Competition in Public Education from School Administrators' Perspective: A Qualitative Study on Public Schools in Türkiye

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Abstract

The aim of this qualitative study is to determine how public-school administrators experience competition in public education. The research was conducted with a phenomenological design. The study group of the research consists of 25 public school administrators working in Istanbul province in Türkiye. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and the data were analyzed with content analysis method. The research results revealed that public school administrators experience competition as a situation that harms public education in general. School administrators have an opinion that conditions of competition are not equal, and inflated grades in private schools lead to an advantage to private school students. Based on the results of the research, it is recommended that public education should be supported more as it is a basic human right.

Key words: Competition, public education, privatization, private schools, school administrators.

Introduction

As a result of neoliberal education policies, privatization and competition in education have risen dramatically. Privatization in education has been widely embraced by governments around the world and often supported by certain inter-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, and non-governmental organizations (Rizvi, 2016:1). It is a shift from public education service to private education service. Since the beginning of 1980, private schools have increased in Türkiye significantly.

Supporters of privatization claim that this shift may result in some changes ranging from educational management to subsiding it. People who support public education claim that education is one of the basic responsibilities of a government, and should be provided by the government itself. In such a system, education is provided to every citizen of the country without free of charge. However, there is a common belief among liberal ideologists that as governments cannot provide education in high quality, private sector should be enlarged. Hence, Bayram (2018:342) underlined that the concept of privatization in education enables commercialization of education, which may lead to lose its value because in such a system, education becomes a meta, which can be sold or bought. Regarding school process, it may result some problems. One of the problems can be eliminating children from lower income families. They cannot afford the costs of educational facilities. Another main problem can be devaluing public education. Governments may invest more on private education and public education can be neglected. This change reduces the responsibilities of the government and leads to more active involvement of private sector in decision-making in educational management, curriculum and financing (Kishan, 2008:114).

Regarding Turkish educational system, Uçkaç (2010) stresses that conditions envisaged by these policies for the Turkish economy led some transformations such as unemployment, income inequalities, reduced public expenditures and finally increased private schools. With the privatization in education, fewer resources were allocated to public education, number of teachers were reduced, and school buildings were not invested to improve the quality of education and teachers. As Dikkaya and Özyakışır (2006) mentioned that success and profit in this field will be achieved through the privatization of education. A. Smith and D. Friedman also argue that it is legitimate for the state to subsidize education instead of providing compulsory and free education services, but that it is more appropriate to leave education entirely to the private sector. Milton Friedman also argued that the state's intervention in education lowered educational standards, failed to provide motivation for education, and increased costs without profitability (Friedman, 2008:25). However, if the duties and powers of the state, especially in the economic field, are limited by laws, the problem of constantly changing laws to adapt to this structure and conditions is encountered, considering

that the economic structure and conditions are constantly changing (Tayyar and Çetin, 2013). The content of education is affected by neoliberal policies.

Institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the OECD, which are the main actors of the change in line with capitalist relations, have educated the society under the determination of the state, based on an understanding that targets the maximization and consumption of goods, instead of the development of the knowledge, equipment and skills of the individual along with capitalist relations (Ercan, 2006). P. Psacharopoulos, who is an important name in determining the education policy of the World Bank, has revealed, as a result of a series of studies he conducted, that the upper income groups of the society benefit more from the state's expenditures on education, especially secondary and higher education. Therefore, neoliberalism emphasizes restricting public spending on education, especially higher education.

The neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish education system can be traced back to the structural adjustment and stabilization programs implemented after January 24, 1980 (Aksoy, 2011). As a public service, education is one of the basic human rights, which should be provided by the government. Şahin (2007) underlines that a democratic government is expected to fulfill this responsibility without discriminating people based on race, religion, language, color, gender, economic and social status. Until 1980s, the Turkish government carried out this role successfully. However, with neo-liberal policies started in 1980s, the government role has decreased and in this sense, the performance of public education in Türkiye has been under a great debate in this competitive world of education. It is claimed that the performance of public education has been significantly below the national average for decades. Despite all this, public schools are resisting and trying to survive in these competitive conditions with their own efforts.

