoring. Principal-M3 confirms this and says that the effect of mentoring also depends on the mentor. Principal-M4 believes that keeping calm in times of conflict <<<participant here refers to anger management skills>>> should be a possible part of mentoring. Regarding the

implementation time, all participants pointed to the early stages of their principalship careers with statements such as *before* or *as soon as they start their duties*. It is difficult to say that the participants agreed on the implementation period.

Discussion and Conclusions

This current study looks at the impacts of mentoring on school principals by consulting the principals working in various schools from different levels and school sizes. The results reflect principals' views on school management training, mentoring, and mentoring on self-efficacy and future practices.

The findings of the first research question of the study indicate that the participants are satisfied with the general training related to school management. However, participants continue their professional development mainly through their own opportunities. This finding contradicts the literature (Chu & Cravens, 2012; Gümüş, 2019; Ng & Szeto, 2016). It is possible to notice the practical problems and inadequacies of the curriculum followed at the faculties of education, which confirms the continuous learning and development expectation in school management (Daresh, 2004; Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016; Ng & Szeto, 2016; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015). The participants reported that the training they were offered was generally compulsory. The criticism towards training structured in seminars plays an important role in this study. In this regard, the findings are compatible with the previous studies (Gümüş & Ada, 2017; Polat et al., 2018; Turhan & Karatabak, 2015). However, there are cases where the participants are partially satisfied with the training given by MoNE, which differentiates this study from others. The results reveal that principals lack professional support in principalship and management, especially in the early stages of their careers. Besides, the need for such training in Türkiye is at a high level as in developed countries (Bakioğlu et al., 2010; Bozkurt & Özkan, 2021; Ereş, 2009). Additionally, the findings revealed that the need mentioned above is among the causes of the resignation of principals, which makes this study profound in determining the stressors of being a principal. As a result, it can be concluded that the Turkish educational system, which pretends to be professional in the principalship, holds certain critical inconsistencies regarding educational strategies and practices.

The second research question of the study discusses what participants understand from mentoring. The results reveal that participants consider their mentors not only as friends but also as professionals. Namely, a mentor is a friendly authority consulted to overcome various problems. The participants of the study are grateful for their mentors. In this sense, the study confirms that the perceptions of Turkish principals about their mentors are similar to their colleagues in different countries (Bolam et al., 1995; Owen, 2015; Schechter, 2014; Smith, 2007). The view stating that the only requirement for mentoring is neither being a friend nor an experienced one is compatible with the nature of mentoring. This is because mentoring is a complicated field involving innovation and guidance that aims to make the mentee independent. According to the participants, mentors are wise people from whose experiences they benefit as this wisdom mediates their success. These results are compatible with the findings of previous research (Daresh, 2004; Fox, 2018; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Hansford & Enrich, 2006). In this sense, the present study characterizes the Turkish context of mentoring. According to the study results, mentoring provides principals with critical advantages, among which principals' self-efficacy is listed (Eusanio, 2022; Fox, 2018; Helber, 2015; Messer, 2019; Mohanty, 2021; Versland, 2016). The study's second question concerns mentoring's effects on principals' self-efficacy. The findings illustrated that mentoring contributed to principals' managerial, instructional, and ethical efficacy beliefs. Mentor support in school management, legal procedures, and leadership competencies were the competence topics with which the participating principals expressed their satisfaction. These are also frequently mentioned in the literature (Geismar et al., 2000; Jugmohan & Muzvidziwa, 2017; Özalp et al., 2016; Parylo et al., 2012; Service et al., 2018). Mentors also shape principals' instructional self-efficacy. The benefits of mentoring, especially in the field of curriculum and supervision, develop principals' instructional leadership roles. These self-efficacies, which also support teachers and students, confirm the school-level benefits of mentoring in Türkiye and underline its unique potential. Mentoring also contributes to the ethical leadership skills of principals. As was found in the present study and similar studies, mentoring strengthens participants' self-control and decision-making competencies (Aravena, 2018; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Searby, 2010). This suggests that the criticisms about the centralized identity of the Turkish education system (Gümüş & Ada, 2017; Özdemir, 2018) can be relatively optimized through mentoring. Principals report that their mentors make vital contributions to their

communication self-efficacy. In this respect, it is thought that communication problems (Arar, 2018; Gündüz & Balyer, 2011; Meyer & Patuawa, 2022; Osterman & Sullivan, 1996; Spillane & Sun, 2022), teachers frequently complain about and cite among the reasons for leaving their institutions, can also be alleviated through mentoring.

The third and last question of the study analyzed the participants' suggestions on the application and content of mentoring. MoNE aims to increase the professional development and learning of principals. For this reason, MoNE has been developing strategies for principal professional development practices for a long time (MoNE, 2022a; MoNE, 2022b; Özdemir, 2018). In this regard, it is thought that it would be appropriate to include mentoring within the scope of principal professional development and learning practices since all participants wish that mentoring should take a formal structure. This wish is compatible with the literature regarding the needs of principals (Bozkurt & Özkan, 2021; Ereş, 2009; Özalp et al., 2016). The critical research results include the formalization of mentoring and the clarification of mentors' qualifications. The participants listed competencies such as equipment, professional knowledge, maturity, and helpfulness among the characteristics of mentors. These qualities give policymakers and researchers valuable messages (Bolam et al., 1995). The contribution of mentoring to the development of principals into independent, self-efficacious individuals is integral to this message. When commenting on the mentoring curriculum, the participants did not mention legislative training or virtual platforms (e.g., MEBBIS). On the other hand, the participant principals found content such as communication, anger management, crisis management, and critical thinking essential for mentoring. In this sense, the research adds depth to previous studies on the competencies of principals (Demirtaş & Özer, 2014; Koç & Atmaca, 2022).

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

This study carries important implications for clarifying the relationship between mentoring and self-efficacy. The results make valuable contributions to the literature on the functions of mentoring in supporting principals' self-efficacy. The study sets a theoretical framework on the content of mentoring and the qualifications of mentors for developing and non-western educational settings such as Türkiye. It is thought that this framework can be a guide for mentoring practices in the future. In Türkiye, mentoring is an informal professional development practice occasionally utilized in the private sector. One of the main implications of the current study is that it has the potential to provide evidence to the literature and researchers by addressing mentoring at this level. Its clear findings on the formalization of mentoring give this research a particular position in practice and policy development.

First, the current study reflects the mentoring practice in a limited way since, as mentioned above, mentoring has not become a formal mechanism in the research population. Thus, the findings mirror only the principals' views within the study's scope. Therefore, it is not easy to generalize the findings. Moreover, it is necessary to conduct quantitative studies to make clearer comments about the causality between mentoring and principal self-efficacy. Otherwise, the criticisms that mentoring can sometimes be dysfunctional in pulling a rabbit out of a hat will not be resolved.

In the future, it is suggested that the mentoring-principal self-efficacy relationship should be studied through cross-sectional or longitudinal techniques. In addition, qualitative studies can address the views of principals as to their mentor preferences. Thus, the process of mentoring, as well as mentoring, can be enriched. Finally, it is thought that it would be appropriate to propose a mentoring model to MoNE in which principal self-efficacy is considered.

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