While contemporary discourse often frames the proliferation of private schools, private teachers, and private lessons as manifestations of neoliberalism, historical scrutiny reveals a much older lineage for these practices than their public counterparts. Contrary to popular belief, the roots of private education delve deep into history, often preceding the establishment of public schooling systems. The concept of private education can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where affluent families hired tutors or mentors to provide personalized education to their children. This bespoke approach to learning, tailored to the individual needs and capacities of the pupil, laid the groundwork for what we now recognize as private instruction. In contrast, public schools, as institutions funded and managed by the state, emerged much later in history, primarily as a response to the need for standardized education and societal development. Throughout the ages, private education has maintained its allure, offering advantages that public institutions sometimes struggle to replicate. One such advantage is the flexibility to adapt curriculum and teaching methodologies according to the specific requirements of students, unconstrained by bureaucratic regulations that often govern public schools. This adaptability fosters innovation and experimentation in pedagogy, allowing private educators to explore alternative approaches that cater to diverse learning styles and interests.

Furthermore, private schools often boast smaller class sizes, enabling more personalized attention and fostering stronger teacher-student relationships. This intimate learning environment can facilitate academic excellence and holistic development, as educators can provide tailored support and guidance to each student. Beyond academics, private schools frequently emphasize extracurricular activities, character development, and values-based education, aiming to nurture well-rounded individuals equipped for success in an increasingly competitive world. By offering a comprehensive educational experience that extends beyond the confines of traditional classroom learning, private schools seek to instill a sense of purpose, integrity, and civic responsibility in their students. While criticisms of private education persist, including concerns about elitism, inequity, and the perpetuation of social stratification, it is undeniable that private schools occupy a significant place in the educational landscape. As repositories of innovation, excellence, and tradition, they continue to play a vital role in providing alternative avenues for learning and shaping the educational discourse of the future. Thus, while the rise of private education may indeed reflect contemporary socioeconomic trends, its historical precedence underscores its enduring significance in the quest for educational excellence and societal advancement. And it is a matter of discussion to determine how public-school administrators experience competition in public education.

Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to determine how public-school administrators experience competition in education in Turkey. To this end, the answers of the following questions were researched:
- How do school administrators experience competition in public education?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of public schools?
- What advantages and disadvantages does competition in education bring to public schools?

- What do public school administrators think of results of competition in public ?
- What academic changes have been made to compete with other public and private schools?

Method

This research was conducted by using qualitative research method. Qualitative research is research in which the data collection techniques such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal the facts and events in their natural environment in a realistic and holistic way (Öztürk, 2015). In qualitative research, inductive logic is used and qualitative research designs are flexible and dynamic (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel 2020). In addition, qualitative research offers a deeper perspective on problems (Creswell, 2012). The study was conducted using the phenomenology design. These kinds of researches focus on the phenomenon itself and select data sources from individuals or groups experiencing the event directly (Büyüköztürk et al., 2020; Karasar, 2021; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2022). Since this study was conducted to determine how public-school administrators experience this competitive situation, phenomenological design was employed.

Study Group

The study group consists of 25 public school administrators chosen from different school types such as primary, secondary and high schools in Beykoz, Ümraniye, Kadıköy, Çekmeköy, Şile, Sancaktepe, Ataşehir and Üsküdar townships in Istanbul in Türkiye. In this study, maximum variation, which is a purposive sampling method, was used. Purposive sampling method provides speed and practicality to the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2022). In purposive sampling, the participants of the study willingly provide information to understand the study problem (Creswell, 2012; Flick, 2014). Creswell (2021) states that maximum variation sampling is one of the most frequently used sampling methods in qualitative researches. This approach was chosen when the research seeks to achieve maximum diversity and ideally increases the likelihood that the findings reflect different perspectives in qualitative research. In maximum diversity sampling, participants from different groups are selected to increase the reliability of the study. In this study, in order to provide maximum diversity, equal numbers of participants from different school types were recruited. In addition, maximum diversity was tried to be achieved with different gender, professional seniority, age and education level factors. Eleven female and fourteen males were chosen. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), it was stated that the sufficient number of participants in the phenomenological design can be between seven and nine. It was said that the inclusion in the sample could be stopped if the information starts to be repeated and new information does not come. In this context, when the data obtained from the interviews were examined, it was determined that the data were repeated and the interviews with 25 school administrators were considered sufficient because the data saturation point was reached. Demographic information of the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Code	Gender	Education Status	Age	Professional Seniority	School Type
A1	Male	Graduate	43	22	Primary School
A2	Male	Graduate	53	31	Primary School
A3	Male	Graduate	38	7	Primary School
A4	Male	Graduate	54	32	Primary School
A5	Male	Undergraduate	47	24	Primary School
A6	Male	Undergraduate	44	21	Secondary School
A7	Male	Undergraduate	34	9	Secondary School
A8	Female	Undergraduate	35	13	Secondary School
A9	Female	Undergraduate	32	10	Secondary School
A10	Female	Undergraduate	43	18	Secondary School
A11	Female	Undergraduate	59	30	High School
A12	Female	Undergraduate	41	20	High School
A13	Female	Graduate	35	14	High School
A14	Female	Graduate	40	15	High School
A15	Male	Graduate	47	22	High School
A16	Male	Undergraduate	40	15	Secondary School

A17	Male	Undergraduate	44	18	Secondary School
A18	Male	Undergraduate	31	9	High School
A19	Male	Undergraduate	44	18	High School
A20	Male	Undergraduate	29	8	High School
A21	Male	Undergraduate	38	12	High School
A22	Female	Undergraduate	44	8	Primary School
A23	Female	Undergraduate	35	9	Primary School
A24	Female	Graduate	30	7	Primary School
A25	Female	Graduate	40	18	Secondary School

A: Administrator (School Principals and Vice Principals)

As can be seen in Table 1, eleven participants are female and fourteen participants are male. Regarding the participants' educational level, while nine participants have graduate degrees, 16 participant have undergraduate degrees. The professional experience of the participants in the study varies between 7-32 years and the age range of the participants varies between 29-59 years. When the participants' school type is concerned, eight of them work at primary school, seven work at secondary school and eight work at high school.

Data Collection

The data were collected using a semi-structured interview form created by the researchers. In semi-structured interviews, the questions prepared in advance can be reorganized according to the participants and the course of the interview in order to provide more detailed answers on the subject (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The interview questions were prepared as open-ended. Before the interview form was prepared, the relevant literature was reviewed and the interview questions used in similar studies were examined. In parallel with the sub-problems, relevant interview questions were prepared and a question pool was created. Then, an interview form was drafted using the questions selected from the question pool. The prepared questions were submitted to the opinion of experts experienced in qualitative research, and necessary arrangements were made because of the feedback. For this purpose, an interview form consisting of 10 semi-structured interview questions was obtained to be applied to teachers.

Before the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the scope of the questions in general. The finalized semi-structured interview questions were directed to 25 administrators via telephone, video call and face-to-face interviews. The duration of the interviews lasted an estimated of 30-40 minutes. During the interviews, voice recordings were made by obtaining permission from the participants. After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and sent to the participants via e-mail to ensure participant confirmation. After the participant confirmation, the texts were finalized to be analyzed after the arrangements made.

Content analysis method was used to analyze the data obtained through semi-structured interviews. The main purpose of content analysis is to explain the findings obtained because of the research based on the collected data through alternative data organization and conclusion writing. Analyses conducted in phenomenological research are aimed at revealing experiences and concepts. For this purpose, themes and concepts that can define the phenomenon should be revealed in content analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2022). The content analysis consists of four stages. First, the interviews with the participants were transcribed, then the data were analyzed and similar expressions were brought together and coded. In the third stage, the coding was grouped under themes. In the last stage, the themes obtained were interpreted. Participant confirmation was taken as the basis for ensuring the validity of the research. After the data were analyzed, participant confirmation was obtained by e-mailing the files to the participants again. As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2022) stated in the reliability of the research, direct quotations and descriptions were used. While analyzing the data, the answers of all participants who answered the same questions were written underneath and various codes and themes were reached from these answers.

Credibility, Transferability, Consistency and Confirmability of the Research

Participant confirmation was taken as a basis for ensuring the validity of the research. After the data were analyzed, participant confirmation was obtained by e-mailing the files to the participants again. As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2022) stated in the reliability of the research, direct quotations and descriptions were used. While validity and reliability in quantitative research can be ensured with numerical data, proving this is a problem in qualitative research since scales based on numerical data are not used (Başkale, 2016). There

are some accepted concepts to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research. These are credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2022).

Table 2. *Methods Used for Credibility in Qualitative Research*

Factor	Qualitative Version	Questions that can be asked	Methods
Internal Validity -	Credibility	Are the results credible?	Long-term interaction Reducing researcher bias Participant confirmation Triangulation
External Validity	Transferability	Are the results transferable to other people and situations?	- Purposive sampling -Inclusion/exclusion criteria - Detailed description of the environment - Detailed introduction of the participants
Reliability	Reliability	Are the results similar when the study is repeated with similar participants under similar conditions?	- Audit trail -Detailed presentation of literature search methods -Triangulation is when another researcher examines the process and outcomes
Objectivity	Confirmability	Has objectivity been increased by reducing biases?	- Reducing researcher bias - Triangulation

Source: Lincoln, S. Yyonna., Guba, Egon. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage.

Credibility

Credibility is related to whether the research reflects the reality or not. In this study, expert review, long-term interaction and participant confirmation methods were used to ensure credibility. Expert opinion experienced in qualitative research was utilized at every stage of the research, such as the formulation of interview questions, analysis and interpretation of data. Confirmation of the data and conclusions reached because of the research by the participants was carried out by transcribing the interview recordings and sending them to the participants via e-mail in the form of a report.

Transferability

Transferability is related to the generalizability of research results and how applicable they are to similar environments (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this study, detailed description method was used to ensure

transferability. Detailed description is done by giving sufficient information about the content of the research. The data are transferred without comment and in this context; the research is supported by direct quotations from the participant views (Başkale, 2016). In this study, the data obtained during the interviews with the participants were used as direct quotations to increase transferability.

Consistency

Consistency is the approach of reflecting this situation in the research in a consistent manner because events and phenomena can change depending on the environment and time (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2022). In order to ensure consistency in this research, expert opinion was sought at every stage of the research in order to evaluate the research from an outside perspective and to determine whether the researcher acted consistently.

Confirmability

Quotations and stories are of great importance to confirm that the research is verifiable. In this context, the findings should be conducted using the participants' own statements rather than the researcher's biases and opinions (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Findings

In this part of the research, the findings on *competition in public education from school administrators' perspective* are presented.

Table 3. *Competition in Public Education School Administrators' Views*

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
	Inequality of conditions	P1, P5, P7, P12
Views on Competition in Public Education	Productivity	P8, P10
	Necessity of competition	P2, P3
	No competition	P6, P9, P4, P11

When Table 3 is examined, the majority of public-school administrators have an opinion that the conditions are unequal and therefore there can be no competition in public schools. Even in the same region, the conditions can be different. In this manner, while some schools have brand new school buildings with a library, lab, and computer rooms, sports hall and meeting room, some others do not have a good building. Some administrators also consider that competition is necessary and this may increase productivity at school in some ways. As competition brings readiness, schools can benefit from competition in order to get ready for the future. In this regard, some participants' views on competition are given below.

P1: "I think competition in the public sector varies according to the province, district, neighborhood and even parent profile of the school. If the region is socioeconomically rich, competition brings good results. Unless the conditions are equal all over the country, it is difficult to talk about competition at public schools and it is impossible to compete to private schools."
P12: "Competition promotes education in public schools. It also increases efficiency among students, but competition should be made with equal opportunities."

As can be seen, school administrators' views on competition differ. According to codes obtained, it can be stated that most school administrators are against competition as the conditions are not unequal. In order to compete in a race, conditions should be equal.

Table 4. *How School Administrators Experience Competition in Public Education*

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
	Inequality of Conditions	P1, P2, P6, P9
Experiences Competition in Public Education	Negative Influence	P5, P10, P11, P13, P14
	Necessary for Development	P7, P8, P12, P15, P16
	Innovation	P3, P4

When Table 4 is examined, while two participants think that, the competition between public schools will provide the least innovation; four participants have the opinion that there will be no competition due to the inequality of conditions in public schools. On the other hand, while some participants have the opinion that competition is necessary at public schools, some others consider that competition will have a negative effect at public schools. In this regard, some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P4: "If the continuous development is in the form of self-renewal and experiencing the new implementations required by the age, it will bring an advantageous and beautiful picture."
P5: "When it becomes a desire of replacing of another person's place it turns into ambition and it has negative results at school"

When analyzed the codes in general, it can be said that school administrators experience competition in a negative way. Unless the conditions are equal, it is not fair to ask schools to compete to even other public schools or private schools. In some public schools, the conditions are bad and competition brings harm to schools. However, some administrators believe that if it means innovation, competition is good but the real world is not as it is presented to the media.

Table 5. *Strengths and Weaknesses of Public Schools at the Age of Competition*

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
	Job Security	P3, P5, P10
Strengths and Weaknesses of Public Schools	Providing Public Service	P1, P4, P12, P13, P16
	Innovative Staff	P2, P6, P7, P9, P11
	Sub-themes	Codes
	Lack of Funding	P4, P5, P6, P9, P10, P15
	Central Management Body	P1, P3, P11
	Inequality of Schools	P2, P7, P8, P11, P13

When Table 5 is examined, education administrators state that the strongest aspect of public schools is providing public service. They believe that they are doing a great work because they work for all the public without discriminating anyone from each other according to their race, social and economic status, and gender and so on. At the same time, they share the view that they have innovative staff and the job security for all staff who work for the government. In this regard, some administrators' views are as followed:

P12: "Its strengths stem from using public funds and it has a lot of benefits such as job security, innovative staff and so on."
P4: "Among some of our strengths are having various program types, free courses and innovative teaching staff."
P5: "One of the biggest strengths is that as you have job security, you don't have worry about your contract every year."

Regarding the weaknesses are analyzed, the majority of the participants state that public schools are the weakest in terms of providing funds, central management body and inequality of schools. Especially with the implementation of neoliberal policies after 1980s, public funds have reduced and public schools are forced to provide their own finance. For example, according to Yolcu (2013), it is a long-standing tradition in Turkey, but as a result of the economic decisions taken on 24 January 1980 and changes in the state's

approach to financing education, public investments decreased and since then, the increase in private schools has risen. Another weakness is the central management body structure of the ministry. Decisions are taken centrally and schools cannot be proactive, as they have to take the approval of the ministry for their every minute. Some administrators' views on it as followed:

P3: "Central management slows down schools and it is a weak point for public schools. Until we take an approval for an idea, other private schools start that work and go ahead."

P4: The biggest problem of public schools providing funds. As we have limited budged coming from ministry, we cannot function properly. Even cleaning, safety, hygiene requires Money. Also, it is necessary to have a good financial structure in order to provide some services, personnel motivation studies, student-teacher-parent rewards."

P13: As we are not equal regarding financial structures, we are unable to expand preschool education."

As can be understood, there are both strengths and weaknesses of public education. One of the biggest strengths is job security for all staff; one big weakness is providing funds to schools. As government has been reducing funds for public education for a long time, schools are unable to take action in some areas. In addition, having a central management body is believed to slow down work in public education.

Table 5. *Advantages and Disadvantages of Competition*

Main Theme	Sub-themes: Advantages	Codes
Advantages	Development	P1, P8
	Motivation-Efficiency	P3, P5, P12, P16
	Innovation	P4, P8, P10
Disadvantages	Inequality of conditions	P3, P5, P12, P15
	Negative effect	P2, P4, P8, P12
	Financing	P6, P7, P11

When advantages and disadvantages of public schools in competition are examined, the majority of the participants state that the competition will provide some advantages in terms of motivation, efficiency and innovation. Competition is believed to bring motivation among staff and it will result in school effectiveness. In addition, when schools are competing, that will follow innovative implementations and this will bring many advantages to schools. For example, some administrators have the opinion that,

P3: "The advantage of competition provides motivation and it brings success at schools. However, if the conditions are not equal, it makes the students, teachers and administrators disappointed and feel bad."

P8: "Competition provides the development of education in public schools. It increases efficiency among students, but competition should be done with equal opportunities."

When disadvantages are analyzed, most of the participants state that the conditions to compete with other schools are not equal, which creates a disadvantage. Therefore, it brings more disadvantages than advantages. They also think that as the financial conditions are not the same, competing is bad for public schools. They cannot even provide fund for basic needs of schools. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P4: "However, if the conditions are not equal, it brings some disadvantages for public schools, and it makes students, teachers and administrators feel disappointed and feel bad."

P12: "Public schools are at a disadvantageous situation comparing to private schools due to the lack of financial and physical opportunities."

In general, it can be said that competition in public schools can bring both advantages and disadvantages. While it is believed that it will bring a motivation for innovation and efficiency among staff, it may result in creating more problems among public schools as the financial and physical conditions are not equal.

Table 7. *Positive and Negative Results of Competition in Education*

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Positive	Strong School	P1, P2
	Productivity	P3, P9
	Human Resources	P16
Negative	Losing work peace	P4, P6
	Lack of funding	P11, P16
	Pressure	P3, P5, P9, P12

When results of competition are examined, some of the participants state that competition in education will have positive results, a strong school will be created with these positive results, productivity will increase and it will have strong and qualified human resources. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P4: *"When competition contributes positively to efficiency in education, it has a positive impact on the school in all aspects."*

P9: *"As an academic process, it provides functional efficiency to teachers and administrators."*

On the other hand, some participants have the opinion that competition in education will lead to negative results and it is against the nature of education. It is believed that work peace will be affected in a negative way. In an atmosphere of competition, teachers can be rivals rather than collaborators. In addition, it is expected to create more inequalities among schools as the financial structure of public schools will not be enough to compete. As a result, it may create psychological pressure on both teachers and students. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P4: *"Competition may disrupt the working peace and cooperation among staff and institutions may harm."*

P6: *"Academic competition puts children under extreme stress. Financially, it leads to financial concerns instead of education."*

P5: *"Also if the competition conditions are not equal, it may make students; teachers and administrators feel disappointed and feel bad."*

In general, while some administrators mention positive results, some underline negative results. When positive results are evaluated, it is believed to lead to a strong school culture, increased productivity, strong and qualified human resources. However, there are also some administrators who think that competition may lead to negative results and it is against the nature of education. They believe that in an atmosphere of competition, collaboration among teachers and students cannot be provided and financially schools cannot compete. In addition, it is thought that it may put psychological pressure on both teachers and students.

Table 8. *Lessons Learned from Competition and Changes to Be Done*

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
Lessons Learned from Competition	Academic Success	P1,P13
	Partnership	P8,P9,P10,P12,P15
	Setting Correct Goals	P4,P5,P11
	Developing Correct Vision	P2,P4
	Building Positive Public Relations	P3,P7,P14,P16
	Sub-themes	Codes
	Physical Conditions	P1, P4, P8
	School Culture	P2, P5, P12, P14, P16
	Team work	P3, P6, P9
	Effective guidance	P13, P15
	PR work	P5, P11

When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that administrators learn many things from competition such as academic success, partnerships, building positive public relations, setting good goals and developing correct vision for the school. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P3: We learned increasing academic success, establishing partnerships with some organizations, and built positive public relations from competition. This competition will raise our position against our rivals."
P4: The rivalry of public schools with all kinds of schools is related to developing correct vision for the school. This competition may force us to develop a competitive and good vision."
P14: It may also help administrators to set correct goals for a school. They look at their rivals and take a proactive position."

However, school administrators think that schools' physical conditions should be changed. Some schools even do not have a sports hall, a lab or a library. The number of students in classrooms are still high. In addition, school culture should be fostered by making some structural changes (policies, school calendar, strategic planning, marketing, etc.). In addition, transforming the school into a living space, conducting teamwork, using guidance services effectively, and performing PR work may help to be preferred by students. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P1: "Schools should be a living space in which there are a lot of extracurricular activities as well by doing so, students may socialize and feel better."
P3: "We made an advertisement by highlighting the social media power of the school. There is no point if you cannot actually market what you are doing. PR is important."
P12: "Structural changes are urgent for the current school system. Schools are not reactive and usually behind the age"

When analyzed in general, administrators think that they can learn many things from competition such as academic success, partnerships, building positive public relations, setting good goals and developing correct vision for the school. On the other hand, they consider that physical conditions of the school should be changed and be equipped with a sports hall, a lab or a library. They also think that the number of students in classrooms are still high and it should be reduced. They believe that school culture can be improved by making some structural changes, school buildings can be transformed into living spaces. Th3ey also believe that teamwork should be provided, guidance services should be more functional and public relations should be improved in order to be preferred by students and parents.

Table 9. *Loss of Status and Its Effects on Decision Making*

Sub themes	Codes
Negative Effect	P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14
Causes Loss of Belonging	P1, P3, P7, P8
Lowers Staff Qualification	P2, P4, P6

When school administrators' views on loss of status and its effects on decision-making are analyzed, they think that it affects their decisions in a negative way. When schools lose their legitimacy, your decisions become useless as well. These days our decisions have no value. In addition, it causes loss of belonging. If people feel valueless, they lose the sense of belonging. Each year the qualifications are lowered in the current system. For example, in the past in order to be a school principal 8 years teaching experience was essential, but these days two years' experience is enough. Some of the participants' opinions are given below.

P3: "It has negative impacts on decision-making processes because you have no value and your decision will have no value either. In addition, it reduces motivation of the staff. As a result you lose our sense of belonging."
P7: "The loss of status negatively affects the quality of decisions. It causes destruction in the long term. Happy staff means happy school."
P6: "If anyone who has a trade union membership is enough to be an administrator, the work loses its meaning."

In general, loss of schools' status is believed to have devastating influences on both systems and decisions. Administrators, teachers and even students lose sense of belonging, and in such an atmosphere, success becomes accidental naturally.

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

After implementing neo-liberal policies in education, fewer resources are allocated to public education, and investments in improving the quality of education and teachers' professional development are reduced all over the world as well as Türkiye. As a result, the performance of public education has decreased significantly below the national average in Turkey for the last four decades. This became one of the basic motivations to accelerate privatization in education. Then, private schools started to play a dominant role as an alternative to public education with nearly 25% rate in 2022 (Eğitim-Sen, 2023). Despite allocating fewer resources and reduced public subsidy, public schools are expected to compete to private schools which have enormous budgets. These days, public schools are trying to survive in this competitive environment. In this world of competition, education is no longer considered a basic human right. It is accepted as a commodity that can be bought and sold because of neoliberal education policies implemented harshly since the beginning of 1980s. Because of these policies, both income distribution gets detoriated and public expenditures decreases, which leads to damage the right to education. By doing so, education a considered as a privileged service what only wealthy people can benefit if from. Moreover, it deepens the inequality in the society. Indeed, since education is considered as a universal human right, it should be provided free and to everybody. However, it is a matter of question to research how public-school administrators experience competition in public education. For this purpose, the current research was conducted to determine how public-school administrators experience competition in education. To this end, some results were obtained.

To start with, regarding school administrators' views on competition in compulsory education, most school administrators have the opinion that competition conditions are not equal and competition in education is against its nature. Because education is a process in which each child should be treated differently. As Akhmetova (1997) stressed every child is unique and should be provided with guaranteed conditions for his self-development and competition is not suitable for children's nature. Under these circumstances, public schools are trying to do their best to serve. School administrators think that while conditions are different even in the same region, it is not fair to compete to private schools and this competition will result in failure. However, Harrison and Rouse (2014) found that average school performance tends to be higher when schools are located in areas of high competition. Also, while some schools have good physical conditions such as new school buildings with a library, laboratories, computer labs, sports halls, music and arts rooms and meeting rooms, some others have none of these listed here. On the other hand, some other school administrators find competition beneficial as it may lead to higher productivity at school in some ways. They also believe that competition brings readiness and schools can have its advantage to get ready for the future. In this regard, Misra, Grimes and Rogers (2012) found higher degrees of competition significantly increase public primary and high school efficiency. They also found that private school competition improves public school efficiency. Even Urquiola (2016) found that transferring children from public to private schools may indeed increase their achievement, especially, for subgroups of generally lower socioeconomic status students. Also, Thapa (2013) proved a positive and significant impact of private school competition on public school performance.As for school administrators' views on competition in public education, while a few believe that competition can foster innovation and is necessary, most participants disagree with its necessity, arguing that the conditions of competition are unequal. They find the condidioons unfair and in the long term it will have negative effects on public education. Competition is believed to harm schools and opened a course in favor of private schools. Both physical conditions, resources and having an advantage of inflated grades will provide more advantages to private schools. In his study, Toch (2000) found that while private sector encourages hard work, innovation, and high standards and rewards of competition, public school educators and students face more consequences of failure because they have fewer resources and rewards.

Moreover, regarding strengths and weaknesses of public education, public school administrators' main strength is providing public service for all citizens and it brings legitimacy. These schools still have a legitimacy despite their failure and citizens tend to send their children to these schools. The other biggest strengths are job security for all staff. In Turkey, teachers who work for public schools have a job security unless they resign themselves. While this can be an advantage, it may become a disadvantage for these schools as well as teachers do not need to renew themselves because of having no worries about terminating their contracts. On the other hand, according to school administrators, there are some weaknesses of public schools. One big weakness is having limited funds especially in times of economic crises. Especially with the implementation of neoliberal policies after 1980s, public funds have reduced and public schools are forced to provide their own finance from parents mostly. As a result of reduced funds, schools are sometimes unable to take action in some areas. For example, if school needs to renew itself or

organize professional development activities, they cannot do it. One of the weaknesses underlined is having a central management body. It is believed to slow down work routines in public education while things can be done faster in private sector. The other weakness noted here is long-term contracts of teachers in public sector. When a school is not happy with a teacher, it is not possible to terminate his/her contract. However, there are some strengths of public education. One strength is having a strong control mechanism as the system is controlled centrally. Another strength is there is still a strong demand for public schools as they are financially affordable. A final advantage is a strong support from the public. People still try to send their children to public schools. The most successful schools are still public schools in Turkey even though they have fewer resources comparing to private schools.

According to a further result, competition in public schools is believed to bring both advantages and disadvantages. In one hand, unequal financial and physical conditions create a disadvantage to public schools. In public sector, schools provide funds mainly from parents. In this sense, if school is in a socio-economically rich region, schools provide more funds while the others which are socio-economically poor regions they provide less funds. On the other hand, public schools have some advantages. One advantage is that public schools have no worries about finding new enrollments as there are millions waiting outside public schools. They do not have to struggle to find new enrollments to survive. Another advantage is that as the government provide teacher, and other staff and pay for them, the public schools do not have a worry to compensate for all these expenses.

Regarding the participants' views on results of competition in education, while some administrators mention positive results, some underline negative results. When positive results are evaluated, it is believed to lead to a strong school culture, increased productivity, strong and qualified human resources. However, there are also some administrators who think that competition may lead to negative results and it is against the nature of education. They believe that in an atmosphere of competition, collaboration among teachers and students cannot be provided and financially schools cannot compete. In addition, it is thought that it may put psychological pressure on both teachers and students. In this regard, Hoxby (2000) claims that competition in public schools have more productive results.

As far as school administrators' views on lessons that can be learned from competition and changes to be done are considered, administrators think that they can learn a lot of things from competition such as academic success, partnerships, building positive public relations, setting good goals and developing correct vision for the school. As competition will bring a vivid atmosphere in a school, these organizations may benefit from it. They also believe that school culture can be improved by making some structural changes, school buildings can be transformed into living spaces. In addition, they believe that teamwork should be provided, guidance services should be more functional and public relations should be improved in order to be preferred by students and parents. On the other hand, they consider that physical conditions of the school should be changed and be equipped with a sports hall, a lab or a library. They also think that the number of students in classrooms are still high and it should be reduced. In this case, it may generate substantial damage to teaching quality, triggering exam-oriented methods; intensifying inequities among and within schools; and sharpening managers' insecurities and anxieties, which accentuate hierarchical and bureaucratic systems of control (Bagley, 2006; Falabella, 2013).

A final result shows that regarding loss of schools' status, it is believed that public schools started to lose power and the loss of status may have important effects on both school system and decisions taken there. Due to reduced funds, limited resources schools cannot compete to private schools and as a result these schools lose their legitimacy in the society. Taxpayers may have an idea that no more taxes should be invest on public education while their performance is decreasing. The parents also prefer private schools and the quality students tend to enroll to private schools. Hence, Couch, Shughart and Williams (1993) think that the evidence shows that when faced with market competition, the public schools can respond by improving the quality of education they provide for their students. In addition; in this case, school administrators, teachers, and even students may lose sense of belonging and in such an atmosphere, success becomes an accidental phenomenon. As (Le Fevre (2014) discussed teachers perceive they would lose control in this sense.

In conclusion, it can be said that competition is perceived as a risk by school administrators of this sample in general. Although it may have some benefits; more worries are thought to be shed on public education process in Türkiye. As a result of this study, some recommendations can be drawn:

• In order to compete in this world of competition, conditions should be revised and by letting changing central management body, school administrators should be given more authority to take some proactive actions.

• Private schools should be supervised more against grade inflation which creates an unequal competition.

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Annex 1
Competition in Public Education from the Perspective of School Administrators:
A Qualitative Study on Public Schools in Turkey
Interview Form

The aim of this study is to explore how competition is experienced in public education from the perspective of school administrators. This interview will be kept completely confidential and no information will be shared with anyone without your permission. The recordings and notes taken during the interview will be shown to you after they have been transcribed and will be used after your consent has been obtained. For whatever reason, the part you do not approve will be removed. You have the right not to answer any question.

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Section I-Demographic Information
Gender :..
Professional Seniority : ....
Education Status: : ....
School Type :...

Section II. Research Questions
1. As a school administrator, what do you think about competition in public education in general?
2. How do you experience competition in public education as a school administrator?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of public schools?
4. What advantages and disadvantages do you think competition in education brings to public schools?
5. As a school administrator, what do you think about the effects/consequences of competition in education (e.g. academic functioning, structural situations, financial situation, human resources)?
6. How do you think public schools compete with other public or private schools in their region? What do they learn from this competition?
7. As a school administrator, what structural changes (policies, school calendar, strategic planning, marketing, etc.) do you make in your school in order to be preferred in the era of competition?
8. How do you think the loss of status of public schools affects the management and decision-making behaviour of school administrators?
Do you have any other experiences or perspectives you would like to share on this issue?